

# Kṛṣṇā (Krishna)

## Two Wikipedia Articles

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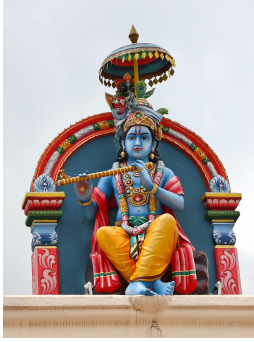
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# Krishna

Krishna	
	
A Statue of Krishna in the Sri Mariamman Temple, Singapore. Here he is shown with a flute.	
<b>Devanagari</b>	कृष्ण
<b>Sanskrit Transliteration</b>	Kṛṣṇa
<b>Affiliation</b>	Full incarnation of Vishnu (Svayam Bhagavan) <sup>[1][2][3][4][5]</sup>
<b>Abode</b>	Goloka Vrindavana, Gokula, Dwarka, Vaikuntha, <sup>[3]</sup>
<b>Mantra</b>	Om Namo Narayanaye, Om Namo Bhagavate Vasudevaye, Om Vishnave Namah, Hare Krishna Mantra
<b>Weapon</b>	Sudarshana Chakra
<b>Consort</b>	Rukmini, Satyabhama, Jambavati, Kalindi, Mitravinda, Nagnajiti, Bhadra, Lakshmana
<b>Mount</b>	Garuda
<b>Texts</b>	<i>Bhagavata Purana</i> , <i>Vishnu Purana</i> , <i>Mahabharata</i> , <i>Bhagavad Gita</i>

**Krishna** (Sanskrit: कृष्ण *Kṛṣṇa* in IAST, pronounced [ˈkɾ̩ʂɳə] ( listen<sup>ⓘ</sup>)), literally "attractive", akin to Russian *прекрасная* -- "beautiful") is the ninth incarnation of the supreme god Vishnu in Hinduism. The word Krishna means *One With Dark Complexion* and *One Who Attracts All*. The name Krishna appears as the 57th and 550th name of lord Vishnu in *Vishnu Sahasranama* of *Mahabharata*. The name Krishna is also amongst the 24 names of lord Vishnu which are recited and praised at the beginning of all Vedic worships in Hinduism.

According to the *Bhagavata Purana*, which is a sattvic purana,<sup>[6]</sup> Krishna is termed as *Svayam Bhagavan* since he was the *purna-avatara* or full incarnation of the supreme god Vishnu.<sup>[7][8]</sup> Krishna is often described and portrayed as an infant or young boy playing a flute as in the *Bhagavata Purana*,<sup>ⓘ</sup> or as a youthful prince giving direction and guidance as in the *Bhagavad Gita*.<sup>ⓘ</sup> The stories of Krishna appear across a broad spectrum of Hindu philosophical and theological traditions.<sup>ⓘ</sup> They portray him in various perspectives: a god-child, a prankster, a model lover, a divine hero and the supreme being.<sup>ⓘ</sup> The principal scriptures discussing Krishna's story are the *Mahabharata*, the *Harivamsa*, the *Bhagavata Purana*, and the *Vishnu Purana*.

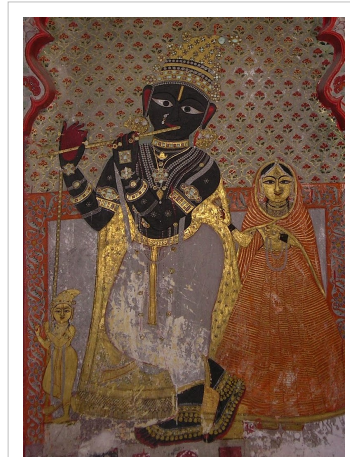
Worship of the deity Krishna, either in the form of Vasudeva, Bala Krishna or Gopala, can be traced to as early as 4th century BC.<sup>ⓘ[9]</sup> Worship of Krishna as *svayam bhagavan*, or the supreme being, known as Krishnaism, arose in the Middle Ages in the context of the bhakti movement. From the 10th century AD, Krishna became a favourite subject in performing arts and regional traditions of devotion developed for forms of Krishna such as Jagannatha in Odisha, Vithoba in Maharashtra and Shrinathji in Rajasthan. Since the 1960s the worship of Krishna has also spread in the West, largely due to the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.<sup>ⓘ</sup>

## Name and titles

The Sanskrit word in its origin language *Kṛṣṇa* is primarily an adjective meaning "black" or "dark",<sup>[10]</sup> sometimes it is also translated as "all attractive".<sup>[11]</sup> It is cognate with Slavic *чрънъ* "black".

As a male noun, *Kṛṣṇa* is used in the meaning "night, blackness, darkness" in the Rigveda. As a proper noun, *Kṛṣṇa* occurs in RV 8.85.3 as the name of the Supreme Being or Lord of Universe.<sup>[12]</sup>

As a name of Vishnu, Krishna listed as the 57th name in the *Vishnu Sahasranama*. Based on his name, Krishna is often depicted in murtis as black or blue-skinned. Krishna is also known by various other names, epithets and titles, which reflect his many associations and attributes. Among the most common names are *Mohan* "enchanter of women or cowherdesses", *Govinda*, "finder of cows", or *Gopala*, "protector of cows", which refer to Krishna's childhood in Vraja (in present day Uttar Pradesh).<sup>[13]</sup> Some of the distinct names may be regionally important; for instance, *Jagannatha* (literally "Lord of the Universe"), a popular deity of Puri, Odisha in eastern India .<sup>[14]</sup>



14th century fresco of Krishna on interior wall City Palace, Udaipur

## Iconography



Krishna with cows, herdsmen and Gopis, Pahari painting [Himalayan] from Smithsonian Institution

Krishna is easily recognized by his representations. Though his skin colour may be depicted as black or dark in some representations, particularly in murtis, in other images such as modern pictorial representations, Krishna is usually shown with blue skin. He is often shown wearing a yellow silk dhoti and a peacock feather crown. Common depictions show him as a little boy, or as a young man in a characteristically relaxed pose, playing the flute.<sup>[15]</sup> In this form, he usually stands with one leg bent in front of the other with a flute raised to his lips, in the *Tribhanga* posture, accompanied by cows, emphasizing his position as the divine herdsman, *Govinda*, or with the gopis (milkmaids) i.e. Gopikrishna, stealing butter from neighbouring houses i.e. Navneet Chora or Gokulakrishna, defeating the vicious serpent i.e. Kaliya Damana Krishna, lifting the hill i.e. Giridhara Krishna ..so on and so forth from his childhood / youth events.

A steatite (soapstone) tablet unearthed from Mohenjo-daro, Larkana district, Sindh depicting a young boy uprooting two trees from which are emerging two human figures is an interesting archaeological find for fixing dates associated with Krishna. This image recalls the Yamalarjuna episode of *Bhagavata* and *Harivamsa Purana*. In this image, the young boy is undoubtedly Krishna, and the two human beings emerging from the trees are the two cursed gandharvas, identified as Nalakubara and Manigriva. Dr. E.J.H. Mackay, who did the excavation at Mohanjodaro, compares this image with the Yamalarjuna episode. Prof. V.S. Agrawal has also accepted this identification. Thus, it seems that the Indus valley people knew stories related to Krishna. This lone find may not establish Krishna as contemporary with Pre-Indus or Indus times, but, likewise, it cannot be ignored.<sup>[16][17][18]</sup>



The scene on the battlefield of the epic *Mahabharata*, notably where he addresses Pandava prince Arjuna in the *Bhagavad Gita*, is another common subject for representation. In these depictions, he is shown as a man, often with typical god-like characteristics of Hindu religious art, such as multiple arms or heads, denoting power, and with attributes of Vishnu, such as the chakra or in his two-armed form as a charioteer. Cave paintings dated to 800 BCE in Mirzapur, Mirzapur district, Uttar Pradesh, show raiding horse-charioteers, one of whom is about to hurl a wheel, and who could potentially be identified as Krishna.<sup>[19]</sup>



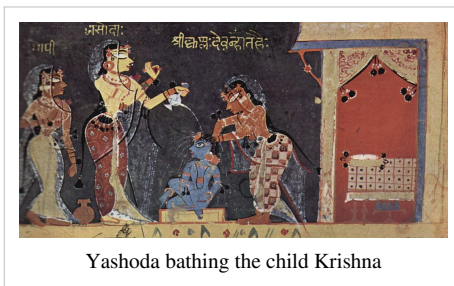
Bala Krishna dancing, sculpture from National Museum, New Delhi.

