

Dashavatar – Lord Krishna Part 1



Lord Krishna is one of the most popular Gods in Hinduism. He is believed to be the eighth incarnation of Lord Vishnu. Lord Krishna was born during Dwapara Yuga out of four cyclic Yugas described in Hindu scriptures. The present Yuga which is known as Kali Yuga started after the departure of Lord Krishna.

What we know about the life of Krishna comes from two sources, the Srimad Bhagavatam, and the Mahabharata. Each incarnation of Lord Vishnu on the Earth is with a purpose and to accomplish some definite tasks. Lord Krishna came to the Earth to kill king Kamsa, and to relieve the people of Braj from his torture and tyranny. Later Krishna played a central character in the Mahabharata, the biggest epic of Indian mythology. A myriad of topics are covered in Mahabharata including war, love, brotherhood, politics, etc. It is essentially the story of two warring groups of cousin brothers, the Pandavas and Kauravas. As a part of the Mahabharata, during the Kurukshetra war, Lord Krishna gave a long discourse to his disciple, Arjuna, collectively termed as Bhagavad Gita.

Lord Krishna is easily recognized by His representations. Krishna is usually shown with blue skin. He is often shown with a flute, wearing a yellow silk Dhoti and peacock feather crown. Tribhangi Mudra is the most popular pose of Lord Krishna in which He stands with one leg bent in front of the other and raises a flute to His lip in a relaxed pose. Lord Krishna never married His childhood lover Radha but He is pictured with Radha in most of the paintings. It was Rukmini who was the legitimate wife of Lord Krishna.

Story of the Lord Krishna's Birth

Once, Mother Earth, unable to bear the burden of sins committed by evil kings and rulers, appealed to Lord Brahma, the God of Creation, for help. Brahma prayed to the Supreme Lord Vishnu, who assured Him that He would soon be born on earth to annihilate tyrannical forces. One such evil force was Kamsa, the ruler of Mathura in northern India. His people were utterly terrified of him. He had overthrown his own father King Ugrasena so he could become King of Mathura.

Devaki was the princess of Mathura, and beloved sister of Kamsa. She got married to a noble young man, King Vasudeva of the Yadu dynasty. After the marriage ceremony, Vasudeva's chariot was ready to take Devaki along with him to his home. As Kamsa was very fond of his sister, he declared that he himself would drive the chariot to Vasudeva's house. While Kamsa drove the chariot bearing Devaki and Vasudeva out of the Mathura, a voice boomed from the heavens. It informed Kamsa that Devaki's eighth child would be his slayer.

On hearing this, Kamsa got anxious and angry. He wanted to kill Devaki, his own beloved sister. Afraid of the ill intentions of Kamsa, Vasudeva pleaded with him not to kill Devaki. He promised to Kamsa that they would hand over all their children to Kamsa if he feared that one of them would kill him. Kamsa accepted the words of Vasudeva but did not let them go free. He put them in his palace prison. Whenever a child was born to the couple, Kamsa would come to the prison and kill the child. This happened to the first seven children of Devaki and Vasudeva, all of whom were boys.

Now Devaki was expecting her eighth child. When she was about to deliver her baby, she and Vasudeva both heard an Akashavani (voice from the sky) which told them that they must take their child to Gokul and exchange him with the new born daughter of Nanda, the cowherd king of Gokul. They were told by the divine voice that their son who was about to take birth was the incarnation of Lord Vishnu. He would eliminate evil on the earth

and protect the innocent people. The voice said nothing could stop Vasudeva from taking his son to Gokul and coming back to the prison with Nanda's daughter. When Devaki gave birth to her eighth son, all the guards magically went to sleep and the doors of the prison opened automatically. Vasudeva and Devaki were freed from their shackles. It was raining heavily and Vasudeva had to cross the river Yamuna to reach Gokul. The river was in full spate. Vasudeva took a bamboo basket and placed his son in it. As Vasudeva stepped out and stood at the bank of river Yamuna, he was worried about his child but then was reminded of the divine voice that promised him that nothing bad would happen to the child. Vasudeva stepped into the river Yamuna submerging half his body in the cold water. As he looked upwards, he saw a five mouthed snake providing protection to his baby against the torrential rain!

On reaching Gokul, Vasudeva found the doors of Nanda's house open and everyone in deep sleep. He took the baby girl of Nanda from beside her mother Yashoda and put his own son there. Then, as he had brought his son, he took the girl through the river. The five mouthed snake protected the girl, just as it had Krishna. When he reached back home in Mathura, he entered the prison, and everything got normal as before - he and Devaki were put back in their shackles, the prison doors closed, and the guards woke up. As soon as the guards saw a child beside Devaki, they informed Kamsa.

