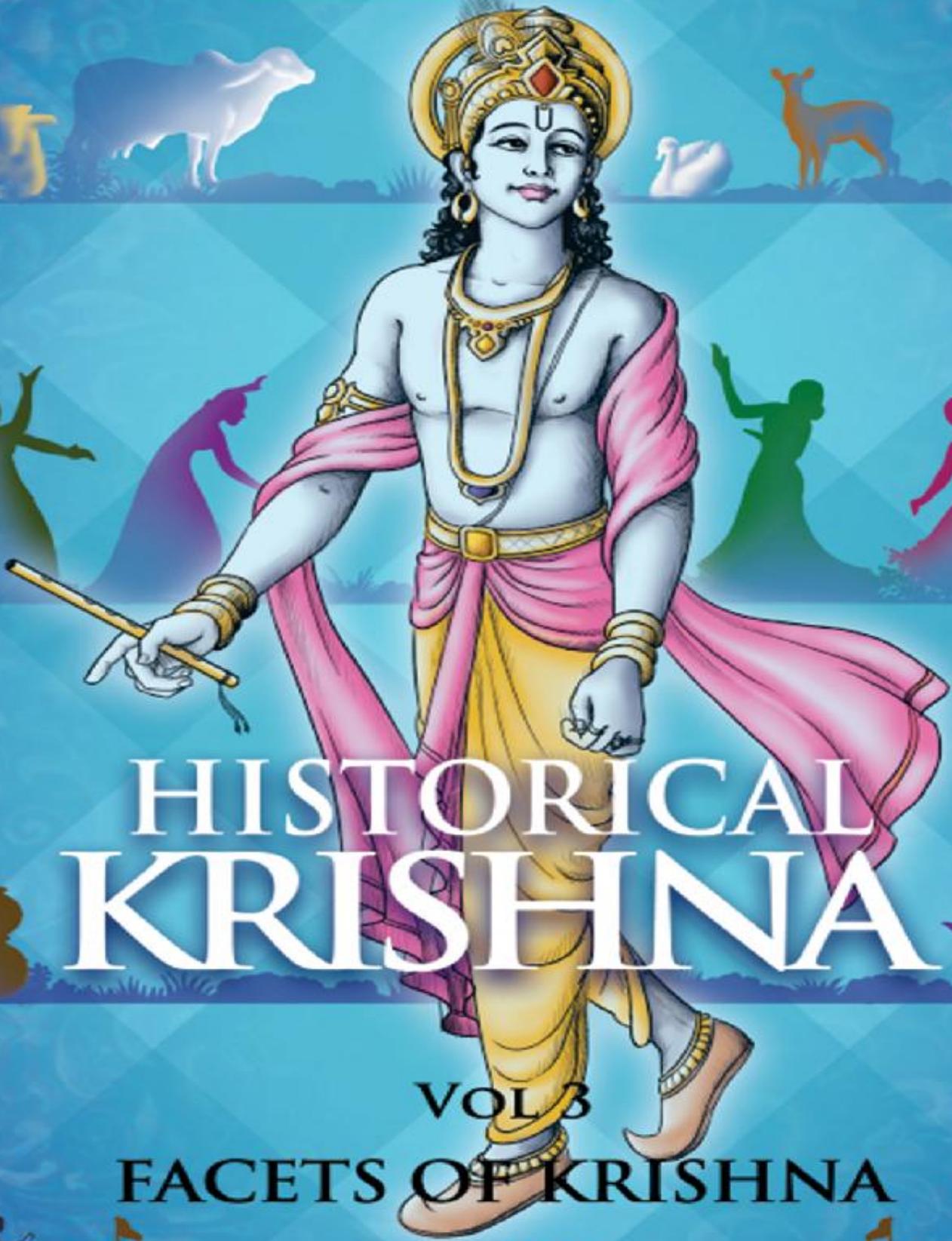




Bharath Gyan®



HISTORICAL KRISHNA

VOL 3

FACETS OF KRISHNA

D.K. HARI
D.K. HEMA HARI

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Back Cover

Krishna has been a subject of fascination. He is an enigma.

He swings between Historicity and Divinity in people's minds.

He has also been the subject of many mysteries and debates.

Is it possible for a historical personage to have performed such deeds?

This book sheds light on some of the mysteries surrounding Him to rationally establish how Krishna is historical and how historicity need not preclude divinity.

It is a key to open the mind to fathom Krishna in His entirety.



Bharath Gyan[®]

Sri Sri Publications Trust

The Art of Living International Center
Kanakpura Road, Bangalore - 560082.

Phone: +91-80-32722473 Email: info@srisripublications.com
For delivery of Bharath Gyan and The Art of Living products at
your doorstep call Toll Free no. 1800-258-6888 or visit our
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Cover Design

Krishna looks back at the colourful facets of His life.

Facets that have made Him Historical as well as Divine.

Facets that have also been cause for many debates.

Tucked within them is the key to understand Him.

This is an interdisciplinary approach to place Krishna in history.

This work is presented as 3 volumes.

Volume 1 – Dating of Krishna, arrives at dates for Krishna in the modern Gregorian calendar.

Volume 2 – Footprints of Krishna, traces Krishna across the geography of India.

Volume 3 – Facets of Krishna, looks at the different sides of Krishna to understand His historicity.

You are now holding Volume 3 **Facets of Krishna**.

**Divinity is a matter of faith.
Historicity is a matter of existence.**



D.K.Hari and D.K.Hema Hari are founders of Bharath Gyan, a knowledge initiative to compile and present the knowledge of India, its traditions, its culture, its global ties - in short, its ethos, from an Indian perspective.

This husband-wife duo of management and IT professionals who have turned research collators, have authored 12 books, many articles and a host of short films. They are also active on social media.

"This work is encyclopaedic."

- Dr. S .Kalyanaraman,
Sarasvati Research Centre

"This is monumental. This will appeal to the public."

- Prof. Narahari B Achar,
Memphis University, USA

"Beyond this, if someone wants further proof on Historicity of Krishna, they have to approach Devaki and Vasudeva."

- An Avid Reader



Bharath Gyan

HISTORICAL KRISHNA

Vol - 3

Facets of Krishna

D.K. HARI
D.K. HEMA HARI

Bharath Gyan Series

Benedictory Note



H.H. Sri Sri Ravi Shankar
Founder - Art of Living

Krishna's historicity has no doubts in the hearts and minds of a billion Hindus. It is some academicians who fashionably dismissed the historicity of Krishna. This book will pose some challenges to them. It will make them sit up and rethink about their imaginations, which they believed and made others believe as the gospel truth.

26 June, 2013
Bengaluru, India.

About Bharath Gyan



Bharath Gyan has been collating specific, scientific knowledge of India, using ancient knowledge sources and modern scientific tools and methods, from a present day perspective and relevance.

The knowledge of the Indian civilization is available scattered in various forms – books, manuscripts, oral tradition amongst scholars, various art forms, customs and traditions of the land.

The current generation is facing a barrier in reaching out to this knowledge due to the limited access to such sources. The ancient languages, the style of expression used and their approach to the subjects which differ from the present way of expression, pose a challenge too.

In Bharath Gyan, as part of our quest for the specific scientific knowledge and practices of the civilization, we have come across many stories, ideas, views, theories, factual events and statements.

With the help of traditional scholars with a modern bent of mind and modern scientists open to traditional knowledge systems, we have endeavoured to carefully sift through all this data, with an inquisitive, rational, logical and scientific mind to understand the knowledge from a fresh interdisciplinary perspective. The outcome of this analysis is the compilation of Bharath Gyan.

Over 13 years, spanning across 108 subjects, the independent facts and data collated, self validate and corroborate each other beautifully in this compilation, as pieces of a jigsaw.

Bharath Gyan, a not for profit, research organization, is in the process of bringing this knowledge out through far reaching and engaging mediums so that it can be easily understood and enjoyed by all across the world.

The objective is to bring out this knowledge and wisdom, with relevance to current day topics of interest, trials and tribulations faced by Indians as well as the world.

Besides filling the readers with wonder at the not-so-commonly known scientific facets of our ancient civilization, it is hoped that this knowledge and approach of the ancients will kindle or aid future research for the benefit of science and mankind.

Can we make the past converge with the present for the future?

Ours is perhaps not the first effort in this direction, neither should it be the last ...

As one of the initiatives, Bharath Gyan, encouraged by His Holiness Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, has entered into an alliance with the Art of Living group to jointly repurpose the compiled knowledge into various knowledge products for dissemination to the community at large.

Our website www.bharathgyan.com provides more insights into our activities.

Foreword



भारतीय इतिहास अनुसंधान परिषद्

Indian Council of Historical Research

(MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT, GOVT. OF INDIA)

35, Ferozeshah Road, New Delhi-110 001

Professor Y. Sudershan Rao
Chairperson

Phone : 011-23386033, 23384869 (O)
Fax : 91-11-23383421
E-mail : chairperson@icrh.ac.in

I am grateful to Sri D. K. Hari and Smt. Hema Hari, for bestowing on me the great benefit of browsing their three volume typescript of “**Historical Krishna**” before it goes public.

Numerous works have come by now on various facets of Lord Krishna. Perhaps, ‘Historical’ may be a new title or attribute to Him. It is necessitated by the times now.

Though he declared Himself as *Kala* (the Time), Lord Krishna taught us through His life how to respect time in one’s earthly existence. In all our known past, right from the days of Creation, we witness a physically strong and powerful section of people known as *Danavas* at one time and ‘intellectuals’ who are wedded to *pratyakshavadain* the present times who questioned the existence of Lord Vishnu and His human incarnations. We have also seen that the devotees had to wait patiently bearing with all the insult and physical pain committed to them by this powerful anti-Vishnu section till some Prahlada like devotees or Vishnu-incarnations come down to earth and provide relief to those who are following the noble path. It is said in the *Vishnupurana* that Prahlada could at last make his father realise the Truth and later Hiranyakashyapa ruled for several years with devotion to Hari.

It is also said that Ravana knew that none else than Hari had come in the guise of Raja Rama and that he departed having realised the Truth. Even in our contemporary world, we personally know a number of our friends and family members who changed their line of thinking at least in their ripe age and realised that they were wrong till then.