Representations in temples often show Krishna as a man standing in an upright, formal pose. He may be alone, or with associated figures:<sup>[20]</sup> his brother Balarama and sister Subhadra, or his main queens Rukmini and Satyabhama.

Often, Krishna is pictured with his gopi-consort Radha. Manipuri Vaishnavas do not worship Krishna alone, but as Radha Krishna,<sup>[21]</sup> a combined image of Krishna and Radha. This is also a characteristic of the schools Rudra<sup>[22]</sup> and Nimbarka sampradaya,<sup>[23]</sup> as well as that of Swaminarayan faith. The traditions celebrate Radha Ramana murti, who is viewed by Gaudiyas as a form of Radha Krishna.<sup>[24]</sup>

Krishna is also depicted and worshipped as a small child (*Bala Krishna*, Bāla Kṛṣṇa the child Krishna), crawling on his hands and knees or dancing, often with butter or Laddu in his hand being Laddu Gopal.<sup>[25][26]</sup> Regional variations in the iconography of Krishna are seen in his different forms, such as Jaganatha of Odisha, Vithoba of Maharashtra<sup>[27]</sup> and Shrinathji in Rajasthan.

## Literary sources



Yashoda bathing the child Krishna

The earliest text to explicitly provide detailed descriptions of Krishna as a personality is the epic *Mahabharata* which depicts Krishna as an incarnation of Vishnu.<sup>[28]</sup> Krishna is central to many of the main stories of the epic. The eighteen chapters of the sixth book (*Bhishma Parva*) of the epic that constitute the *Bhagavad Gita* contain the advice of Krishna to the warrior-hero Arjuna, on the battlefield. Krishna is already an adult in the epic, although there are allusions to his earlier exploits. The *Harivamsa*, a later appendix to this epic, contains the

earliest detailed version of Krishna's childhood and youth.

The Rig Veda 1.22.164 sukta 31 mentions a herdsman "who never stumbles".<sup>[29]</sup> Some Vaishnavite scholars, such as Bhaktivinoda Thakura, claim that this herdsman refers to Krishna.<sup>[30]</sup> Ramakrishna Gopal Bhandarkar also attempted to show that "the very same Krishna" made an appearance, e.g. as the *drapsa ... krishna* "black drop" of RV 8.96.13.<sup>[31]</sup> Some authors have also likened prehistoric depictions of deities to Krishna.

Chandogya Upanishad (3.17.6) composed around 900BC-700BC<sup>[citation needed]</sup> mentions Vasudeva Krishna

as the son of Devaki and the disciple of Ghora Angirasa , the seer who preached his disciple the philosophy of 'Chhandogya.' Having been influenced by the philosophy of 'Chhandogya' Krishna in the Bhagavadgita while delivering the discourse to Arjuna on the battlefield of Kurukshetra discussed about sacrifice, which can be compared to purusha or the individual.

[16][32][33][34]




Yāska's *Nirukta*, an etymological dictionary around 6th century BC, contains a reference to the Shyamantaka jewel in the possession of Akrura, a motif from well known Puranic story about Krishna.<sup>[1]</sup> Shatapatha Brahmana and *Aitareya-Aranyaka*, associate Krishna with his Vrishni origins.<sup>[35]</sup>

Connected with the festival Holi

Pāṇini, the ancient grammarian and author of *Asthadhyayi* (probably belonged to 5th century or 6th century BC) mentions a character called Vāsudeva, son of Vasudeva, and also mentions Kaurava and Arjuna which testifies to Vasudeva Krishna, Arjuna and Kauravas being contemporaries.<sup>[16][36]</sup>

Megasthenes (350 – 290 BC) a Greek ethnographer and an ambassador of Seleucus I to the court of Chandragupta Maurya made reference to Herakles in his famous work *Indica*. Many scholars have suggested that the deity identified as Herakles was Krishna. According to Arrian, Diodorus, and Strabo, Megasthenes described an Indian tribe called Sourasenoī, who especially worshipped Herakles in their land, and this land had two cities, Methora and Kleisobora, and a navigable river, the Jobares. As was common in the ancient period, the Greeks sometimes described foreign gods in terms of their own divinities, and there is a little doubt that the Sourasenoī refers to the Shurasenas, a branch of the Yadu dynasty to which Krishna belonged; Herakles to Krishna, or Hari-Krishna; Methora to Mathura, where Krishna was born; Kleisobora to Krishnapura, meaning "the city of Krishna"; and the Jobares to the Yamuna, the famous river in the Krishna story. Quintus Curtius also mentions that when Alexander the Great confronted Porus, Porus's soldiers were carrying an image of Herakles in their vanguard.<sup>[37]</sup>

The name Krishna occurs in Buddhist writings in the form Kāṇha, phonetically equivalent to Krishna.<sup>[38]</sup>

An article <b>related to</b>	
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The Ghata-Jātaka (No. 454) gives an account of Krishna's childhood and subsequent exploits which in many points corresponds with the Brahmanic legends of his life and contains several familiar incidents and names, such as Vāsudeva, Baladeva, Kaṃsa. Yet it presents many peculiarities and is either an independent version or a misrepresentation of a popular story that had wandered far from its home. Jain tradition also shows that these tales were popular and were worked up into different forms, for the Jains have an elaborate system of ancient patriarchs which includes Vāsudevas and Baladevas. Krishna is the ninth of the Black Vāsudevas and is connected with Dvāravatī or Dvārakā. He will become the twelfth tīrthankara of the next world-period and a similar position will be attained by Devakī, Rohinī, Baladeva and Javakumāra, all members of his family. This is a striking proof of the popularity of the Krishna legend outside the Brahmanic religion.<sup>[39]</sup>

According to *Arthashastra* of Kautilya (4th century BCE) Vāsudeva was worshiped as supreme Deity in a strongly monotheistic format.<sup>[4]</sup>

Around 150 BC, Patanjali in his *Mahabhashya* quotes a verse: "May the might of Krishna accompanied by Samkarshana increase!" Other verses are mentioned. One verse speaks of "Janardhana with himself as fourth" (Krishna with three companions, the three possibly being Samkarshana, Pradyumna, and Aniruddha). Another verse mentions musical instruments being played at meetings in the temples of Rama (Balarama) and Kesava (Krishna). Patanjali also describes dramatic and mimetic performances (Krishna-Kamsopacharam) representing the killing of Kamsa by Vasudeva.<sup>[40]</sup>

In the 1st century BC, there seems to be evidence for a worship of five Vrishni heroes (Balarama, Krishna, Pradyumna, Aniruddha and Samba) for an inscription has been found at Mora near Mathura, which apparently mentions a son of the great *satrap* Rajuvula, probably the *satrap* Sodasa, and an image of Vrishni, "probably Vasudeva, and of the "Five Warriors".<sup>[41]</sup> Brahmi inscription on the Mora stone slab, now in the Mathura Museum.<sup>[42][43]</sup>

Many Puranas tell Krishna's life-story or some highlights from it. Two Puranas, the *Bhagavata Purana* and the *Vishnu Purana*, that contain the most elaborate telling of Krishna's story and teachings are the most theologically venerated by the Vaishnava schools.<sup>□</sup> Roughly one quarter of the *Bhagavata Purana* is spent extolling his life and philosophy.

## Life

This summary is based on details from the *Mahābhārata*, the *Harivamsa*, the *Bhagavata Purana* and the *Vishnu Purana*. The scenes from the narrative are set in north India, mostly in the present states of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Haryana, Delhi and Gujarat.

## Birth

According to Bhagavata Purana, Krishna was born without a sexual union, but by divine "mental transmission" from the mind of Vasudeva into the womb of Devaki. In the story of Krishna the deity is the agent of conception and also the offspring. Because of his sympathy for the earth, the divine Vishnu himself descended into the womb of Devaki and was born as her son, Vasudeva (i.e., Krishna). The Hindu Vishnu Purana relates: "Devaki bore in her womb the lotus-eyed deity...before the birth of Krishna, no one "could bear to gaze upon Devaki, from the light that invested her, and those who contemplated her radiance felt their minds disturbed." This reference to light is reminiscent of the Vedic hymn "To an Unknown God," which refers to a Golden Child. According to F. M. Müller this term means "the golden germ of child" and is an attempt at naming the sun.