Kamsa, who had waited all these years to kill the eighth child of Devaki and Vasudeva, came hurriedly to get rid of his destined slayer. Like always, he picked up the baby girl and threw her against the wall but this time a miracle happened. The little baby slipped from his hands and flew up into the air and took the form of the goddess, Yogamaya. She said to Kamsa, "You want to kill me but the one who will kill you has taken birth and is safe somewhere out of your reach. One day, your slayer will come searching for you and kill you. This is your destiny and you cannot change this!" Saying this, she laughed and vanished leaving behind the angry and dumbstruck Kamsa.

Nanda's wife was Yashoda. Like Devaki, she had also given birth that night. She had fainted at the time of her delivery. When she came to her senses next day morning, she found a beautiful little baby lying by her side. Here was a joy beyond words, for the world had never seen such a lovely child before. His skin was deep blue in color. The entire village came to know that in Nanda's house was born a most heavenly child. Nanda was the chief of the Yadava clan. Since Nanda and Yashoda were not having any children, for quite some time, the birth of the boy made the people of Gokul wild with delight and joy. The boy was named Krishna with appropriate rituals. Krishna means "the dark skinned one."

Every year, we celebrate a festival the day Lord Krishna was born, called Krishnashtami. The festival is also called in different names as Sri Krishna Jayanti, Janmashtami, and as Gokulashtami.

The evil king Kamsa was greatly upset after hearing goddess Yogamaya that the boy who would grow up to kill him still lived. But he did not know where the child was. He consulted his ministers, who, being Rakshasas, or demons in disguise, advised him to kill all the new born babies in and around the kingdom. Kamsa called upon Poothana, a horrible big, ugly, evil Rakshasi, and asked her to carry out the task.

Poothana disguised herself by taking on the form of a lovely woman, wandered around looking for the baby. When she finally found the house where Nanda and Yashoda rejoiced in their new son, Poothana slipped inside. In a soft, charming voice, she asked for permission to hold the child, as many visitors did. Yashoda, surrounded by

love and kindness, did not suspect a thing. She left Krishna and Poothana alone for a few minutes. Poothana picked up baby Krishna and put him to her breast, which was full of the deadliest poison. But the baby Krishna sucked out all the poison without coming to any harm. Not only that, he also sucked all the life right out of the horrible, evil woman!

When Kamsa came to know that Poothana had failed him, he sent another very cunning and tricky Rakshasa, Trinavarta. Trinavarta could raise dust-storms and whirlwinds at a moment's notice, and could easily sweep into a cyclone the heaviest objects on the earth. One day, Yashoda was sitting with her baby Krishna on her lap in the court yard. Krishna, the holy child, had a sense of the approaching danger. Yashoda found him suddenly becoming heavier and heavier. Every moment his weight increased. Finally, she could take his weight no longer. Yashoda put Krishna down on the ground and went to call for help. Trinavarta, who had just arrived, turned into a whirlwind and began to raise a terrible dust storm. Huge swirls of dust and sand rose and filled the air. It got into everyone's eyes and blocked their noses. They struggled to cover their faces. Such a storm had never been seen before. Trinavarta lifted Krishna and began to fly higher and higher in the twisting, whirling sandstorm. But he found it difficult to carry the little boy, who was growing heavier and heavier. Krishna stretched out his chubby hand and clutched the throat of the demon, choking him. The rakshasa fell to the ground like a big stone, crashing dead down onto a rock. The whole of Gokul went in search of baby Krishna. Finally, the anxious villagers found Him on the outskirts of Gokul playing on the lifeless body of the demon.

Almost every day, some miracles occurred in Gokul. As a result, the simple villagers of Gokul felt both amazed and frightened. So all the people in Gokul decided to leave Gokul and settle at Brindavan, a place some miles distant. Krishna and his brother Balarama were full of joy when they saw the green pastures of Brindavan, the sacred hill Govardhan, and the rippling waters of Yamuna. When Krishna had grown a little older, he insisted on going with the older boys in order to graze cows and calves on the pasture lands.

At Mathura, Kamsa was not able to sleep in peace. He kept remembering how Krishna killed Putana, Trinavarta, and other demons. He felt his death looked sure and imminent. So, he sent other demons Vatsasura, Bakasura, Vyomasura, Aghasura, Dhenukasura, and Pralambasura one after the other, but in vein. Krishna killed all of them with ease.

