



## Glory of Bharath » Bharath Darshan

This month our sojourn is to the sacred town Kalady, the birthplace of Sri AdiShankaracharya.

### Kalady



Adi Shankara shrine

On the right of the river Periyar, or 'Poorna' as it is also known, there is a tiny village cradled in green fields, called Kalady. This is an important pilgrimage center since it was the birth place of Sri Adi Sankaracharya, one of India's foremost philosopher saints who preached the monistic or 'advaita' philosophy.

Adi Sankaracharya was born here as the only son of Sivaguru and Aryamba, a Kerala Brahmin couple. His early life was marked by several miraculous exploits that singled him out for a divine role. It was he who played a major role in saving the Hindu religion from the ritualistic and superstitious state to which it had degenerated. At his birth, astrologers had predicted among other things, that he would become a 'sarvajna' or an all-knowing sage. The extraordinarily intelligent boy mastered the Vedas and completed his studies when he was merely 16 years of age. He then started his quest for truth and spent many years of his life preaching the Vedic Dharma as well as its universality and superiority. He established four 'mutts' in four sections of the country- Sringeri, Dwaraka, Joshimutt and Puri. His commentaries on the Upanishads, Brahmasutra and the Bhagavad Gita hold relevance even today. At the age of 32, Adi Sankara attained 'mahasamadhi'.

Among the many miraculous happenings associated with his life is one when he is believed to have diverted the course of the river Poorna, then flowing one and a half kilometers away from the house, for his aged mother who could have her daily bath in the river without walking a long way. Even today one can see the river has taken an uncharacteristic turn towards the Sringeri Mutt shrine, believed to be the site of Sankara.



Poorna River

Another supernatural incident in his life happened when he needed his mother's permission to take up 'sanyas'. While he and his mother were bathing in the river one day, Sankara created through his yogic powers, a crocodile which caught him and began to beg to his mother to allow him to take 'sanyas' upon which the crocodile may spare him. The mother, of course, granted permission and Sankara was set free. The bathing ghat where this is believed to have happened is just below the Sringeri temple.



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Adi Sankara's shrine run by the Sringeri Math is a large, partly open structure situated right on the bank of the river. Of the two major shrines within, one is dedicated to Sri Sankaracharya and the other to Goddess Saradamba, guardian deity of Sringeri. The samadhi of Shri Sankara's mother Aryamba is also located here. A small shrine to Vinayaka, or Ganapati, is the seat of evening prayers, chanted to the rhythmic ringing of cymbals. When the river Poorna changed its course, an ancient temple of Sri Krishna, very dear to Sankara's mother, was submerged. A new temple was then built by the loving son just next to the Sringeri Shrine.



**Sri Krishna Temple**

**Our sojourn continues next month...Till then Sai Ram**