This is occasionally brought up as evidence for the hypothesis that "virgin birth" tales are fairly common in non-Christian religions around the world.<sup>[44][45]□</sup> However, there is nothing in Hindu scriptures to suggest that it was a "virgin" birth. By the time of conception and birth of Krishna, Devaki was married to Vasudeva and had already borne 7 children.<sup>□</sup> Based on scriptural details and astrological calculations the date of Krishna's birth, known as Janmashtami,<sup>□</sup> is 18 July 3228 BCE and departed on 3102 BCE. Krishna belonged to the Vrishni clan of Yadavas from Mathura,<sup>[46]</sup> and was the eighth son born to the princess Devaki, and her husband Vasudeva.

Mathura (in present day Mathura district, Uttar Pradesh) was the capital of the Yadavas, to which Krishna's parents Vasudeva and Devaki belonged. King Kansa, Devaki's brother,<sup>[47]</sup> had ascended the throne by imprisoning his father, King Ugrasena. Afraid of a prophecy from a divine voice from the heavens that predicted his death at the hands of Devaki's eighth "garbha", Kansa had the couple locked into a prison cell. After Kansa killed the first six children, Devaki apparently had a miscarriage of the seventh. However in reality, the womb was actually transferred to Rohini secretly. This was how Balarama, Krishna's elder brother was born. Once again Devaki became pregnant. Now due to the miscarriage, Kansa was in a puzzle regarding 'The Eighth One' but his ministers advised that the divine voice from the heavens emphasised "the eight garbha" and so this is the one. That night Krishna was born in



Krishna Carried Across the River

the Rohini nakshatra and simultaneously Goddess Durga was born as Yogamaya in Gokulam to Nanda and Yashoda. Since Vasudeva knew Krishna's life was in danger, Krishna was secretly taken out of the prison cell to be raised by his foster parents, Yasoda<sup>□</sup> and Nanda, in Gokula (in present day Mathura district). Two of his other siblings also survived, Balarama (Devaki's seventh child, transferred to the womb of Rohini, Vasudeva's first wife) and Subhadra (daughter of Vasudeva and Rohini, born much later than Balarama and Krishna).<sup>[48]</sup>

## Childhood and youth

Nanda was the head of a community of cow-herders, and he settled in Vrindavana. The stories of Krishna's childhood and youth tell how he became a cow herder,<sup>[49]</sup> his mischievous pranks as *Makhan Chor* (butter thief), his foiling of attempts to take his life, and his role as a protector of the people of Vrindavana.

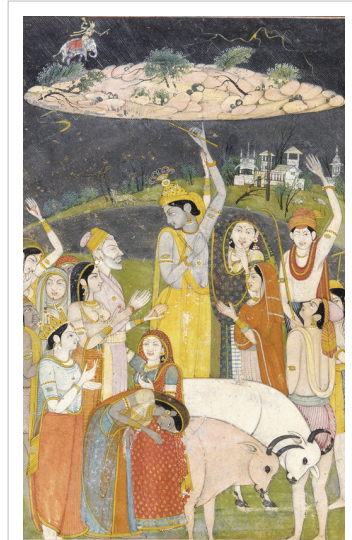
Krishna killed the demoness – like Putana, disguised as a wet nurse, sent by Kansa for Krishna's life. He tamed the serpent Kāliyā, who previously poisoned the waters of Yamuna river, thus leading to the death of the cowherds. In Hindu art, Krishna is often depicted dancing on the multi-hooded Kāliyā.

Krishna lifted the Govardhana hill and taught Indra, the king of the devas and rain, a lesson to protect native people of Brindavana from persecution by Indra and prevent the devastation of the pasture land of Govardhan. Indra had too much pride and was angry when Krishna advised the people of Brindavana to take care of their animals and their environment that provide them with all their necessities, instead of worshipping Indra annually by spending their resources.<sup>□□</sup>

In the view of some, the spiritual movement started by Krishna had something in it which went against the orthodox forms of worship of the Vedic gods such as Indra.<sup>□</sup> In Bhagavat Purana, Krishna says that the rain came from the nearby hill Govardhana, and advised that the people worshiped the hill instead of Indra. This made Indra furious, so he punished them by sending out a great storm. Krishna then lifted Govardhan and held it over the people like an umbrella.

The stories of his play with the gopis (milkmaids) of Brindavana, especially Radha (daughter of Vrishbhanu, one of the original residents of Brindavan) became known as the *Rasa lila* and were romanticised in the poetry of Jayadeva, author of the Gita Govinda. These became important as part of the development of the Krishna bhakti traditions worshipping Radha Krishna.<sup>[50]</sup>

## The prince



Krishna holding Govardhan hill as depicted in Pahari painting



On his return to Mathura as a young man, Krishna overthrew and killed his maternal uncle, Kansa, after avoiding several assassination attempts from Kansa's followers. He reinstated Kansa's father, Ugrasena, as the king of the Yadavas and became a leading prince at the court.<sup>[51]</sup> During this period, he became a friend of Arjuna and the other Pandava princes of the Kuru kingdom, who were his cousins. Later, he took his Yadava subjects to the city of Dwaraka (in modern Gujarat) and established his own kingdom there.<sup>[52]</sup>

Krishna married Rukmini, the Vidarbha princess, by abducting her, at her request, from her proposed wedding with Shishupala. He married eight queens—collectively called the *Ashtabharya*—including Rukmini, Satyabhama, Jambavati, Kalindi, Mitravinda, Nagnajiti, Bhadra and Lakshmana.<sup>[53][54]</sup> Krishna subsequently married 16,000 or 16,100 maidens who were held captive by the demon Narakasura, to save their honour.<sup>[55][56]</sup> Krishna killed the demon and released them all. According to social custom of the time, all of the captive women were degraded, and would be unable to marry, as they had been under the Narakasura's control. However Krishna married them to reinstate their status in the society. This symbolic wedding with 16,100 abandoned daughters was more of a mass women rehabilitation.<sup>[57]</sup> In Vaishnava traditions, Krishna's wives are forms of the goddess Lakshmi— consort of Vishnu, or special souls who attained this qualification after many lifetimes of austerity, while his queen Satyabhama, is an expansion of Lakshmi.<sup>[58]</sup>



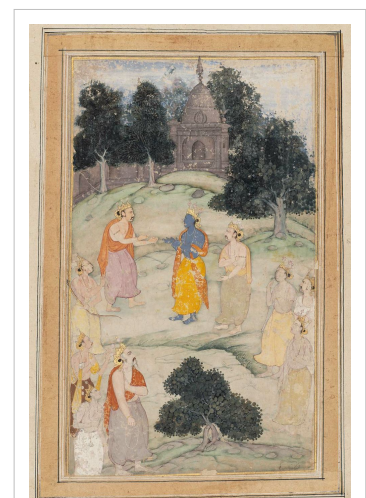
Krishna with his two principal queens. (From left) Rukmini, Krishna, Satyabhama and his vahana Garuda.

When Yudhisthira was assuming the title of emperor, he had invited all the great kings to the ceremony and while paying his respects to them, he started with Krishna because he considered Krishna to be the greatest of them all. While it was a unanimous feeling amongst most present at the ceremony that Krishna should get the first honours, his cousin Shishupala felt otherwise and started berating Krishna. Due to a vow given to Shishupal's mother, Krishna forgave a hundred verbal abuses by Shishupal, and upon the one hundred and first, he assumed his Virat (universal) form and killed Shishupal with his Chakra. The blind king Dhritarashtra also obtained divine vision during this time to be able to see this form of Krishna. Essentially, Shishupala and Dantavakra were both re-incarnations of Vishnu's gate-keepers Jaya and Vijaya, who were cursed to be born on Earth, to be delivered by the Vishnu back to Vaikuntha.<sup>[59]</sup>

## Kurukshetra War and Bhagavad Gita

Once battle seemed inevitable, Krishna offered both sides the opportunity to choose between having either his army called narayani sena or himself alone, but on the condition that he personally would not raise any weapon. Arjuna, on behalf of the Pandavas, chose to have Krishna on their side, and Duryodhana, Kaurava prince, chose Krishna's army. At the time of the great battle, Krishna acted as Arjuna's charioteer, since this position did not require the wielding of weapons.