The efforts of our Hari couple to make the present ‘intellectual’ world realise that Lord Krishna incarnated as Yadu Krishna and lived during such and such time may atleast help doubting ones

to gain faith in their belief.

No doubt, the divinity of Lord Krishna was doubted by some of his contemporaries, but now his very historicity is being questioned by the modern ‘intellectuals’.

The western educated being separated from the traditional knowledge are following these ‘intellectuals’ blindly cutting off the branch on which they stand. The uneducated are still protected from these tendencies. I am not a specialist in the history of our ‘remote’ past. So I would only look at the question from a lay man’s point of view representing millions of lay-devotees.

Sri Rama and Sri Krishna are the heroes of the world’s oldest epics, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. They are worshipped as very important incarnations of God, one as manifestation of *Dharma* and the other for Bodha (teaching) to guide men in the path of *Sanatana Dharma*.

The family trees of both Iksvaku and Yadu dynasties are clearly given in the Puranas with slight differences. Sri Rama had about 60 predecessors and about 30 successors in the line and the last ruler in the main line fought in the *Mahabharata* War on the side of Kauravas and he was killed by Abhimanyu, son of Arjuna. Later, the dynasty was split into many minor lines and Suddhodhana father of Siddhartha Gautama was the last ruler of a major sub-line as Siddhartha took *sanyasa* followed by his son, Rahula. Yaduvamsa (Yadu dynasty) came to an end quarrelling among themselves after the departure of Sri Krishna as ‘cursed’ by Queen Gandhari.

The title ‘Ramayana’ itself means the life journey of Sri Rama written by none other than a Rishi (a ‘*Jnani*’) who was also a contemporary of Sri Rama. The title of ‘Maha Bharata’ (originally known as *Jaya kaavya* meaning victory to *Dharma*) is the history of Bharata *vamsa* connected to Chandra *vamsa*, the lineages are clearly given in the ancient literature. The writer was also a sage (Rishi- *Jnani*) who was not only a contemporary to Pandavas but also to three preceding generations.

Both of the writers were not only contemporary but they were also ‘participatory observers’ to use the terminology of modern “empiricists”. We find no parallel to such a phenomenon in the world’s ancient literatures of nations other than India. Both, Sage Valmiki of Ramayana and Sage Vyasa of Mahabharata stand role models for a ‘true historian’, being unbiased and truthful in their expositions. Though, both of them strongly believed that Sri Rama and Sri Krishna were none other than Lord Vishnu, they were keen in presenting facts as they happened impartially, leaving the judgement of the event to the readers.

To-day our intellectuals could criticize some of the actions of these great personalities, Sri Rama and Krishna, taking references only from these works.

Being devoted to Lord Vishnu, the sages could have hidden some negative references on the lines of some modern researchers who depend on select-data for their interpretations. But these

great writers held Truth above even their venerable God. The birth-days of both, Valmiki Jayanthi and Vyasa Poornima, are being celebrated since times immemorial with great veneration in India. Their *Ashramas* are well identified. They have become pilgrimages being visited by thousands.

There are some ‘intellectuals’ who argue that the writers were real but not their ‘stories’.

In ancient Indian literature, Vedic literature is ‘heard’. Various *Sastras* are not fiction. The *Purana*, history of the Universe, was flashed to Sage Parasara, father of Sage Vyasa, as a ‘revived memory’. The subject-matter of later *Kaavya* literature was only taken from the earlier literature. Buddha’s *Jataka* stories are considered the stories of his previous births revealed to his disciples by the Buddha himself. Fiction writing has become more prevalent in the modern times when writing and printing have become gainful professions. By no means, we can bring the epic writers to the category of present fiction writers. The *Kathasaritsagara* or *Panchatantra* do not of course belong to the genre of modern fiction.

Both the epics give us a clear understanding of the geographical expanse of Bharat from Afghanistan in the north-west to Rameswaram in the south-east, and from Himalayan range in the north to the Dravidadesa in the south. The then inhabiting tribes -civilian and forest – are described. Their life styles, their customs and traditions, interrelations, social and political systems etc are also given to us very clearly. The geographical regions and political demarcations are described. The dynastic lineages are given. The events are narrated with the essential coordinates of time and space. The time is given so specifically that it is astronomically dated, the *tithi*, *nakshatra* constellations etc., which is more specific than modern dating.

As a text, the *Mahabharata* is more comprehensive than the *Ramayana*. The *Mahabharata* is also described as encyclopedia and revered as Fifth book of Veda. The *Bhagavad Gita* is considered the essence of Vedic knowledge guiding its followers in their *laukika* and *aadhyatmika* life. Lord Krishna’s *bodha* is meant for the present *Kali* times.

These facts are enough for a common man to believe the epic stories to be real and true. By raising doubts in the minds of Indian educated being alienated from their tradition about the historicity of Rama and Krishna, no good purpose will be served to the society by misleading people.

All the sites of *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* are already identified. They are not only known to people since generations but they are considered pious *kshetras* for common man.

Mahabharata sites are identified archaeologically in the post-independent survey. Hastinapura, Indraprastha, Kurukshetra, Mathura, Dwaraka (submerged) are well known to every one. Kings from all parts of Bharat participated in the Great War. They along with their kingdoms are identified.

Archaeology suggests that the origin and growth of civilisation in the world could be traced to the end of last ice-age, may be around 10,000 years BP (Before Present). Many scholars -Indian and foreign - have brought out their theses on the date of Mahabharata War referring to the astronomical and scientific data given in the epic. Most of the modern works suggest the dates between 4500 BP to 5200 BP. Since about 30-38 rulers have succeeded Rama in Iksvaku lineage, the gap between Rama and Krishna should be as wide as 30+ generations. There were about 60 rulers before Rama in his line. Even by rough estimate, the origin of civilisation in India could be pushed back to a hundred generations from the Mahabharata times.

Early European scholars had arbitrarily fixed the average reigning years of a king to as low as single digit years. But, we find that all main characters of the epics, like Dasaratha, Dhrutarashtra, Bhishma, Drona, Krishna and others lived for quite a long time, some of them were even hundred plus. They, even at that age, were also active and strong. They fought a big war. By any estimate the hundred generations before Mahabharata might be in the range of about 3000 years on an average of 30 years (may be arbitrarily) for each reigning period. Thus, the state formation in India could be traced back to at least 8000 BP. We should not forget that even archaeological estimates or carbon analyses are also approximations but not precise. (I owe this understanding to Sadguru, Mahamahopadhyaya, Dr K Sivananda Murtyji, D.Litt, Bheemunipatnam, AP).

Here, the author-couple have endeavoured to answer the questions of many a doubting Thomas and presenting a scientific analysis of data available in the Mahabharata itself. They deserve a lot of appreciation from the scholars and serious readers.

Since the work has received the blessings of His Holiness Sri Sri Ravi Shankarji, it needs no more authentication.

I wish the learned couple all the best in their struggle for the cause of Sanatana Dharma.

Dated: 10.12.2014



(Y. Sudershan Rao)

Preface



D.K.Hari and D.K.Hema Hari

While people at large accept the divinity of Krishna, some, at the same time, have doubts about the historicity of Krishna. This work is an effort to understand Krishna from a historical angle and bring out the fact that Krishna, a hero of the land of India, was indeed historical. Krishna had walked and lived on this earth, some time in the remote past. .

In the earlier volumes of this work, **Dating of Krishna** and **Footprints of Krishna**, we have looked at distinct factors that brought forth the historicity of Krishna and the events that took place around Him. Each stands out as a stout pillar upholding historicity.

You are now holding Volume 3, **Facets of Krishna**.

Historicity is not the only facet of Krishna.

Krishna has always been a subject of fascination and intrigue.

Aspersions have also been cast on some of Krishna's acts – such as His relationship with Radha and the Gopi, His role in the Mahabharata war and so on. How can we try to understand the various acts of Krishna?

In this volume, we shall examine some of these oft discussed facets of Krishna's life, His character as well as events from the Mahabharata.

Facets which have given rise to many debates.

Out of Syllabus

Religious expressions of Krishna, the miracles attributed to Him and detailed discussions on philosophy, *Nishkama Karma* and the *Gita*, are not the focus of this book.

Historicity and Divinity

Krishna is revered by many as divine.

So, is Krishna historical or divine?

Some may feel that we are taking away the divinity from Krishna with this effort of trying to establish His historicity.

The idea here is not to offend the religious sentiments of such people. On the contrary, with the relegation of Krishna and the events of His times, to the status of a myth, the basis for His divinity itself is put to test too.

If there was no Krishna, how can He be divine?



Just Halo, an aspect of divinity sans historicity and

Lord Krishna, a combination of historicity and divinity

While divinity is a matter of faith, historicity is a matter of existence.

If the stories of Krishna are to be believed to have been true, then Krishna must have walked this earth.

In this effort, we are responding to those who tend to dismiss Krishna as a myth.

In Volume 1, **Dating of Krishna**, we have seen how Krishna can be dated to 3112 BCE and the Kali Yuga to 3102 BCE based on sky configurations recorded to have been observed during the *Mahabharata* period.

In Volume 2, **Footprints of Krishna**, we have seen how ground evidences from Geography, Archaeology, Ecology also point to a similar period for the lifetime of Krishna and the *Mahabharata*.

From this volume, we will be able to connect with Krishna as a historical person who walked the geography of this land during a period in time, 5100 years ago leaving behind memories and evidence to treasure far beyond what other historical personages have.

Infact, once we are able to establish in our minds that Krishna was also a historical person, then those who are seeking the divine Krishna will find themselves a lot closer in established time and space, to cherish and revere Him better.

D. K. Hari

D. K. Hema Hari

17th August 2014

Sri Krishna Jayanthi, Janmashtami

5126th Birth Anniversary of Krishna

Acknowledgements

We have been singularly fortunate to have been born in this land of ancient wisdom and seers. We owe a lot to our parents who have brought us into this world and provided us with the right education, upbringing and guidance. The values and traditions of this ancient civilization inculcated in us by our family and teachers are what have formed the basis for our work at Bharath Gyan. We owe a lot to our family and friends for their continued support and encouragement in our endeavour.

