

Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu



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Chaitanya Mahaprabhu ([Bengali](#): মহাপ্রভু শ্রীচৈতন্য দেব, [Sanskrit](#): श्री चैतन्य महाप्रभु), born Vishvambhara Mishra ([IAST](#): *Viśvambhara Miśra*),<sup>[1]</sup> (1486–1533 CE)<sup>[2]</sup> was an Indian Hindu saint from [Bengal](#) who was the founder of [Gaudiya Vaishnavism](#), which considers him to be [Krishna](#) (God) incarnate, "in the mood and complexion" of his chief consort, [Radha](#)".<sup>[3]</sup> Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's mode of worshipping Krishna with [bhajan-kirtan](#) and dance had a profound effect on [Vaishnavism](#) in [Bengal](#).

He was considered the chief proponent of the Vedantic philosophy of [Achintya Bheda Abheda](#), although the concept of inconceivable difference in non-difference, known as achintya-bhedabheda, was developed later by Jiva Gosvami in his book Bhagavat Sandharbha.<sup>[4]</sup>

Mahaprabhu founded [Gaudiya Vaishnavism](#) (a.k.a. the [Brahma-Madhva-Gaudiya Sampradaya](#)). He expounded [Bhakti yoga](#) and popularised the chanting of the [Hare Krishna Maha-mantra](#).<sup>[5]</sup> He composed the [Shikshashtakam](#) (eight devotional prayers).

Chaitanya is sometimes called [Gauranga](#) ([IAST](#): *Gaurāṅga*) or Gaura due to his molten gold-like complexion.<sup>[6]</sup> His birthday is celebrated as [Gaura-purnima](#).<sup>[7][8]</sup> He is also called Nimai because he was born underneath a [Neem](#) tree.<sup>[9]</sup>

Deity of Shadabhuja [Gauranga](#) at Ganga Mata Math in [Puri](#)

Caitanya was born in a Brahmin family as Viśvambhara Mishra aka Nimāi, the second son of Jagannātha Mishra and his wife Śacī Devī, the daughter of Nilambara Chakrabarti, both [Brahmins](#) of [Sylhet](#) region.<sup>[1]</sup> Jagannātha Mishra's family were from the village of [Dhakadakshin](#) in [Srihatta \(Sylhet\)](#) (now in [Bangladesh](#)). The ruins of their ancestral home still survive in present-day [Bangladesh](#).<sup>[10][11][3]</sup>

Yogapith temple at Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's birthsite established in the 1880s by [Bhaktivinoda Thakur](#) in [Mayapur](#), [West Bengal](#)

According to [Chaitanya Charitamrita](#), Caitanya was born in [Nabadwip](#) (in present-day [West Bengal](#)) on the full moon night of 18 February 1486, at the time of a lunar eclipse.<sup>[12][13][14]</sup>

While still a student, his father died, and he soon married Lakṣmīpriyā. He travelled to east Bengal to become a scholar and support his family but his wife died in his absence. He then married [Viṣṇupriyā](#), daughter of paṇḍit Sanātana Miśra. Viśvambhara, also known as Nimāi Paṇḍit, was a promising Sanskrit scholar, and once defeated Keśava Bhaṭṭa of the [Nimbārka](#) school in a debate on Sanskrit prosody. In 1508-1509 he left Nabadwip to go to Gaya to perform [śrāddha](#), a ritual homage to his dead father. There he met an ascetic named Īśvara Purī and was initiated by him using a mantra for [Kṛṣṇa](#) worship. After this meeting Viśvambhara abandoned all scholarly and domestic pursuits and had no interest except hearing and speaking of Kṛṣṇa. Within a year he took a vow of *saṁnyāsa* (renunciation) and changed his name to Kṛṣṇa Caitanya under his guru Keśava Bhāratī. His mother then asked him to at least live in the city of Puri so that he would not be too far from Bengal.<sup>[3]</sup> After becoming a renunciate he spent his time converting and instructing followers in the tenets of Kṛṣṇa bhakti and engaging in communal *saṁkīrtana*. Notably he is said to have debated and converted followers of [Advaita Vedānta](#) or Māyāvāda. He spent two months in Vrindavan in c. 1515 where he instructed [Sanātana Gosvāmī](#) and [Rūpa Gosvāmī](#). The last two decades of his life were spent in Puri where he focused on immersing himself in devotional yearning for Kṛṣṇa and his consorts, mainly Rādhā. He died c. 1528-1534.<sup>[3]</sup>