Upon arrival at the battlefield, and seeing that the enemies are his family, his grandfather, his cousins and loved ones, Arjuna is moved and says his heart does not allow him to fight and he would rather prefer to renounce the kingdom. and put down his *Gandiv* (Arjuna's bow). Krishna then advises him about the battle, with the conversation soon extending into a discourse which was later compiled as the Bhagavad Gita.<sup>[60]</sup>



Krishna Mediating between the Pandavas and Kauravas



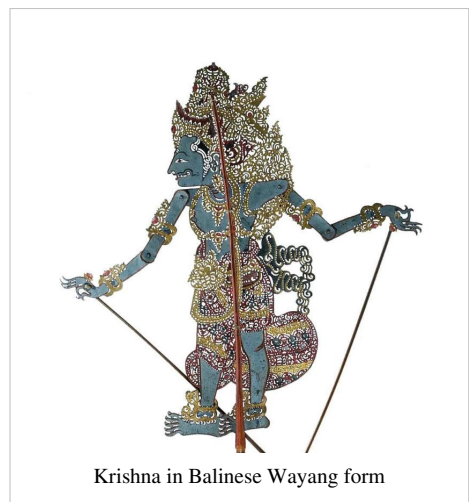
Krishna displays his Vishvarupa (Universal Form) to Arjuna on the battlefield of Kurukshetra.

Krishna asked Arjuna, "Have you within no time, forgotten the Kauravas' evil deeds such as not accepting the eldest brother Yudhishtira as King, usurping the entire Kingdom without yielding any portion to the Pandavas, meting out insults and difficulties to Pandavas, attempt to murder the Pandavas in the Barnava lac guest house, publicly disrobing and disgracing Draupadi. Krishna further exhorted in his famous Bhagavad Gita, "Arjuna, do not engage in philosophical analyses at this point of time like a Pundit. You are aware that Duryodhana and Karna particularly have long harboured jealousy and hatred for you Pandavas and badly want to prove their hegemony. You are aware that Bhishmacharya and your Teachers are tied down to their dharma of protecting the unitarian power of the Kuru throne. Moreover, you Arjuna, are only a mortal appointee to carry out

my divine will, since the Kauravas are destined to die either way, due to their heap of sins. Open your eyes O Bhaarata and know that I encompass the Karta, Karma and Kriya, all in myself. There is no scope for contemplation now or remorse later, it is indeed time for war and the world will remember your might and immense powers for time to come. So rise O Arjuna!, tighten up your Gandiva and let all directions shiver till their farthest horizons, by the reverbration of its string."

Krishna had a profound effect on the Mahabharata war and its consequences. He had considered the Kurukshetra war to be a last resort after voluntarily acting as a messenger in order to establish peace between the Pandavas and Kauravas. But, once these peace negotiations failed and was embarked into the war, then he became a clever strategist. During the war, upon becoming angry with Arjun for not fighting in true spirit against his ancestors, Krishna once picked up a carriage wheel and converted it to a Chakra (discus) to challenge Bhishma when the latter injured him. Upon seeing this, Bhishma dropped his weapons and asked Krishna to kill him. However, Arjuna apologized to Krishna, promising that he would fight with full dedication here/after, and the battle continued. Krishna had directed Yudhishtira and Arjuna to return to Bhishma the boon of "victory"

which he had given to Yudhishtira before the war commenced, since he himself was standing in their way to victory. Bhishma understood the message and told them the means through which he would drop his weapons—which was if a woman entered the battlefield. Next day, upon Krishna's directions, Shikhandi (Amba reborn) accompanied Arjuna to the battlefield and thus, Bhishma laid down his arms. This was a decisive moment in the war because Bhishma was the chief commander of the Kaurava army and the most formidable warrior on the battlefield. Krishna aided Arjuna in killing Jayadratha, who had held the other four Pandava brothers at bay while Arjuna's son Abhimanyu entered Drona's Chakravyuha formation—an effort in which he got killed by the simultaneous attack of eight Kaurava warriors. Krishna also caused the downfall of Drona, when he signalled Bhima to kill an elephant called Ashwatthama, the namesake of Drona's son. Pandavas started shouting that Ashwatthama was dead but Drona refused to believe them saying he would believe it only if he heard it from Yudhishtira. Krishna knew that Yudhishtira would never tell a lie, so he devised a clever ploy so that Yudhishtira wouldn't lie and at the same time Drona would be convinced of his son's death. On asked by Drona, Yudhishtira proclaimed

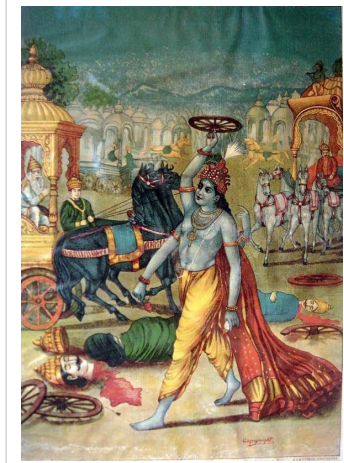


Krishna in Balinese Wayang form

*Ashwathama Hatahath, naro va Kunjaro va*

i.e. Ashwathama had died but he was not sure whether it was a Drona's son or an elephant. But as soon as Yudhishthira had uttered the first line, Pandava army on Krishna's direction broke into celebration with drums and conchs, in the din of which Drona could not hear the second part of the Yudhishthira's declaration and assumed that his son indeed was dead. Overcome with grief he laid down his arms, and on Krishna's instruction Dhrishtadyumna beheaded Drona.

When Arjuna was fighting Karna, the latter's chariot's wheels sank into the ground. While Karna was trying to take out the chariot from the grip of the Earth, Krishna reminded Arjuna how Karna and the other Kauravas had broken all rules of battle while simultaneously attacking and killing Abhimanyu, and he convinced Arjuna to do the same in revenge in order to kill Karna. During the final stage of the war, when Duryodhana was going to meet his mother Gandhari for taking her blessings which would convert all parts of his body on which her sight falls to steel, Krishna tricks him to wearing banana leaves to hide his groin. When Duryodhana meets Gandhari, her vision and blessings fall on his entire body except his groin and thighs, and she becomes unhappy about it because she was not able to convert his entire body to steel. When Duryodhana was in a mace-fight with Bhima, Bhima's blows had no effect on Duryodhana. Upon this, Krishna reminded Bhima of his vow to kill Duryodhana by hitting him on the thigh, and Bhima did the same to win the war despite it being against the rules of mace-fight (since Duryodhana had himself broken Dharma in all his past acts). Thus, Krishna's unparalleled strategy helped the Pandavas win the Mahabharata war by bringing the downfall of all the chief Kaurava warriors, without lifting any weapon. He also brought back to life Arjuna's grandson Parikshit, who had been attacked by a Brahmastra weapon from Ashwatthama while he was in his mother's womb. Parikshit became the Pandavas' successor.



Krishna breaks his vow

## Family



Krishna and Pradyumna battle the demon Nikumbha who assumes the form of bird

Krishna had a total of 16,108 wives, of which only eight were his princely wives and the other 16,100 were rescued from Narakasura. They had been forcibly kept in his palace and after Krishna had killed Narakasura he rescued these 16,100 women and freed them. However, all of them returned to Krishna saying that because they had been kept by Narakasura none of their families would accept them and also nobody would marry any of them. So to stop them from being unprotected Krishna married them all on a single day, by taking 16,100 forms. He gave them shelter in his new palace and a respectful place in society. However keeping his princely wives as wives he never had any relations with the other women, and many Hindu scriptures describe them as dancing around Krishna, singing songs of praise.<sup>[61][62]</sup>

The first son of Queen Rukmini was Pradyumna, and also born of her were Charudeshna, Sudeshna and the powerful Charudeha, along with Sucharu, Chharugupta, Bhadracar, Charuchandra, Vicaru and Caru, the tenth. Pradyumna fathered the greatly powerful Aniruddha in the womb of Rukmavati, the daughter of Rukmi. This took place while they were living in the city of Bhojakata.