Having embarked on our quest, many scholars, thinkers and students of the knowledge of India have come forward and helped us in this collation. Some have helped by offering data and some through their questions that made us think and look for the data.

Many traditional scholars have patiently tolerated our inquisitiveness and have laboriously searched and retrieved from the ancient texts, the data we had requested of them and explained the same to us in simple layman terms. Without their mastery over old and new, their knowledge, their mind-set and support, this bridge from the ancient to the present day would never have been built.

Then faced with the task of dissemination, many friends and experts have come forward to review our works and take it to stages of production and distribution. We owe a lot to their support, without which this compilation could not have seen the light of the day.

More specifically, we would like to thank H. H. Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, for the faith reposed in us and our work and for offering us a platform, to share the knowledgebase we have collated, with the community at large.

We would be failing in our character, if we do not acknowledge more importantly, the unseen forces which have connected us up with these right

sources of information and noble people just in time, just as we were looking for the information and help.

The list is therefore very long and words fail us to thank everyone sufficiently. Hence we take refuge in the all encompassing words of the 18th century Indian poet Saint Thyagaraja –

Entharo Mahanu Bhavulu Anthariki Vanadanamulu

There are many noble persons (behind this work) and we salute them all.

D. K. Hari

D. K. Hema Hari

PART EIGHT – FASCINATING KRISHNA

The Mothers of Krishna

DEVAKI



Krishna being separated from Devaki

Krishna, the eighth child, of Devaki and Vasudeva was born to them in a prison cell.

The irony in Devaki's life was that, while on one hand she was the fortunate mother to have given birth to a child such as Krishna, who as Devakiputra Krishna, son of Devaki, made her name immortal, she was unfortunate to have to separate from this wonderful baby within moments after His birth.

Devaki as a mother did not get to enjoy watching Krishna growing up and performing His adorable mischief. That was the sole prerogative of Yashoda, the foster mother of Krishna.

Devaki got to meet Krishna only when he had grown up into a teenager.

YASHODA

Yashoda was a lady of the pastoral land. She was the wife of Nandagopa, the chief of the cowherds, in the village called Gokul.

As destiny played itself out, she became the mother of Krishna. She was the one bestowed to care for little Krishna and enjoy the childish acts of this most adorable child of all times.

Her love for Krishna had no bounds.



[Yashoda chiding Krishna](#)

The legends abound with many an incident bringing out the remarkable relationship between this mother and child – the feelings of love, care, amazement at the deeds of this precocious child, light admonishing at His mischief, fear for His safety and despair when separated even for a few moments.

It is during the time that He spent under the watchful eyes of this doting mother that Krishna managed to perform various acts which seem heroic and miraculous. These are to this day tied to the geography and tradition of the land, giving them a flavour of both historicity and divinity.

The name Yashoda to this day, is synonymous with motherly affection.

LIFE VS LOVE

Devaki thus gave Krishna His bloodline and historicity.

Yashoda gave Krishna her love and the platform to showcase His acts of childish mischief as well as heroism.

Between these two mothers, we see Krishna twinning between historicity and divinity.

Pastimes of Young Krishna

KALINGA NARDHANA - DANCING ON A SNAKE



Krishna and His friends were grazing their cows when one of the cows went to the riverside to drink water from the river Yamuna. Soon it dropped dead from water poisoning.

Krishna's uncle Kamsa had been sending his emissaries on and off to kill Krishna and they too had tried various methods to kill Him, but in vain. So, many thought that this must be another ploy of Kamsa but soon realized that the culprit behind the poisoning of the Yamuna was Kaliya, the dreaded Naga, snake.

The friendly waters of the Yamuna soon became green and nobody could go near the Yamuna any longer. Krishna seized of this, entered the water to seek out and rout out Kaliya.

The people of Braj were shocked and anxious at Krishna's dare. Krishna's father Nandagopa and mother Yashoda came running in panic, worried about what would happen to their dear son. The whole village assembled on the banks of the river and everyone started pleading with Krishna to return to the shore.

Krishna however waded further and sought out Kaliya. A fierce struggle ensued between Kaliya and Krishna. At one point, both Krishna and Kaliya disappeared beneath the waters. People on the bank prayed with bated breath.

Krishna suddenly emerged from the waters, dancing on the hood of the fierce Kaliya, holding Kaliya's tail in His hand.



Krishna dancing on Kaliya, Kalinga

Seeing her husband in this plight, Kaliya's wife emerged from the waters and pleaded with Krishna, not to harm Kaliya but to let them off, so that they could go away somewhere far off and not disturb the people of Braj anymore.

Krishna let Kaliya and his family off and peace returned to Braj. The waters of the Yamuna sparkled once again. Krishna and His friends returned to their favourite pastime of grazing and playing by the Yamuna. 

This incident of Krishna subduing Kaliya has come down as *Kalinga Nardhana*, one of the popular tales around Krishna's childhood.



Kalinga Nardhana, Krishna's Dance On Kalinga

It has found a place in everyone's heart and in almost all homes in India through millennia in some form of art or the other, including song and dance.

Under the Hood

Rivers meander by nature. i.e., they take up a new course. In the course of this meandering, as the river moves away, troughs in its earlier path which get cut off from the main stem, retain water and become stagnant and

seasonal pools. Such cut off sections of the rivers are known in geography as Oxbow lakes.

The Krishna-Kaliya episode is expressed as an incident connected with contamination of one such Oxbow. It was not in the main Yamuna, as in a river, the poisons would have been carried away downstream by the flowing waters of the river.



Meandering Yamuna as seen from air and Formation of an Oxbow

Today, this legend of Kaliya has to perhaps be understood and internalized beyond the miracle and beauty of Krishna's dance on the hood of a venomous snake.

Even today, there are people who continue to poison our waters with modern day pollutants and garbage. They are the "*Kaliya*" of today, who need to be identified and suitable steps need to be taken to rescue our water bodies from the inconsiderate acts of such Kaliya.

Krishna and the Gopi

Krishna, as a fun loving, playful, young lad had a joyous time on the banks of the Yamuna River with His childhood friends, the cowherds - both male, the *Gopa* and female, the *Gopi*.

Many stories, sculptures, paintings have been drawn, through the centuries, on the delightful pranks of Krishna. Many have eulogized through poetry, dance and drama, Krishna and His friends teasing the *Gopi*.

Many have painted Krishna as a lad cavorting with the young *Gopika Stree*, maidens of the village.

Many a stories abound on how even married women, finding Krishna irresistible, would leave their meals and husbands just to be with Him.

The stories about the *Lila*, “acts”, “play” of Krishna with the *Gopi*, have come down through millennia through various forms of art, through enchanting tales as well as through spiritual messages.



Krishna and friends teasing the Gopi

RASLILA - DANCING WITH THE GOPI



In Krishna, the Gopi of Vrindavan saw the divine and were keen on obtaining Krishna as a husband. They therefore undertook fasts and prayed fervently with all devotion. Their minds were fixed on Krishna.

One night, the Gopi were drawn to the woods by the mesmerizing notes from Krishna's flute. Leaving everything behind, they rushed to the woods to find that there was a Krishna waiting there for each one of them.

The night was spent dancing with their respective Krishna and rejoicing in His company as though each Gopi was His sole consort and that Krishna belonged to each of them solely. It was a very long night.

The moon came out to cool and brighten up the night with its soft glow. The night breeze was crisp and scented with the intoxicating fragrances from wild flowers.

Peacocks and deer mesmerized by this spell, stayed awake and came to lend colour and sound to the dance. They danced to the music too.

The waters of the Yamuna, as they flowed past, gurgled with joy at this sight.

It was the night of a Raslila.

As this night passed and the dance kept going, the Gopi relished being Krishna's consort and the sole object of His love and attention.

It was a long night but even that gave way to daybreak and the magic came to a halt with the Lila. They had come to the forest at moon rise, with longing for Krishna. Now, before the sun could rise and wake the world, they returned to their homes with pangs of separation.





Popular depiction of Krishna's *Raslila* - Courtesy ISKCON

This incident of Krishna dancing with the *Gopi* has been beautifully described in poetry on Krishna. It is also enacted through various dance forms to this day.

Many have explained this *Raslila* beyond the miracle and beauty in it, for the essence of the spiritual message that lies there for one and all to relish. This *Raslila* has been explained by the realized as a symbolism of the spiritual reunion of the seeker with the Divine.

JALA KREEDA – A PLAY IN WATER

Images of Krishna stealing the clothes of women when they bathed in the river and they begging Him to give their clothes back, have been imprinted onto the minds of many with the colourful stories woven around them.

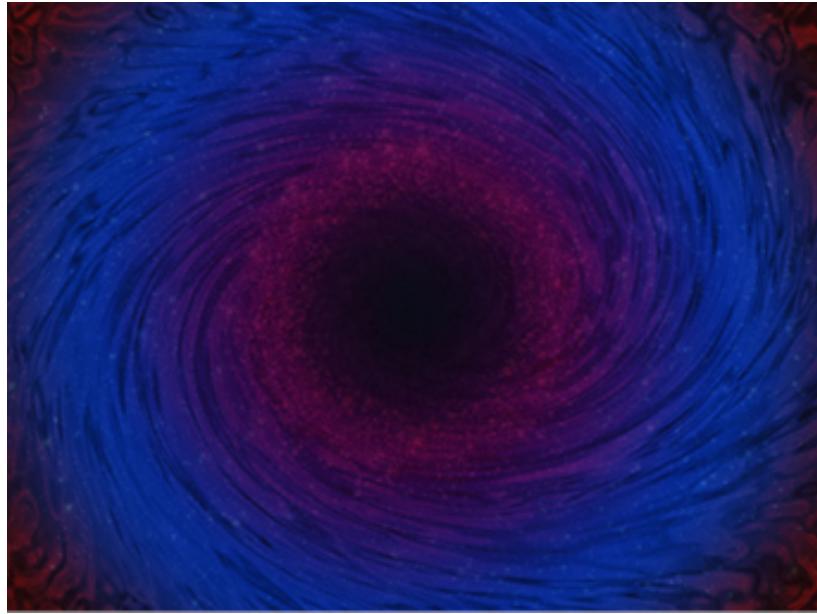
This scene has been ridiculed by many and some have even derogatorily mentioned it as being voyeuristic.