There was a deep lake close to the bank of river Yamuna that flowed by Brindavan. A huge poisonous serpent (Naga) with hundred and one hoods, named Kaliya, made this lake its home. The lake and waters of Yamuna were being poisoned as Kaliya spit poison continuously from its hoods. The residents of Brindavan were very afraid of the serpent and avoided to go near the lake. Whoever unknowingly went to take water from the lake was being killed by the serpent. One day, Krishna intentionally went near that lake to play with his friends. While playing, he threw a ball into the lake purposely, and then he told his friends that he will go and get the ball. He climbed a nearby tree, and jumped into the river. Kaliya got furious! Hissing violently; it gripped Krishna in its curl and caused him to swoon. This caused great chaos amongst the gopas. A few of them ran immediately to tell Krishna's parents Nanda and Yashoda. Soon the entire village of Brindavan assembled at the shore. Krishna expanded Himself until the serpent could no longer hold him, and lost its grip. Then Krishna jumped up on to the top of the serpent's hoods and started dancing so hard that it could not bear the pain. Then Kaliya began to die. But then the Naga's wives came and prayed to Krishna with joined palms, worshipping Krishna and praying for their husband. Kaliya, recognizing the greatness of Krishna, surrendered, promising he would never harass or

harm anybody again. Krishna agreed, and Kaliya with his wives moved to some other place leaving that lake forever. All the Gopas (cow boys) irresistibly attracted towards Krishna, more than ever before

Govardhana Leela

The people of Brindavan started preparations in a grand way for a Yagna before the rainy season. Krishna respectfully approached his father Nanda and asked, "Father in whose honor is this Yagna being performed, and why?" Nanda said, "Krishna, Lord Indra is the god of rain. Rain gives us water for our crops, fodder for the cattle and gives life to all beings. Therefore Indra is to be worshipped. Besides, we have to respect the tradition which has come down to us from our forefathers."

But Krishna had no desire to please Indra. He knew Lord Indra had become very proud. Krishna thought this was the ideal time to teach Indra a lesson. Then Krishna told his father and elders, "Why do you worship Indra? Worship your cows that give you milk and calves. Worship the Yamuna where our cattle drink water and whose water irrigates our crops. Worship the Govardhan Hill with its green grass and rich pasturelands on whose sides our cattle graze."

Nanda and all the elders thought this an excellent suggestion, and the people of Brindavan gave up the worship of Indra and began to worship cows, the Yamuna, and the Govardhan Hill. Indra felt highly offended, and decided to teach the people of Brindavan a bitter lesson. Indra instructed his clouds and winds to wreck havoc on Brindavan and to destroy the land and people completely. A rainstorm broke out and it began to hail heavily. Water flooded into every house and cow-sheds. Human beings and animals became blue with cold and looked as though they would die. The people of Brindavan were frightened and ran to Krishna for safety, and pleaded with Him to save them from the anger of Indra. Krishna was moved when He saw their plight.

Krishna took all of them to the Govardhan Hill. He lifted the hill on the little finger of His left hand. It served as a big umbrella under which the people and the cattle of Brindavan took shelter. It rained continuously for seven days, and all those days Krishna held aloft the Govardhana Mountain while the people took refuge under it.

Indra was puzzled and surprised. He realized his anger and jealousy was futile. He felt ashamed and withdrew the clouds and wind. The sun came out and shone brightly. The floods subsided. The people of Brindavan went back to their home and Krishna replaced the hill in its original position. All the villagers realized the divinity of Krishna, and worshipped him as the Lord of the Universe. Indra had come to his senses. He very apologetically approached Krishna, and prostrated before Him. He touched Krishna's feet and begged His pardon. Krishna said, "All this was done to break your pride, Indra. Go and perform your duties faithfully."

When Krishna was holding up the mountain, he did it effortlessly. He just used one little finger to hold it up for all of seven days! But when Krishna held up the mountain, the villagers also wanted to help him. Krishna had grown very large to hold up the mountain. So all the villagers got sticks and poles, which they also used to help Krishna hold up the mountain. In the same way, when we are doing some of God's work, we can say "I am helping Krishna hold up the mountain." God does not need our help, but nevertheless, out of love for Him, we can try to assist Him in every way we can.

Lingashtakam

Brahma Murari surarchita Lingam
Nirmala bhasita sobhita Lingam
Janmaja dukha vinasaka Lingam
Tat pranamami Sadasiva Lingam (1)

Devamuni pravararchita Lingam
Kamadahana karunakara Lingam
Ravana darpa vinasaka Lingam
Tat pranamami Sadasiva Lingam (2)

Sarva sugandhi sulepita Lingam
Buddhi vivardhana karana Lingam
Siddha surasura vandita Lingam
Tat pranamami Sadasiva Lingam (3)

Kanaka maha mani bhushita Lingam
Paniphati veshtitha shobhita Lingam
Dakshasu yajna vinashana Lingam
Tat pranamami Sadasiva Lingam (4)

Kumkuma chandana lepita Lingam
Pankaja hara sushobhita Lingam
Sanchita papa vinashana Lingam
Tat pranamami Sadasiva Lingam (5)

Jumble Words – All words are from this lesson

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Coloring exercise