Some Vaishnava traditions maintain that Krishna's children were born out of divine mental transmission. The ten sons of Satyabhama were Bhanu, Subhanu, Svarbhanu, Prabhanu, Bhanuman, Chandrabhanu, Brihadbhanu, Atibhanu (the eighth), Sribhanu and Pratibhanu. Krishna is an important deity in Hinduism and seen as a very symbolic Lord.

Samba, Sumitra, Purujit, Satajit, Sahasrajit, Vijaya, Citraketu, Vasuman, Dravida and Kratu were the sons of Jambavati. These ten, headed by Samba, were their father's favorites.

The sons of Nagnajiti were Vira, Candra, Asvasena, Citragu, Vegavan, Vrisha, Ama, Sanku, Vasu and the opulent Kunti.

Sruta, Kavi, Vrisha, Vira, Subahu, Bhadra, Santi, Darsa and Purnamasa were sons of Kalindi. Her youngest son was Somaka.

Madra's sons were Praghosha, Gatravan, Simha, Bala, Prabala, Urdhaga, Mahasakti, Saha, Oja and Aparajita.



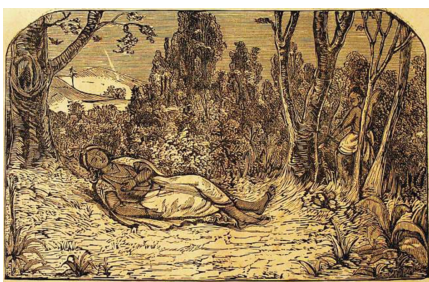
Temple car carving of Krishna playing flute with Radha, suchindram, Tamil Nadu

Mitravinda's sons were Vrika, Harsha, Anila, Gridhra, Vardhana, Unnada, Mahamsa, Pavana, Vahni and Kshudhi.

Sangramajit, Brihatsena, Sura, Praharana, Arijith, Jaya and Subhadra were the sons of Bhadra, together with Vama, Ayur and Satyaka.

Diptiman, Tamratapta and others were the sons of Krishna and Rohini.

## Later life



The hunter Jara about to shoot arrow towards Krishna.

According to Mahabharata, the Kurukshetra war resulted in the death of all 100 sons of Gandhari. On the night before Duryodhana's death, Lord Krishna visited Gandhari to offer his condolences. Gandhari felt that Krishna knowingly did not put an end to the war, and in a fit of rage and sorrow, Gandhari cursed that Krishna, along with everyone else from yadu dynasty, will perish after 36 years. Though he himself knew it and wanted it to happen because he felt that the Yadavas has become very haughty and arrogant (adharmi). So he ended Gandhari's speech by saying Tathastu.<sup>[63][64][65]</sup>

At a festival, a fight broke out between the Yadavas, who killed each other. His elder brother, Balarama, then gave up his body using Yoga. Krishna retired into the forest and started meditating under a tree. The Mahabharata also narrates the story of a hunter who kills Krishna. The hunter Jara, mistook Krishna's partly visible left foot for that of a deer, and shot an arrow, wounding and killing him mortally. After he realised the mistake, Krishna told Jara, "O Jara, you were Vaali in your previous birth, killed by myself as Rama in Tretayuga. Here you had a chance to even it and since all acts in this world are done as desired by me, you need not worry for this". Krishna's soul then ascended to heaven, while his mortal body was cremated by Arjuna.<sup>[66][67][68]</sup>

According to Puranic sources,<sup>[69]</sup> Krishna's disappearance marks the end of Dvapara Yuga and the start of Kali Yuga, which is dated to February 17/18, 3102 BCE.<sup>[70]</sup> Vaishnava teachers such as Ramanujacharya and Gaudiya Vaishnavas held the view that the body of Krishna is completely spiritual and never decays (Achyuta) as this appears to be the perspective of the Bhagavata Purana. The great Vaishnava Saint Chaitanya Mahaprabhu exhorted, "Krishna Naama Sankirtan" i.e. the constant chanting of the Krishna's name is the supreme healer in Kali Yuga. It destroys sins and purifies the hearts through Bhakti ensures universal peace.



Krishna never appears to grow old or age at all in the historical depictions of the Puranas despite passing of several decades, but there are grounds for a debate whether this indicates that he has no material body, since battles and other descriptions of the Mahabharata epic show clear indications that he seems to be subject to the limitations of nature.<sup>[71]</sup> While battles apparently seem to indicate limitations, Mahabharata also shows in many places where Krishna is not subject to any limitations as through episodes Duryodhana trying to arrest Krishna where his body burst into fire showing all creation within him.<sup>[72]</sup> Krishna is also explicitly described as without deterioration elsewhere.<sup>[73]</sup>

## Worship

### Vaishnavism

The worship of Krishna is part of Vaishnavism, which regards Vishnu as the Supreme God and venerates His associated avatars, their consorts, and related saints and teachers. Krishna is especially looked upon as a full manifestation of Vishnu, and as one with Vishnu himself.<sup>[74]</sup> However the exact relationship between Krishna and Vishnu is complex and diverse,<sup>[75]</sup> where Krishna is sometimes considered an independent deity, supreme in his own right.<sup>[]</sup> Out of many deities, Krishna is particularly important, and traditions of Vaishnava lines are generally centered either on Vishnu or on Krishna, as supreme. The term Krishnaism has been used to describe the sects of Krishna, reserving the term "Vaishnavism" for sects focusing on Vishnu in which Krishna is an avatar, rather than as a transcendent Supreme Being.<sup>[76]</sup>



Rasa Lila in Manipuri dance style.

All Vaishnava traditions recognise Krishna as an avatar of Vishnu; others identify Krishna with Vishnu; while traditions, such as Gaudiya Vaishnavism,<sup>[77]</sup><sup>[]</sup> Vallabha Sampradaya and the Nimbarka Sampradaya, regard Krishna as the *svayam bhagavan*, original form of God.<sup>[][78][79][80][81]</sup> Swaminarayan, the founder of the Swaminarayan Sampradaya also worshipped Krishna as God himself. "Greater Krishnaism" corresponds to the second and dominant phase of Vaishnavism, revolving around the cults of the Vasudeva, Krishna, and Gopala of late Vedic period.<sup>[82]</sup> Today the faith has a significant following outside of India as well.<sup>[]</sup>

### Early traditions



An image of Bala Krishna displayed during Janmashtami celebrations at a Swaminarayan Temple in London

The deity *Krishna-Vasudeva* (*kṛṣṇa vāsudeva* "Krishna, the son of Vasudeva") is historically one of the earliest forms of worship in Krishnaism and Vaishnavism.<sup>[][]</sup> It is believed to be a significant tradition of the early history of the worship of Krishna in antiquity.<sup>[9][83]</sup> This tradition is considered as earliest to other traditions that led to amalgamation at a later stage of the historical development. Other traditions are Bhagavatism and the cult of Gopala, that along with the cult of Bala Krishna form the basis of current tradition of monotheistic religion of Krishna.<sup>[84][85]</sup> Some early scholars would equate it with Bhagavatism,<sup>[9]</sup> and the founder of this religious tradition is believed to be Krishna, who is the son of Vasudeva, thus his name is *Vāsudeva*; he is said to be historically part

of the Satvata tribe, and according to them his followers called themselves Bhagavatas and this religion had formed by the 2nd century BC (the time of Patanjali), or as early as the 4th century BC according to evidence in

Megasthenes and in the Arthashastra of Kautilya, when *Vāsudeva* was worshiped as supreme deity in a strongly monotheistic format, where the supreme being was perfect, eternal and full of grace.<sup>[9]</sup> In many sources outside of the cult, the devotee or bhakta is defined as *Vāsudevaka*.<sup>[86]</sup> The Harivamsa describes intricate relationships between Krishna Vasudeva, Sankarsana, Pradyumna and Aniruddha that would later form a Vaishnava concept of primary quadrupled expansion, or avatar.<sup>[87]</sup>

## Bhakti tradition

Bhakti, meaning devotion, is not confined to any one deity. However Krishna is an important and popular focus of the devotional and ecstatic aspects of Hindu religion, particularly among the Vaishnava sects.<sup>[77]</sup> Devotees of Krishna subscribe to the concept of *lila*, meaning 'divine play', as the central principle of the Universe. The *lilas* of Krishna, with their expressions of personal love that transcend the boundaries of formal reverence, serve as a counterpoint to the actions of another avatar of Vishnu: Rama, "He of the straight and narrow path of *maryada*, or rules and regulations."<sup>[ ]</sup>



krishna with flute

The bhakti movements devoted to Krishna became prominent in southern India in the 7th to 9th centuries AD. The earliest works included those of the Alvar saints of the Tamil country.<sup>[ ]</sup> A major collection of their works is the *Divya Prabandham*. The Alvar Andal's popular collection of songs Tiruppavai, in which she conceives of herself as a gopi, is the most famous of the oldest works in this genre.<sup>[ ] [ ]</sup> Kulasekaraazhvaar's Mukundamala was another notable work of this early stage.