This incident warrants a philosophical enquiry.



Krishna's *Jala Kreedha*, a popular illustration

The word *Kreedha* means play, game, sport. The word *Jala* normally means water. The word *Jala* can also be split into two where *ja* stands for *janaanam*, “birth” and *la* is for *layam*, “to melt”, that which leads to *pralayam*, “dissolution”.



Pralayam

Jananam and *Pralayam*, form a rhythm, a cycle that is represented by each and every body in the Universe. The meaning and concept of *pralayam* is explained in our book “**Understanding Shiva**”.

From origin to dissolution, everything is shrouded in *maya*, illusion.

It is in this play, *jalakreeda*, a play with the word *jala*, that Krishna helps remove the shroud of *maya* from our minds, enabling us to see the real play from *ja* to *la*, from origin to dissolution.

It is this whole play from *ja* to *la* which is the real *ja-la-kreeda*. The setting for this was with the *Gopi*.

THE *GOPA* AND *GOPI*

The word *Gopa* comes from *Go* and *Pa*. *Go* stands for “cow” and *Pa* for “one who looks after”, “nourishes”. *Gopa* literally means “cowherd”, one who tends to cows.

From another perspective, *Gopa* also implies one who cherishes knowledge. This again comes from the roots *Pa* to “cherish”, “nurture”, “look after” and *Go* which also means knowledge. *Gopi* is the feminine gender of *Gopa*.

Gopi is also explained from the root *Pi*, as one who is drunk, consumed by the thirst for divine knowledge, *Go*.

Gopa and *Gopi*, the cow-herd folk, constantly sought Krishna out, surrounded Him and relished spending time with Him.

The *Gopa* and the *Gopi*, their yearning for and cherishing of Krishna, signify symbolically every soul's yearning, thirst and cherish for true knowledge, symbolized by Krishna.

In recent years however, based on looking at the poetic descriptions of such *Lila* at a superficial level, for just the literal meaning of the words used, some have loosely cast the image of Krishna into the mould of a young man who flirted with the *Gopi*.

The *Raslila* dance stands as a metaphor for the emotions of single minded love, devotion and unification with the divine that prevailed in the seeker, the simple *Gopi*.

Krishna, *Gopi* and their *Jalakreeda* also provide an intrinsic insight into the *kreeda* or interplay in the Universe at an ethereal level.

The whole Universe itself is the twinning of the two – the gross and the subtle. The *Lila* of Krishna, gain relevance, meaning, significance when one elevates one's thoughts from the gross, physical level to the subtle, ethereal level. It is the twinning of the two that will help us recognize and realize reality.

THE REALITY – A PRE-TEEN KRISHNA

What is to be recollected very clearly is that, Krishna left Vrindavan before He turned twelve years old. He left for Mathura to meet Kamsa and did not return to Vrindavan after that.

So, when Krishna was playing with the *Gopi* in Vrindavan, Krishna was about the age of twelve. A child of twelve obviously enjoys playing his pranks, irrespective of gender differentiation.

Given this fact, what could have been the intentions of a less than twelve year old child when playing with the milk maids, the *Gopi*, if not innocently playful?

He was a child, delighting all with His pranks.

It is from this perspective that we should look at the light-hearted, lively and lovable deeds of Krishna, as a pre-teen child.

CHERISHING PRANKS

Children by nature are mischievous. To be mischievous is an innate quality of children.

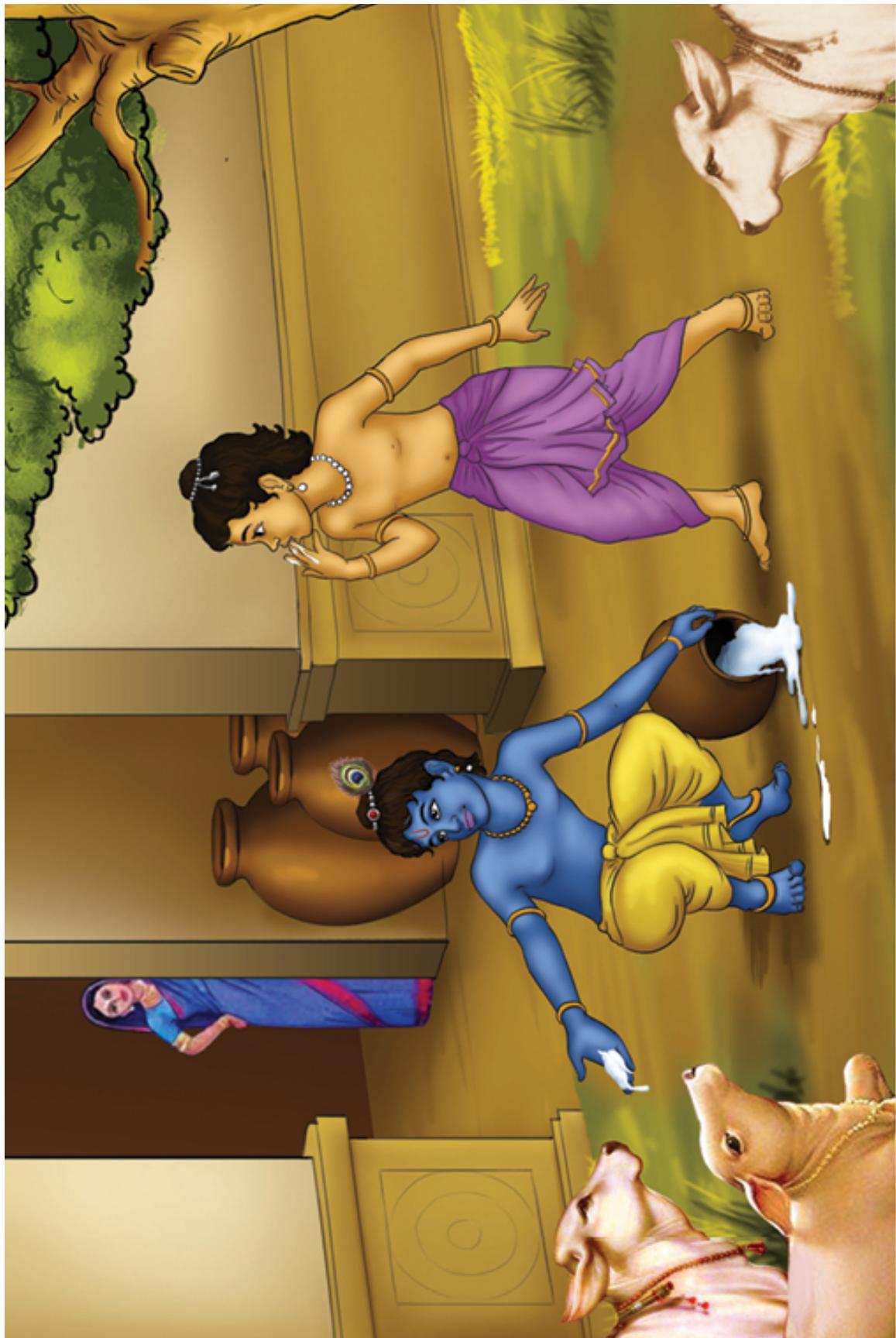
Krishna's precocious pranks are part of the rich folklore of this land. Krishna, His pranks and His lovable, playful ways, set the trend for how people regarded children in the land of India for millennia.

This land, by culture, for the last 5,100 years since the times of Krishna, has viewed children as a replica of Krishna and has relished their pranks as they would Krishna's. The mischief of children has rarely been punished and reprimanded harshly. It has instead been eulogized and happily expressed as an imitation of Krishna.

Given this ethos, when elders admonish their children for their harmless pranks, it is not stern. It has in it an admiration for their innocence and a tolerance with an understanding that by nature, children are given to their ways of pranks.

A culture that gives space for children to grow up with their mischief also automatically gives them the space to grow out of their mischief as a part of the transition from childhood to adolescence.

But what about the fact that when Krishna grew up, He married many times over?



Krishna's pranks

The 16,100 Damsels

DID KRISHNA MARRY 16100 WOMEN?

There are many legends which mention that Krishna married 16,100 princesses. These are later additions that came along with the legends on Krishna's heroic deeds.

One of these legends narrates how Krishna vanquished Narakasura who had held captive several thousands of damsels.



It had been prophesied that Narakasura would die at the hands of a woman. Hence he had all the maidens in his, as well as nearby kingdoms, captured and locked up in prison. Feeling secure that he would no longer be killed, Narakasura went on a rampage causing widespread distress.

Krishna, to put an end to his tyranny, went to battle with Narakasura, accompanied by His valiant wife Sathyabhama, skilled in warfare.

Sathyabhama engaged Narakasura in a duel and killed him. The prophecy had indeed come true. Narakasura finally met his end at the hands of a woman.



Sathyabhama fighting with Narakasura

Krishna then released all the damsels from captivity. Each wanted Krishna to marry them as none else would, since they had been held captive by Narakasura.

As a form of succour, Krishna manifested that many times over, so that, each damsel had her own manifestation of Krishna to marry and live with in Dwaraka, in her own home.



Deepavali – Naraka Chathurdasi

The day Narakasura was vanquished and people were freed of his terror, is celebrated to this day, as *Naraka Chathurdasi*. It falls during the period of *Deepavali* festival. It is called *Chathurdasi*, as it was the fourteenth phase of the dark fortnight of the moon, just one day preceding the New Moon.

Yogamaya

An explanation to the manifestations of Krishna married to each damsel comes from the concept of *Yogamaya*. Krishna is described to have extended Himself yogically to marry and be with each of the rescued damsels as their dedicated spouse, leading the life of a common householder with them.

This concept of *Yogamaya* is as yet unexplainable in science as it seems to go against the normal physical laws known today. But that is the beauty of *Yogamaya* which contains the word *Maya* meaning “illusion” in it.

A Metaphoric Marriage

Another angle to this comes from the fact that Krishna was adorable and everyone was attracted towards Krishna. It is a fact of nature that attraction gives rise to various forms of bonds – bonds of friendship, service, devotion, mentoring, motherliness, brotherhood, guardianship, conjugal bliss, infatuation and so on.

All are various forms of love.

The vast sources of literature produced in different languages, right through the times, across the land, are proof of how Krishna indeed was an object of attraction for many poets and saints – men and women alike. Through their beautiful poetry, they have poured out their feelings for Him.

Some have beheld Him as a divinity, some as a guide, some as a friend, some as a child and some as a lover. Many men too in their poetry have imagined themselves to be a woman in love with Krishna. Such was the charisma of Krishna.

Those who could not mouth lyrics, silently adored Krishna in their own way.

So, it would not be surprising for the maidens released from captivity, to eulogize and look up to Krishna as the prince who had come to save them and therefore think of themselves as a “consort to Krishna”. Eventually this metaphor could have morphed to linger in memories as a fact that Krishna married 16,100 princesses.

A SIMILAR SITUATION

There is an unconfirmed story floating around in recent times. Nevertheless in this context, it does present us with an easy way to understand how the minds of people, world over, across ages, work similarly.

As this story goes,

“A case was filed by a Nun in Eastern Europe, objecting to the veneration of Krishna, saying Krishna had displayed loose morals by marrying thousands of wives.

The response from the people who were venerating Krishna, was to ask the honourable court to read the oath taken by the Nuns in the local seminary and in different parts of the world.

As part of the oath, the Nuns declare that they are married to Jesus, in service to Him.

Using this argument that such an oath implied that Jesus too was married to millions of Nuns, the case was dismissed.”

But such an oath by Nuns the world over, does not mean that Jesus is physically married to all the Nuns. This solemn oath indicates commitment to noble, selfless, lifelong service of Nuns and does not change the status of Jesus.

Similarly in the case of Krishna too, the wish, the prayer, the feelings shown by others towards Him, does not necessarily make Him the party to a physical relationship with them. The yearning of the thousands of damsels does not, from His side, make Him physically married to all of them.

But that does not take away the fact that Krishna is surely with all of them, in their thoughts, throughout their lives.

The 8 Wives of Krishna

Krishna married 8 women as per the norms of the society then.

These 8 queens were called the *Ashta Bharya*, *ashta* meaning “eight” and *bharya* meaning “wives”.

KRISHNA'S EIGHT WIVES – ASHTA BHARYA



Rukmini

We have seen in the section on archaeology how Krishna married Rukmini, the daughter of King Bhishmaka of Vidarbha, by carrying her away when she went to visit a temple.

What is of interest to us here is the proposal from Rukmini.

Finding that her family had fixed a marriage for her with a spiteful king just for the sake of forging an alliance between their kingdoms, Rukmini sends Krishna a letter requesting Him to accept her and carry her away.

She writes of a plan whereby Krishna was to carry her away without harming her people when she visited her family *Devi* temple prior to her wedding arranged by her brother. Failing this, she threatens to end her life.

As per plan, Krishna arrived with His army in time to rescue Rukmini from this marriage of compulsion and carried her off to Dwaraka where He married her amidst all due celebration. Rukmini became Krishna's first and most celebrated queen.

It is to be noted here that it was Rukmini who first requested Krishna to marry her.

The matter in the letter is described in the *Bhagavata Purana*.

This is perhaps one of the early instances of a love letter recorded in history. Here, Rukmini addresses Krishna as *Bhuvana Sundara*, meaning, "the most beautiful person of this world."



Rukmini - Krishna, a Tanjore Art Work

Krishna – Rukmini story is one of the timeless romantic stories of India which continues to keep every listener absorbed and many a girl wishing she were Rukmini, even after 5100 years.



Bhuvana Sundara

You are equal only to yourself,
O Mukunda,
in lineage, character, beauty, erudition,
youthfulness, wealth and power.

O lion among men, which aristocratic,
sensible and marriageable girl,
from a good family
would not select you as her husband,
when the right time arrives ?

Don't let Shishupala touch the kill of a lion.

Having heard of your unparalleled beauty
and wonderful qualities,
I have fixed my shameless mind on you
and have chosen you for my husband, O Krishna.

Vidarba

Rukmini



Jambhavati



King Satrajit possessed the Syamantaka Mani, a precious, mystical gemstone which Krishna desired to have. It so happened that Satrajit was attacked by a lion who made away with the jewel and deposited it in a cave which happened to be inhabited by Jambavan. Unfortunately the blemish of having stolen the gem fell on Krishna and in order to clear his name, Krishna went in search of the gemstone.

His search landed Him in the cave of Jambavan. After a gruelling duel with Jambavan, Jambavan finally conceded to Krishna and handed over the Syamantaka Mani gemstone along with the condition that Krishna should accept his daughter Jambavathi's hand in marriage.

Krishna thus married Jambavathi.





Krishna fighting with Jambavan



Krishna receives *Syamantaka Mani* and Jambavati's hand in marriage

Sathyabhama

When Krishna returned the gemstone to King Satrajit and cleared His name, King Satrajit gifted Him the gemstone instead, along with the hand of his daughter Sathyabhama in marriage to Krishna.

Thus Krishna ended up marrying Sathyabhama.

Sathyabhama is described as a very feisty queen who had an indomitable fighting spirit. She was gifted in archery and warfare. Her ability to engage in intelligent arguments and debates used to hold Krishna captive. She assisted Krishna in many of His efforts for the welfare of His people and mankind.

Kalindi

Kalindi was a maiden whose parents were Surya and Yamuna. She had engaged in severe austerities to win the hand of Krishna and hence Krishna had to oblige her by marrying her as His fourth wife.

Nagnajiti

Nagnajiti, the fifth wife of Krishna, was the princess of Kosala, kingdom, whose capital was Ayodhya, from where Rama had ruled about 2000 years prior to Krishna.

Nagnajiti, also known as Sathya, was the daughter of the king called Nagnajit or Krishna Raja who was ruling Ayodhya then. When Nagnajiti came of age for marrying, her father Krishna Raja announced a *Swayamvara* for her.

Swayamvara was one form by which a marriage was formalized. It was a custom typically followed by royal families. There were various types of *Swayamvara*. The very word *Swayamvara* literally means “self choice”, “to choose a prospect by oneself”. *Swayam* means “self” and *Var* which denotes “a prospective bride or groom”, “a chosen one”, comes as an object from the root *vr*, meaning “to choose”.

Kings, princes and the noble from different parts of the land would be invited to partake in the *Swayamvara*.

In one form of *Swayamvara*, the girl could literally pick and choose her life partner from among those who had accepted the invitation and had come to the *Swayamvara*.

In another form of *Swayamvara*, the groom was chosen from among the invitees based on a contest. The one to win the contest would win the hand of the maiden too. It was one way of choosing the best in the land as a life partner, especially amongst royals, to ensure that the lineage continued with the best blood, among men.

In keeping with the customs of the land, King Krishna Raja too had invited the best of kings and nobles for his daughter’s *Swayamvara*.

Nagnajiti however had been secretly nurturing a love for Krishna in her heart. When her father King Krishna Raja came to know of her love for Krishna, in order to fulfill his daughter’s desires and yet conduct the *Swayamvara* as per norms, he modelled the contest such that it could be won only by someone of the calibre of Krishna.

He designed a contest wherein seven ferocious bulls of the *Asura* Khumbaka, would have to be tamed, a feat that was accomplished only by Krishna among all present. Nagnajiti thus won a husband of her choice in her *Swayamvara*.

The father thus colluded to bring together Krishna and his daughter Nagnajiti.

For Nagnajiti, her father was called Krishna and so was her husband.

Krishna Raja was yet another person by name Krishna in those times.

Mitravrinda

Mitravrinda was the sister of the kings of Avantipura, Vinda and his brother Anuvinda.

Krishna married her as part of a royal alliance between the two kingdoms.

Mitravrinda thus became the sixth wife of Krishna.

Bhadra

Bhadra was the daughter of a distant aunt of Krishna. Bhadra chose Krishna in an open *Swayamvara*, to which He was invited and could not refuse. Thus Krishna gained His seventh wife.

Lakshana

Krishna won His eighth wife Lakshana or Lakshmana in an archery competition.

In this contest, many stalwarts including Duryodhana, Arjuna, Bhima and Krishna were invited. While some could not hit the target, many of them withdrew on seeing Krishna among the participants, either out of friendship for Krishna or sure that they would lose to Krishna.

WIVES WITH A DIFFERENCE

These eight wives of Krishna are recorded in the various texts to have lived amicably amongst themselves. There are some interesting anecdotes involving Rukmini and Sathyabhama though.

They have all been accorded a place of honour in the temple to Krishna in Dwaraka and there is a separate section dedicated to their memory and for their worship.

Did Krishna do the right in marrying 8 wives?

REASONS FOR MULTIPLE MARRIAGES

Contrary to the image of a womanizer, carrying away or luring away women, from the descriptions of the eight marriages, we can see that Krishna did not go about marrying at random.

Each of the marriages arose out of situations where Krishna was compelled to oblige.

Krishna's marriages seem to have been more at the wish of the women who had wanted to marry Him or for royal alliances of those days or arisen out of having won at *Swayamvara* contests, a norm of settling marriages in those days.

One may wonder, why did Krishna have to attend *Swayamvara* after He had already married Rukmini?

Customs of the Land

In a *Swayamvara*, the king or the father of the bride would send invitations to kings, princes, noblemen and other eligible men that he felt would make a suitable match for his daughter. Some of the qualities sought were beauty, fame, valour, character, wealth and lineage. Sometimes contests were held to ensure that the best among the best would win the daughter's hand, thus ensuring a good lineage for her or for cementing a good alliance with the future son-in-law.

It was considered an honour to be invited to a *Swayamvara* and it did not behove someone to decline such invitation. Declining such invites sometimes would result in inviting the wrath of the inviting king.