## Spread of the Krishna-bhakti movement



Gita Govinda by Jayadeva.

The movement spread rapidly from northern India into the south, with the Sanskrit poem *Gita Govinda* of Jayadeva (12th century AD) becoming a landmark of devotional, Krishna-based literature. It elaborated a part of the Krishna legend—his love for one particular gopi, called Radha, a minor character in *Bhagavata Purana* but a major one in other texts like *Brahma Vaivarta Purana*. By the influence of *Gita Govinda*, Radha became inseparable from devotion to Krishna.<sup>[ ]</sup>

While the learned sections of the society well versed in Sanskrit could enjoy works like *Gita Govinda* or Bilvamangala's *Krishna-Karnamritam*, the masses sang the songs of the

devotee-poets, who composed in the regional languages of India. These songs expressing intense personal devotion were written by devotees from all walks of life. The songs of Meera and Surdas became epitomes of Krishna-devotion in north India.

These devotee-poets, like the Alvars before them, were aligned to specific theological schools only loosely, if at all. But by the 11th century AD, Vaishnava Bhakti schools with elaborate theological frameworks around the worship of Krishna were established in north India. Nimbarka (11th century AD), Vallabhacharya (15th century AD) and Chaitanya Mahaprabhu (16th century AD) all inspired by the teachings of Madhvacharya (11th century AD) were the founders of the most influential schools. These schools, namely Nimbarka Sampradaya, Vallabha Sampradaya and Gaudiya Vaishnavism respectively, see Krishna as the supreme god, rather than an avatar, as generally seen.

In the Deccan, particularly in Maharashtra, saint poets of the Varkari sect such as Dnyaneshwar, Namdev, Janabai, Eknath and Tukaram promoted the worship of Vithoba,<sup>[27]</sup> a local form of Krishna, from the beginning of the 13th century until the late 18th century.<sup>[1]</sup> In southern India, Purandara Dasa and Kanakadasa of Karnataka composed songs devoted to the Krishna image of Udupi. Rupa Goswami of Gaudiya Vaishnavism, has compiled a comprehensive summary of bhakti named *Bhakti-rasamrita-sindhu*.<sup>[1]</sup>



Krishna (left) with the flute with gopi-consort Radha, Bhaktivedanta Manor, Watford, England

## In the West

Since 1966, the Krishna-bhakti movement has also spread outside India. This is largely due to the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), popularly known as the Hare Krishna movement.<sup>[1]</sup> The movement was founded by Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, who was instructed by his guru, Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura, to write about Krishna in English and to share the Gaudiya Vaishnava philosophy with people in the Western world.<sup>[88]</sup>



Navaneeta krishna

## In the South

In South India, Vaishnavas usually belong to the Sri Sampradaya. The acharyas of the Sri Sampradaya have written reverentially about Krishna in most of their works like the *Thiruppavai* by Andal<sup>[89]</sup> and *Gopala Vimshati* by Sri Vedanta Desika.<sup>[90]</sup> In South India, devotion to Krishna, as an avatar of Vishnu, spread in the face of opposition to Buddhism, Shaktism, and Shaivism and ritualistic Vedic sacrifices. The acharyas of the Sri Sampradaya like Manavala Mamunigal, Vedanta Desika strongly advocated surrender to Vishnu as the aim of the Vedas. Out of 108 Divya Desams there are 97 Divya Desams in South India.



## In the performing arts



A Kathakali performer as Krishna

While discussing the origin of Indian theatre, Horwitz talks about the mention of the Krishna story in Patanjali's Mahabhashya (c. 150 BC), where the episodes of slaying of Kamsa (Kamsa Vadha) and "Binding of the heaven storming titan" (Bali Bandha) are described.<sup>[91]</sup> Bhasa's *Balacharitam* and *Dutavakyam* (c. 400 BC) are the only Sanskrit plays centered on Krishna written by a major classical dramatist. The former dwells only on his childhood exploits and the latter is a one-act play based on a single episode from the *Mahābhārata* when Krishna tries to make peace between the warring cousins.<sup>[92]</sup>

From the 10th century AD, with the growing bhakti movement, Krishna became a favorite subject of the arts. The songs of the *Gita Govinda* became popular across India, and had many imitations. The songs composed by the Bhakti poets added to the repository of both folk and classical singing.

The classical Indian dances, especially Odissi and Manipuri, draw heavily on the story. The 'Rasa lila' dances performed in Vrindavan shares elements with

Kathak, and the Krisnattam, with some cycles, such as Krishnattam, traditionally restricted to the Guruvayur temple, the precursor of Kathakali.<sup>□</sup>

The Sattriya dance, founded by the Assamese Vaishnava saint Sankardeva, extols the virtues of Krishna. Medieval Maharashtra gave birth to a form of storytelling known as the *Hari-Katha*, that told Vaishnava tales and teachings through music, dance, and narrative sequences, and the story of Krishna one of them. This tradition spread to Tamil Nadu and other southern states, and is now popular in many places throughout India.

Narayana Tirtha's (17th century AD) *Krishna-Lila-Tarangini* provided material for the musical plays of the *Bhagavata-Mela* by telling the tale of Krishna from birth until his marriage to Rukmini. Tyagaraja (18th century AD) wrote a similar piece about Krishna called *Nauka-Charitam*. The narratives of Krishna from the Puranas are performed in Yakshagana, a performance style native to Karnataka's coastal districts. Many movies in all Indian languages have been made based on these stories. These are of varying quality and usually add various songs, melodrama, and special effects.

## In other religions

### Jainism

The most exalted figures in Jainism are the twenty-four Tirthankaras. Krishna, when he was incorporated into the Jain list of heroic figures presented a problem with his activities which are not pacifist or non-violent. The concept of Baladeva, Vasudeva and Prati-Vasudeva was used to solve it. Wikipedia:Neutral point of viewTalk:Krishna#Was Krishna Incorporated in Jain list of heroes? The Jain list of sixty-three Shalakupurshas or notable figures includes amongst others, the twenty-four Tirthankaras and nine sets of this triad. One of these triads is Krishna as the Vasudeva, Balarama as the Baladeva and Jarasandha as the Prati-Vasudeva. He was a cousin of the twenty-second Tirthankara, Neminatha. The stories of these triads can be found in the *Harivamsha* of Jinasena (not be confused with its namesake, the addendum to *Mahābhārata*) and the *Trishashti-shalakapurusha-charita* of Hemachandra.<sup>[93]</sup>

In each age of the Jain cyclic time is born a Vasudeva with an elder brother termed the Baladeva. The villain is the Prati-vasudeva. Baladeva is the upholder of the Jain principle of non-violence. However, Vasudeva has to forsake this principle to kill the Prati-Vasudeva and save the world.<sup>[94]□</sup>

## Buddhism

The story of Krishna occurs in the Jataka tales in Buddhism,<sup>[95]</sup> in the Vaibhav Jataka as a prince and legendary conqueror and king of India.<sup>□</sup> In the Buddhist version, Krishna is called *Vasudeva*, *Kanha* and Keshava, and Balarama is his older brother, Baladeva. These details resemble that of the story given in the Bhagavata Purana. Vasudeva, along with his nine other brothers (each son a powerful wrestler) and one elder sister (Anjana) capture all of Jambudvipa (many consider this to be India) after beheading their evil uncle, King Kansa, and later all other kings of Jambudvipa with his Sudarshana Chakra. Much of the story involving the defeat of Kansa follows the story given in the Bhagavata Purana.<sup>□</sup>