It should be remembered that Krishna Himself did not have a kingdom. He had left Mathura with His people and come to far away Dwaraka, to establish His own city. In such a situation, in those ancient days, it would

have been natural and the norm for Krishna to ensure that he did not incur the wrath of neighbouring kingdoms and instead to go ahead and forge multiple alliances with different kingdoms to strengthen the position of His own people.

All these marriages took place only after Krishna had moved to Dwaraka, atleast a thousand kilometers away, far away from Mathura and after Krishna had crossed His teens.

Unlike the 16100 damsels, where it could have been a yogic form of Krishna that married them all, here we see Krishna, in His single, physical self, having married eight women as per social norms.

Who was Radha?

Of all the *Gopis* that Krishna used to play with, Radha was His favourite and Krishna was everything to Radha as well.



Radha and Krishna

Some have explained Radha as a concept that denotes pure love and devotion.

Various forms of art have depicted Krishna and Radha as a couple.

Some stories tell us that Krishna married Radha.

Some others describe Radha as a married woman, older to Krishna, who was enamoured by Krishna and sought Krishna's company.

Some have even gone to the extent of writing derogatorily that Radha was a concubine.

In modern times too, Radha has been described by a few, even in learned circles, as a *Gopi* who had a live-in relationship with Krishna.

We have seen how Radha and Krishna were together only in Vrindavan, before Krishna left for Mathura, never to return to Vrindavan ever again. We have also seen how, after slaying Kamsa in Mathura and restoring King Ugrasena on the throne of Mathura, Krishna underwent the thread ceremony and was sent to Sandipani *Ashram* for his *Gurukula*. Krishna then was less than twelve years old.

How could Krishna, a child who may not have attained puberty, not yet in his teens, have had a live-in relationship?

Such statements evidently show a deliberate suppression of real fact while blowing out of proportion an incorrect interpretation of the context and concept of Radha and Krishna relationship.

Such misconceptions could also have set in due to picturizations that show Krishna not as a 10 to 12 year old lad but instead as a young handsome man while in the company of Radha and the *Gopi*.

Comprehending the true essence of such picturizations, needs an indepth understanding of the meaning of "Radha".

How does one explain the Radha - Krishna relationship?

Who was Radha?

HISTORICAL RADHA

Radha has been accorded historical status by various accounts. Legends state that Radha, the *Gopi*, was already a married woman when she met

Krishna.

The husband of Radha was a senior trusted soldier in the army of Kamsa, the wily king of Mathura. Kamsa had deputed Radha's husband to battle in the far ends of his kingdom. It is probably then that Radha spent her time with the local children, especially Krishna and participated in their playful deeds.

To misconstrue this association beyond this, from an immoral perspective, would be incorrect, given the facts of the story.

The birth place of Radha is Brahmasarin, which is now known by the name Barsana. This place is about 45 kilometers from Mathura. Radha's husband's name was Abhimanyu. Jatiladevi was her mother-in-law and Kutiladevi, her sister-in-law.

Radha's father was Vrushabhanu and mother, Kirtida.

All this information is available in *Brahma Vaivarta Purana*, *Padma Purana*, *Narada Purana* and *Garga Samhita*.

Radha was born at noon on *Sukla paksha ashtami* of *Bhadrapada* month, i.e on the 8th day of the increasing phase of the moon in the month spanning across August – September, in present times.

This day falls 14 days after Krishna *Janmashtami* and is celebrated with much gaiety in the birthplace of Radha at Barsana and also all over *Braj Bhumi* as *Radhashtami*.

How did this Radha come to be looked up to as the soulmate of Krishna?

POPULARIZATION OF RADHA

The Radha-Krishna love story was popularized by a few poets, primarily,

- Jayadeva
- Surdas

•
Rasika Trayi (the 3 connoisseurs)

Swami Haridas
Hita Harivansha
Hariram Vyas

Jayadeva

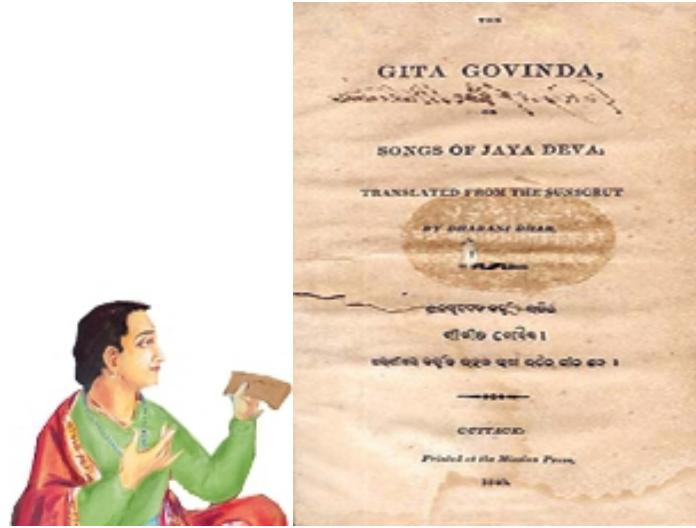
Jayadeva composed the *Gita Govinda* in the 12th Century CE. He wrote his poetry in Orissa, in the famous temple of Puri Jagannath. His poetry, *Gita Govinda*, which is one of the early works of the “*Bhakthi Movement*” is based on the divine love between Radha and Krishna.

Jayadeva portrays so beautifully the love between Radha and Krishna, that whether man or woman, when one reads the poetry or listens to the songs, one relates to Radha and goes through the pangs of boundless love for Krishna, the divine being.

The entire imagery and portrayal of Krishna is such that, when one's thought dwell on Krishna, one experiences a sudden surge of benign love. Irrespective of age, gender and status, it creates a feeling of Krishna hovering around, smiling and extending His arms to embrace as a sign of affection and succour. For each individual, it creates a personal experience of sharing love with Krishna mutually.

Such a mutual exchange, which in the Indian language is known as *Parasparam*, is the whole aura behind the universal love between Radha and Krishna.

It was such a love that was extolled by Jayadeva in his *Gita Govinda* and *Ashtapadi*.



Gita Govinda by Jayadeva

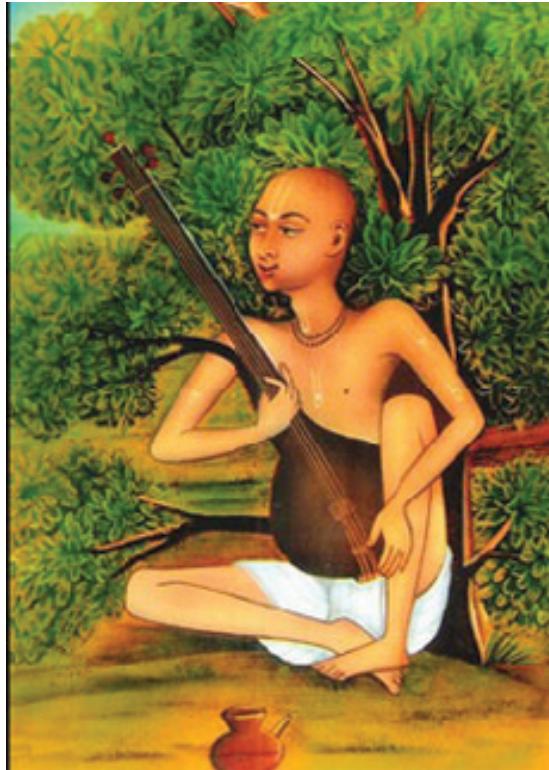
Surdas



Surdas

Surdas, the blind poet from the *Braj Bhumi* region, who lived between 1478 and 1573 CE, whose devotion, *Bhakthi* and songs have become part of the local folklore and the musical heritage of the land, further popularized this *Bhakthi* and spread the message of love through the songs of Radha and Krishna.

Rasika Trayi



Swami Haridas

Trayi means “three” and *Rasika* means “connoisseurs”. *Rasika Trayi* were the trio of connoisseurs-*Swami* Haridas, Hita Harivansha and Hariram Vyas, who eulogized the platonic, universal love between Radha and Krishna.

The poetry of Hariram Vyas titled, **Mann ki Shrinkhala Raaspanchadhyayi** is very popular in the *Braj Bhumi* area.

The works of all these medieval poets, who lived in the last thousand years, about four thousand years after the time of Krishna, immortalized the love of Radha and Krishna through the *Bhakti* movement and created this lovely aura of the love between Radha and Krishna. Their songs made Radha the undisputed heroine among many anonymous *Gopi Sthree*.

If this is so, then why is the name Radha celebrated so much with Krishna?

To seek an answer to this question, we collated the mention of Radha and the connotation in which it has been mentioned, from various ancient texts of the land.

MEANING OF RADHA

Rig Veda

In *Rig Veda*, 3.33.12 the word *Radha* is mentioned, but it has got no correlation to the Radha who is regarded as Krishna's consort.

Bhagavata Purana

This *Purana* gives us maximum details of the story of Krishna. In this *Purana*, in the chapter on *Krishna Leela*, which deals with the divine acts of Krishna, there is no reference to Radha.

Brahma Vaivarta Purana

In this *Purana*, the word *Radha* is etymologically analyzed and expressed.

Yielding to Bhakti

- *Ra* means to give, to yield
- *Dha* means to leave, to let go, to wish to give, to wish to gain, to strive after, to fix mind upon

These two syllables when joined together as “*Radha*”, give a very interesting interpretation.

It is only when we “*give in*” and “*let go of ourselves*” with “*our mind fixed upon*” the truth, can “*we gain*” the realization of the true self within ourselves as well as the universal divinity. If we hold back, there is no gain.

The word *Radha*, aptly suggests that we give ourselves in, fully, to realize the divinity that encapsulates us and this whole Universe, of which we are but a part.

Radha thus embodies the act of complete and unconditional surrender, which is also known as *Sharanagathi*, surrendering at the feet of the divine. Pure *Bhakti*, devotion, is when one unconditionally gives oneself unto the other.

Krishna, through His teachings brought to people's attention, the existence of a supreme consciousness, *Paramatma*, which is part of everything in this Universe as well as beyond everything in this Universe. That which can offer complete bliss only when one merges with it unconditionally through a surrender of everything – ego, intellect, mind, body and senses.

Such a devotion and admiration of the *Gopi* towards the adorable Krishna, was symbolized and personified by *Radha* the word and Radha, the *Gopi* in later day poetry like that of Jayadeva.

Yielding to Bliss

Such poetry also describe that while Radha, as a *Gopi* pined for Krishna, Krishna too felt a sense of intense pleasure only in the company of Radha.

This aspect of Radha – Krishna relationship can be derived from another etymological meaning of the word *Radha*.

- *Ra* also means “pleasing”
- *Dha* also means “to possess”

Radha from this, is one who is pleasing to all, who possesses such a quality that it evokes a sense of pleasure.

The literal meaning of the word Radha thus conveys a physical perspective to Radha.

But in conjunction with Krishna's teachings about the concept of souls, *Paramatma*, the supreme, cosmic soul and *Jeevatma*, the individual soul, Radha denotes a very profound union. Radha denotes that aspect of pleasure, fulfilment that even the *Paramatma* derives, when the *Jeevatma* merges, dissolves in it both in thought and in existence. Krishna represents

the longing *Paramatma* and the *Gopi*, Radha specifically, the seeking *Jeevatma*.

This message that even the cosmic soul longs to unite with the individual souls, grew to form the foundation of the *Bhakti* movement.

This profound idea can also be seen corroborated by another independent thought of ancient India.

Yielding to Stability

Modern science describes the Universe as continuously evolving into a more stable state, with the passage of time, post the moment of Creation, the Big Bang.

Ancient Indian thought on the contrary, calls the state of the Universe before the Big Bang as stable, *nithyam*. *Nithyam* means that which does not change, that which is content in being itself. From the moment of Creation, the Universe becomes *anithyam* or unstable, ever changing, seeking to return to the stable state once again.

Thus the Universe with its cosmic soul is portrayed as always wanting to reunite with its *bhaktas*, the individual souls, after which it returns to its stable state once again, the state of everlasting bliss and calm.

Aradhana

In the *Samskrt* language, the word *Radha* can also be derived from the other root word “*radh*” meaning “to strive for”, “to perform”, “to propitiate”. It is from this *radh*, *Radha*, that we get the word *aradhana*. When we strive to propitiate the divine, the *aradhana* is an internalized expression of the yearning to be in consonance with the divine Nature.

Other Literature

<i>Venisamhar</i>	Bhattnarayana	750 CE
<i>Dhwaryaloka</i>	Anandwardhan	850 CE
<i>Saraswatikanthabharan</i>	Bhoja	1066 CE
<i>Dashawatara</i>	Kshemendra	1066 CE
<i>Nalchampu</i>	Trivikrambhatt	10 th Cent CE
<i>Gathasaptashati</i>	Hala	
<i>Panchatantra</i>	Vishnu Sharma	
<i>Dashrupak</i>	Dhananjaya	
<i>Vikramankdevcharita</i>	Bilhana	
<i>Bajjalagga</i>	Maratta Prakit text	
<i>Jain text</i>	Jainacharya Hemchandra writes on seclusion of Radha in his grammer work	

Other literature pre-dating Jayadeva with the mention of Radha

Dictionaries

There are three primary dictionaries in *Samskrta* literature. A search for the usage and meaning of the word *Radha* yields the following.

Amarakosa

Amarakosa is the dictionary in which the term Radha has been described as

- full moon of *Vaisakha Poornima*. *Poornima* means Full Moon and *Vaisakha* is a month, typically April – May.
- love
- affinity
- daughter of Vrashbhanugopa
- the beloved of Krishna

The very word *Radha* thus has got the love, affinity and the beauty of a Full Moon.

Radha would have been one among the many *Gopi* playing with Krishna and enjoying His pranks.

The poets of the *Bhakti* movement used the word Radha, which means love, affinity, Full Moon and seemed to have developed on it in the form of the person Radha, to express and bring forth their *Bhakti*, universal love for Krishna.

Shabdakalpadruma

Here Radha is synonymous with

- *Vishakha nakshatra*, the star Vishakha known as Zubenelgenubi in Libra
- Vishnukanta
- Vidyutitibhedini

Radha in Anuradha

Vishakha, Zubenelgenubi is a double star system along with its companion Zubeneschamali. This double star system can be seen with the naked eyes. They form the extended claws of the Scorpio constellation.

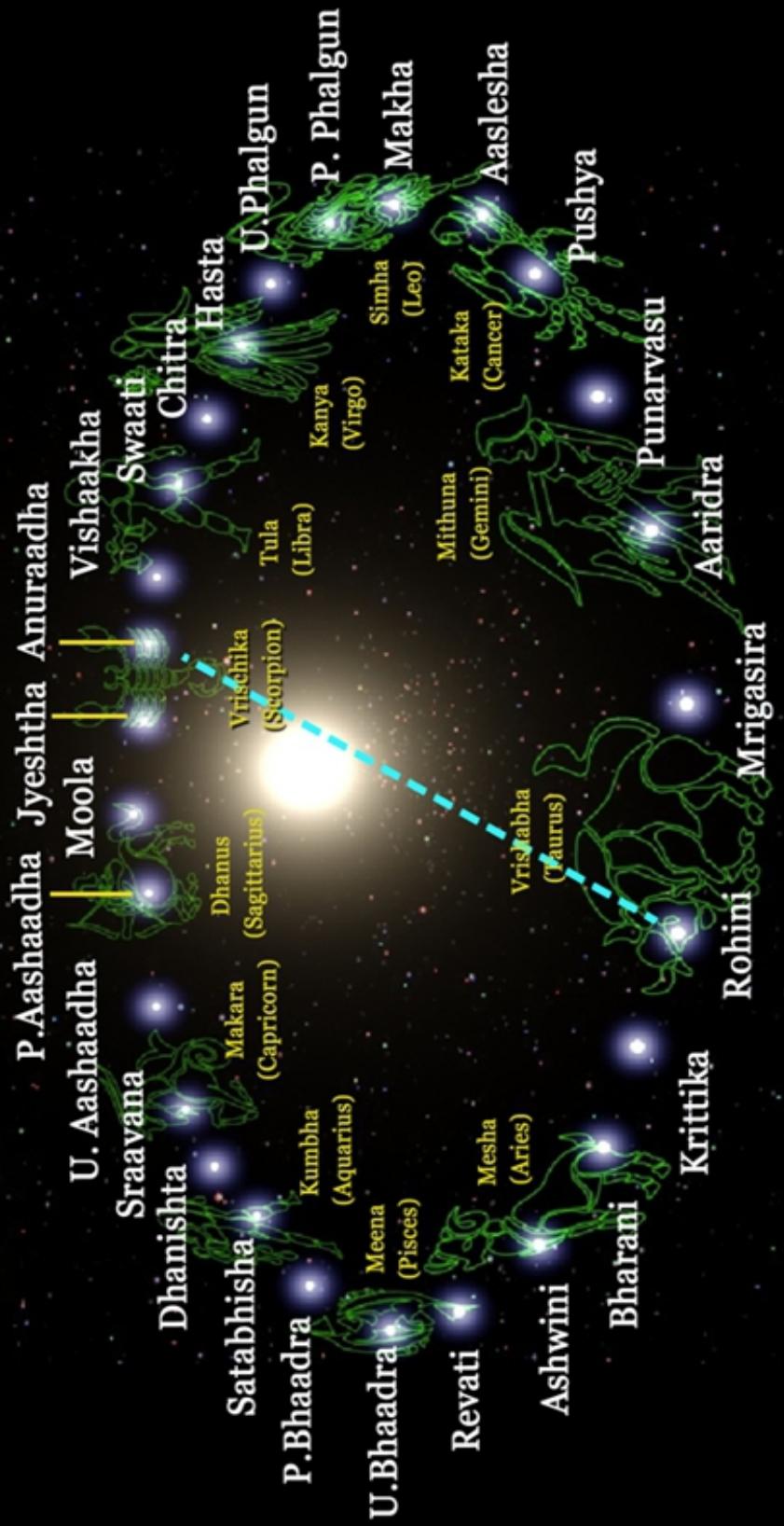
This definition of *Radha* brings out the celestial nature in the name *Radha*.

By associating *Radha* with the *Vishakha* double star system, it again brings out the Radha – Krishna duality. It is interesting to note that Radha's birth star, *Janma Nakshatra* was *Anuradha*, a star that is adjacent to this double star, *Vishakha* epitomizing the Radha – Krishna pair.

Anuradha is also diagonally opposite to *Rohini*, the star of Krishna's birth. They thus took the legend into the sky to express it through astronomy.

Vrischika
Scorpio





Nirukta by Yaska

Nirukta is a work on etymology compiled by *Rishi* Yaska.



Yaska writing *Nirukta*

It is one of the authoritative works on the meaning of the words in *Samskr*t language. *Nirukta* is used to understand the range of meanings of the words mentioned in the *Veda*.

In the *Nirukta*, the word *Radha* means “wealth”. Wealth is that which one can gain and yet one has to leave behind.

The one wealth that is indiminishable in this world and grows with giving is love.

Radha thus became centre to the *Bhakti* movement poetry centred around love for the divine.

Radha – Relish, Relate, Appreciate

From the exhaustive analysis of the word, *Radha* and the root *Ra* also meaning “that which is pleasing”, “that which is to be relished”, what comes out clear is that every time we utter the word *Radha*, it is to relish, relate and appreciate the divinity within the self as well as in others and the Supreme consciousness. It is to revel in the unbounded love that binds us all together.

RADHA – UNDERSTANDING HER IN 3 WAYS

Radha can be understood at different levels -

1. at the historical level,
2. at the etymological level and
3. at the cosmic level.