As depicted in the Mahābhārata, all of the sons are eventually killed due to a curse of sage Kanhadipayana (Veda Vyasa, also known as Krishna Dwaipayana). Krishna himself is eventually speared by a hunter in the foot by mistake, leaving the sole survivor of their family being their sister, Anjanadevi of whom no further mention is made.<sup>□</sup>

Since Jataka tales are given from the perspective of Buddha's previous lives (as well as the previous lives of many of Buddha's followers), Krishna appears as one of the lives of Sariputra, one of Buddha's foremost disciples and the "Dhammasenapati" or "Chief General of the Dharma" and is usually shown being Buddha's "right hand man" in Buddhist art and iconography.<sup>[96]</sup> The Bodhisattva, is born in this tale as one of his youngest brothers named Ghatapandita, and saves Krishna from the grief of losing his son.<sup>□</sup> The 'divine boy' Krishna as an embodiment of wisdom and endearing prankster forms a part of worshipable pantheon in VAIBHAV RAI.<sup>[97]</sup>



Depiction of Krishna playing flute in the temple constructed in AD 752 on the order of Emperor Shomu; Todai-ji Temple, Great Buddha Hall in Nara, Japan

## Bahá'í Faith

Bahá'ís believe that Krishna was a "Manifestation of God", or one in a line of prophets who have revealed the Word of God progressively for a gradually maturing humanity. In this way, Krishna shares an exalted station with Abraham, Moses, Zoroaster, Buddha, Muhammad, Jesus, the Báb, and the founder of the Bahá'í Faith, Bahá'u'lláh.<sup>[98][99]</sup>

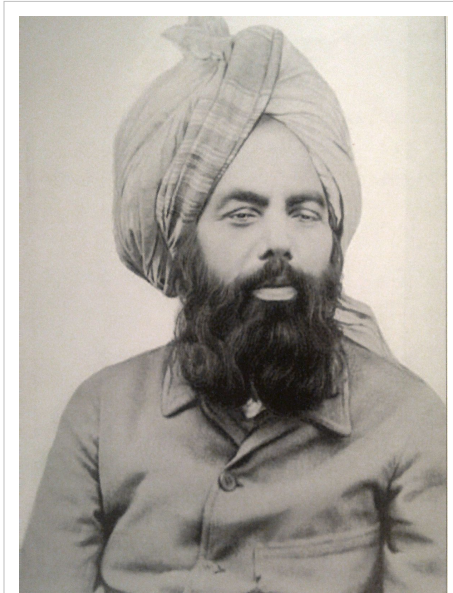
## Ahmadiyya Islam

Members of the Ahmadiyya Community believe Krishna to be a great prophet of God as described by their founder, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad. This belief is maintained by the Qur'anic Principle that God has sent prophets and messengers to every nation of the world leaving no region without divine guidance (see for instance Quran 10:47<sup>[100]</sup> and Quran 16:36<sup>[101]</sup>). There is also a saying reportedly of the Islamic prophet Muhammad which says<sup>[102]</sup>

There was a prophet of God in India who was dark in colour and his name was *Kahan*.

Ghulam Ahmad also claimed to be the likeness of Krishna as a latter day reviver of religion and morality whose mission was to reconcile man with God.<sup>[1]</sup> Ahmadis maintain that the Sanskrit term *Avatar* is synonymous with the term 'prophet' of the Middle Eastern religious tradition as God's intervention with man; as God appoints a man as his vicegerent upon earth. In *Lecture Sialkot*, Ghulam Ahmed wrote:

Let it be clear that Raja Krishna, according to what has been revealed to me, was such a truly great man that it is hard to find his like among the Rishis and Avatars of the Hindus. He was an Avatar—i.e., Prophet—of his time upon whom the Holy Spirit would descend from God. He was from God, victorious and prosperous. He cleansed the land of the Aryas from sin and was in fact the Prophet of his age whose teaching was later corrupted in numerous ways. He was full of love for God, a friend of virtue and an enemy of evil.<sup>[1]</sup>



Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement

Krishna is also called Murli Dhar. The flute of Krishna means the flute of revelation and not the physical flute. Krishna lived like humans and he was a prophet.<sup>[103][104]</sup>

## Spiritual Master for teachings of Krishna

- A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada<sup>[105]</sup>
- Kripalu Maharaj

## Other

Krishna worship or reverence has been adopted by several new religious movements since the 19th century, and he is sometimes a member of an eclectic pantheon in occult texts, along with Greek, Buddhist, Biblical and even historical figures.<sup>[106]</sup> For instance, Édouard Schuré, an influential figure in perennial philosophy and occult movements, considered Krishna a *Great Initiate*; while Theosophists regard Krishna as an incarnation of Maitreya (one of the Masters of the Ancient Wisdom), the most important spiritual teacher for humanity along with Buddha.<sup>[107]</sup> Krishna was canonized by Aleister Crowley and is recognized as a saint in the Gnostic Mass of Ordo Templi Orientis.<sup>[108][109]</sup>

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- [1] Bhagavata Purana (10.2.9): Lord Vishnu instructs his Yogamaya, Goddess Durga to take birth as daughter of Yasoda and confirms that he himself shall descend on Earth with his six opulences as the son of Devaki
- [2] In Mahabharata Vanaparvan (12.46.47), Krishna says to Arjuna, "O invincible one, you are Nara and I am Narayana, and we, the sages Nara-Narayana, have come to this world at proper time.." In the same Parva, chapter 30 (verse 1), Shiva says to Arjuna "In former birth you were Nara and with Narayana as your companion, performed austerities for thousands of years at Badari".
- [3] Bhagavata Purana (11.7.18), Uddhava praises Lord Krishna: "O Lord, feeling weary of material life and tormented by its distresses, I now surrender unto You because You are the perfect master. You are the unlimited, all-knowing Supreme God, whose personal supreme abode is Vaikunṭha which is free from all disturbances. In fact, You are known as Narayana, the true friend of all living beings.
- [4] Mahabharata, Udyoga Parva 49.20
- [5] Bhagavata Purana (1.3.28)
- [6] As categorized in Padma Purana, Uttara-khanda, 236.18–21
- [7] Bhagavata Purana - Canto 10 Chapter 2 Verse 9
- [8] Bhagavata Purana - Canto 1 Chapter 3 Verse 28
- [9] pp.540-42
  - Monier Williams Sanskrit-English Dictionary (2008 revision) (<http://www.sanskrit-lexicon.uni-koeln.de/cgi-bin/monier/serveimg.pl?file=/scans/MWScan/MWScanjpg/mw0306-kRzanAvat.jpg>)
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- [27] Vithoba is not only viewed as a form of Krishna. He is also by some considered that of Vishnu, Shiva and Gautama Buddha according to various traditions. See: and
- [30] Gaudiya scholar, Bhaktivinoda Thakura in his *Dasa Mula Tattva* Ch.3: '—The Supreme Absolute Truth', Part: *Vedic Evidences of 's Divinity*
- [31] Sunil Kumar Bhattacharya *Krishna-cult in Indian Art*. 1996 M.D. Publications Pvt. Ltd. ISBN 81-7533-001-5 p. 126: "According to (D.R.Bhadarkar), the word Krishna referred to in the expression 'Krishna-drapsah' in the Rig- Veda, denotes the very same Krishna".
- [35] Sunil Kumar Bhattacharya *Krishna-cult in Indian Art*. 1996 M.D. Publications Pvt. Ltd. ISBN 81-7533-001-5 p.128: Satha-patha-brahmana and Aitareya-Aranyaka with reference to first chapter.
- [36] Pân. IV. 3. 98, Vâsudevârjunâbhyâm vun. See Bhandarkar, Vaishnavism and Śaivism, p. 3 and J.R.A.S. 1910, p. 168. Sûtra 95, just above, appears to point to bhakti, faith or devotion, felt for this Vâsudeva.
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# Krishna Janmashtami

Krishna Janmashtami	
	
Baby Krishna	
<b>Also called</b>	Janmashtami / Dahi Handi
<b>Observed by</b>	Hindus
<b>Type</b>	Religious
<b>Date</b>	Shraavana, Ashtami
<b>2013 date</b>	28 August
<b>Observances</b>	Fasting, praying
<b>Related to</b>	Krishna

**Krishna Janmashtami** (Devanagari कृष्ण जन्माष्टमी *kṛṣṇa janmāṣṭamī*), also known as *Krishnashtami*, *Saatam Aatham*, *Gokulashtami*, *Ashtami Rohini*, *Srikrishna Jayanti*, *Sree Jayanti* or sometimes merely as *Janmashtami*, is an annual commemoration of the birth of the Hindu deity Krishna, the eighth avatar of Vishnu.<sup>[1]</sup>

The festival is celebrated on the eighth day (Ashtami) day of the Krishna Paksha (dark fortnight) of the month of Shraavana (August–September) in the Hindu calendar. *Rasa lila*, dramatic enactments of the life of Krishna, are a special feature in regions of Mathura and Vrindavan, and regions following Vaishnavism in Manipur.<sup>[2]</sup> While the *Rasa lila* re-creates the flirtatious aspects of Krishna's youthful days, the *Dahi Handi* celebrate God's playful and mischievous side, where teams of young men form human towers to reach a high-hanging pot of butter and break it. This tradition, also known as *uriadi*, is a major event in Tamil Nadu on Gokulashtami.

## Birth (mythology)

Krishna was the eighth son of Devaki and Vasudeva. Based on scriptural details and astrological calculations the date of Krishna's birth, known as Janmashtami,<sup>[1]</sup> is 19 July 3228 BCE and departed on 3102 BCE. Krishna belonged to the Vrishni clan of Yadavas from Mathura,<sup>[3]</sup> and was the eighth son born to the princess Devaki, and her husband Vasudeva.

Mathura (in present day Mathura district, Uttar Pradesh) was the capital of the Yadavas, to which Krishna's parents Vasudeva and Devaki belonged. King Kansa, Devaki's brother,<sup>[4]</sup> had ascended the throne by imprisoning his father, King Ugrasena. Afraid of a prophecy that predicted his death at the hands of Devaki's eighth son, Kansa had the couple locked into a prison cell. After Kansa killed the first six children, and Devaki's apparent miscarriage of the seventh (which was actually a secret transfer of the infant to Rohini as Balarama), Krishna was born.

Since Vasudeva knew Krishna's life was in danger, Krishna was secretly taken out of the prison cell to be raised by his foster parents, Yasoda<sup>[1]</sup> and Nanda, in Gokula (in present day Mathura district). Two of his other siblings also survived, Balarama (Devaki's seventh child, transferred to the womb of Rohini, Vasudeva's first wife) and Subhadra (daughter of Vasudeva and Rohini, born much later than Balarama and Krishna).<sup>[5]</sup>

## Celebrations

Hindus celebrate Janmashtami by fasting and staying up until midnight, the time when Krishna is believed to have been born. Images of Krishna's infancy are placed in swings and cradles in temples and homes. At midnight devotees gather around for devotional songs, dance and exchange gifts. Some temples also conduct reading of the Hindu religious scripture Bhagavad Gita.<sup>[6]</sup>



*Krishna Carried Across the River*



Govinda Pathaks forming a human tower to break the Dahi handi



Jay Bharat Seva Sangh forming a human tower to break the Dahi handi in Dadar

## Maharashtra

*Janmaashtami*/ Gokulashtami ( Marathi- गोकुळाष्टमी ), popularly known in Mumbai and Pune as *Dahi Handi*, is celebrated with enormous zeal and enthusiasm. The *handi* is a clay pot filled with buttermilk that is positioned at a convenient height prior to the event. The topmost person on the human pyramid tries to break the *handi* by hitting it with a blunt object. Mostly *nariyal* (coconut) is preferred being a sign of purity, truth etc. in Hinduism. When that happens the buttermilk is spilled over the entire group, symbolizing their achievement through unity. *Handis* are set up around the city, and groups of youngsters, called *Govinda Pathaks*, travel around in trucks trying to break as many *handis* as possible during the day.

Many such Govinda Pathaks compete with each other, especially for the *handis* that dole out hefty rewards. The event, in recent times, has gathered a political flavor, and it is common for political parties and rich community groups to offer prizes amounting to *lakhs* of rupees.

Some of the most famous *handis* are at Dadar, Lower Parel, Worli, Mazgaon, Lalbaug, Thane and Babu Genu, Mandai in Pune.<sup>[7]</sup>

Cash and gifts are offered for *Govinda* troops to participate; for over 4,000 *handis* in Mumbai, 2,000 *Govinda* troops compete for the prizes.



*Rasa Lila in Manipuri dance style*

## Manipur

Janmaashtami, popularly known in Manipur as *Krishna Janma*, is a significant festival celebrated at two temples in Imphal, the capital city of Manipur. The first festival is at the Govindaji temple and the second is at the International Society for Krishna Consciousness temple. Devotees of Lord Krishna gather mostly at the ISKCON temple.

## Northern and Eastern India

Places in Uttar Pradesh associated with Krishna's childhood, such as Mathura, Gokul and Vrindavan, attract visitors from all over India, who go there to participate in the festival celebrations.<sup>[8]</sup> People in the city of Dwarka in Gujarat, where Krishna is believed to have established his Kingdom, celebrate the festival by visiting the Dwarkadhish temple. In Jammu, kite flying is an important part of the celebration on his day.<sup>[9]</sup>

In the eastern state of Odisha, in the region around Puri and in Nabadwip, West Bengal people celebrate Janmashtami by fasting and worship till midnight. Purana Pravachana from the Bhagavata Purana are recited from the 10th Skandha. This section deals with pastimes of Lord Krishna. The next day is called **Nanda Utsav** or the joyous celebration of Krishna's foster parents Nanda and Yashoda. On this day, people break their fast and offer various cooked sweets during the early hours.




## South India

In Southern India, floors in houses are decorated with footprints made from flour, to symbolize Krishna's childhood sport of stealing butter from houses.<sup>[10]</sup>

## Nepal

Eighty percent of the population of Nepal identify themselves as Hindus and celebrate Krishna Janmaasthimi. They observe fast till midnight. They chant Slokas from the Bhagavad Gita and sing religious songs called bhajans. The temples of Lord Krishna are decorated and bhajans and kirtan are sung or played. The Krishna Mandir in Patan Durbar Square, Narayanhiti Krishnamandir and other temples of lord Krishna are the centers for festivities in Krishna Janmaasthimi. Numerous devotees flock to the ancient Krishna temple in old Patan Durbar Square to keep vigil through the revered night of his birth. Sitting closely together, people's bodies rock as women chant the many names of Lord Krishna, *Narayan*, *Narayan* and *Gopal*, *Gopal*. Some sing hymns, others clap their hands, while some pray. Crowds of men and women edge their way slowly up narrow steps through the seated devotees to the temple's dark interior to where the main idol stands. There they offer flowers, coins and food and wait for a glimpse of Krishna Janmashtami festival at Krishna Mandir the idol. After the temple priest gives them *prasad* they make their way home.<sup>[citation needed]</sup>

## Bangladesh

An article <i>related to</i>	
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Janmashtami is a national holiday in Bangladesh.<sup>[11]</sup> On Janmashtami, a procession starts from Dhakeshwari Temple in Dhaka, the National Temple of Bangladesh, and then proceeds through the streets of Old Dhaka. The procession dates back to 1902 but was stopped in 1948 following the establishment of Pakistan and subsequent attacks by Muslim mobs in Dhaka. The procession was resumed in 1989.<sup>[12]</sup>

## Pakistan

Janmashtami is celebrated by Pakistani Hindus in the Shri Swaminarayan Mandir in Karachi with the singing of bhajans and delivering of sermons on Krishna.<sup>[13]</sup>

## Outside South Asia

The first ever elected government official in the world to issue proclamation for the celebration Janmashtami is Janet Napolitano, while she was the Governor of Arizona.

## Street plays

For the past few years, several thousand teams of youth perform street plays on the occasion of Janmashtami worldwide. The performers of these plays are inspired by Pandurang Shastri Athavale, of the Swadhyay Pariwar, to spread the message of Krishna. They disseminate the thoughts of Bhagavad Gita through street plays around the week of Janmashtami.

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