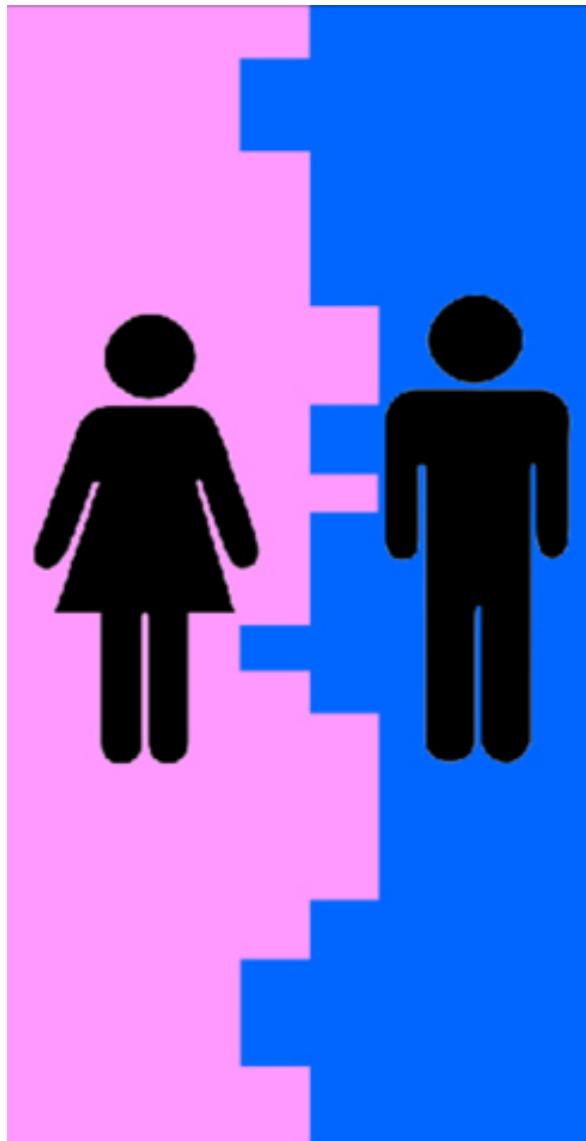
We have already seen the first two.

Taking on from the etymological level, at the cosmic level, the relationship, the interplay between Radha and Krishna can be seen as complementary.

Sama – Saha

As man and woman, they complement each other, not as equals in the modern sense of the word “equals”. Genders cannot be equated as “equals”. Each is unique and has intrinsic strengths and purposes.

Instead of equating the two, when we work towards capitalizing on the innate strengths of each other and filling in for the gaps in each other, it makes the genders complementary to each other.



Man and Woman as complementary to one another

That is why the relationship between husband and wife, in Indian thought, is expressed not as *Sama* or same, equal but as *Saha*, which means complementary, together. The wife is therefore called a *Saha Dharmi*, one who complements. Husband and wife play complementary roles in society as they perform their *Dharma*, duties together.

Complementary is when the two recognize their differences, allow each to play to their strengths and support each other in times of need. It brings in a balance to their relationship and in the society overall.

It is all about “give and take”.

The Eternal Need

It is a Nature created jigsaw and Nature herself has provided the solution in the form of innate differences between the different beings in Nature.

An equilibrium sets in with the need for one another and the dependence on one another.

The need for one another exists between man and woman.

It exists between the male and female genders of all species including plant, insects, birds and animals.

This need exists between all species on the earth.

It exists between the species and the earth itself.

It exists between earth, the moon and other planets.

It exists between the planets and the sun.

It exists between the sun and the galaxy.

It exists between the various galaxies in the cosmos.

It finally exists between the consciousness in individual bodies and the cosmic consciousness itself.

This need for one another, creates an eternal bond, an universal bond.

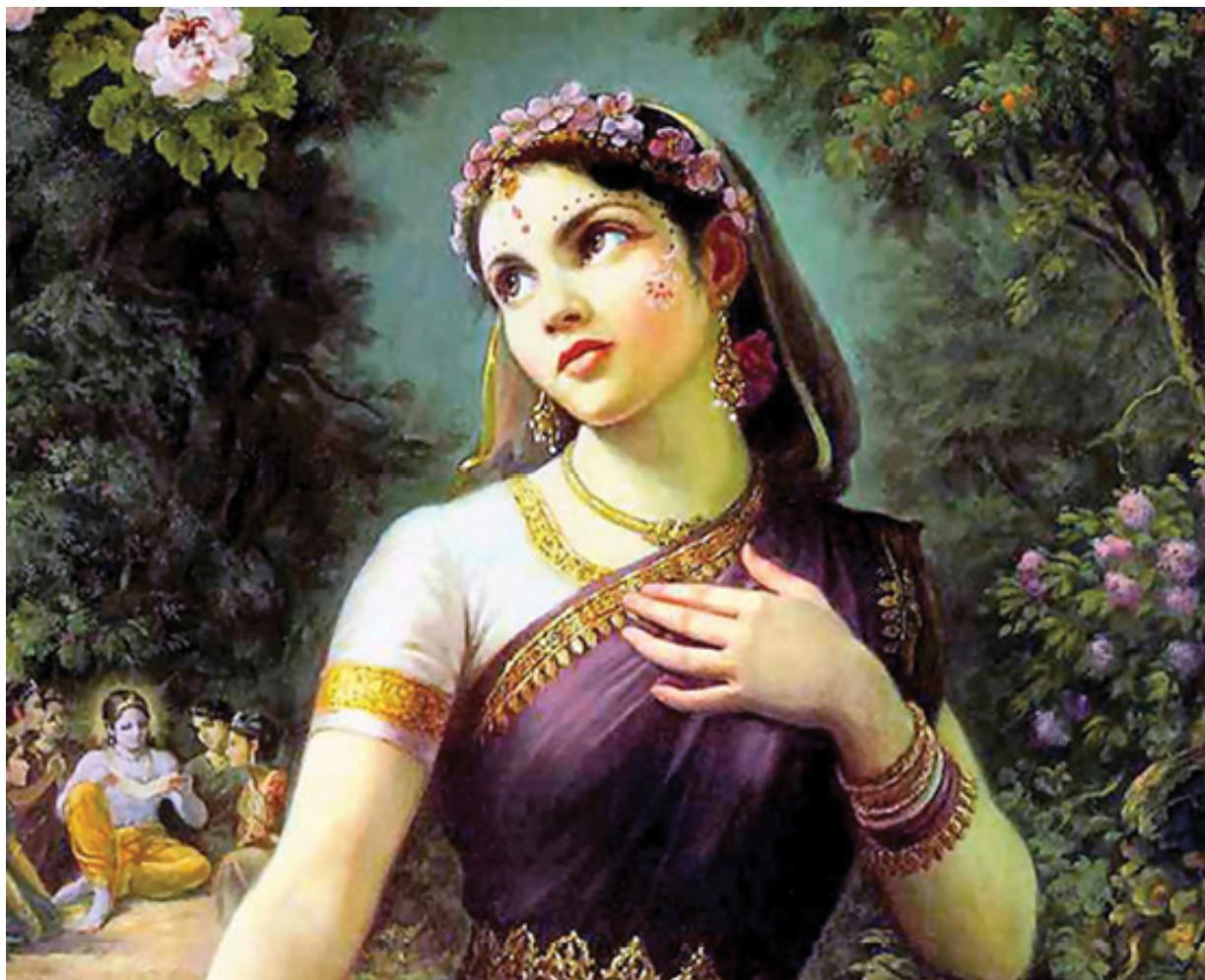
Radha and Krishna symbolize this eternal bond in the Universe that arises out of the need for one another between each and every entity that has come out of Creation.

Radha needs Krishna and His soulful music to feel happy and Krishna cannot produce the soulful music without Radha. They are both incomplete without each other.

The concept of this interplay between Radha and Krishna is not to be limitedly understood as a sexual chemistry between a man and a woman. It is a symbolic expression of the physics, chemistry and biology in the cosmos. It is the interplay of the subtle forces of Nature, expressed

pictorially in a human form for the commoner to understand and relish in terms that one can easily relate to at a personal self.

THE BEAUTY IN RADHA



Radha - An ISKCON Illustration

16100 vs 8 vs 1

In the case of the 16100 damsels, we see a case where individual yogic forms of Krishna married the 16100 damsels individually and led separate lives of married bliss with each of them.

In the case of the 8 wives of Krishna, we see Krishna in His single physical form having married and lived as per social norms of those times.

In the case of Radha, we see the converse. A symbolic idea and a profound message, being given a physical shape through Radha the *Gopi* and being paired with Krishna so much so that, over time it became Radha, who is now world over celebrated as the most beloved consort of Krishna. It is the beautiful idol of Radha that stands beside Krishna in many of the temples world over today.

A Profound Symbolism

The profound idea that Radha symbolises, seems to have been left behind in the passage of time. Radha is now just an object of beauty, whose claim to fame seems to be her association with Krishna.

This is the beauty to be seen in the history of civilizations – how time and the power of evolution can change memories, thoughts and perspectives.

But the beauty of the inner self, the beauty in Nature around and the beauty in the all pervading Divine consciousness, does not change. It continues to stay as beautiful, waiting to be discovered and relished by each generation. All it takes is to dare to surrender oneself wholly to this beauty.

That is the beauty in Radha and the beauty in Radha - Krishna.

The Govardhan Giri Episode – Lifting A Mountain



The people of Braj were absorbed in preparing for the annual worship of Indra. Preparations were on in a large scale and all attention in Braj was only on Indra and His worship. All other day to day activities had come to a stand still.

Krishna was a little boy watching all the goings on with His group of cowboy playmates. After enquiring and learning about the worship to Indra, Krishna called the people of Braj and reasoned with them that instead of praying to Indra, they must pray and pay more attention to the fields, the lakes, the pastures on the hills, the cows and other things around them that helped them with day to day living. He convinced them to pray to Govardhan Giri, the hill called Govardhan instead.

Heeding to the sense in little Krishna's words, the people of Braj offered prayers to Govardhan Giri that year, instead of offering worship to Indra. Suddenly as a sign of Indra's wrath, the land of Braj was covered by thick, dark clouds and it started raining heavily in Braj. People started running helter skelter looking for shelter from this torrential downpour which did not seem to halt. The cows and other animals were the most affected.

They all ran to Krishna asking Him for a way to stop this since it was His advice which had brought it all about. Krishna then went to Govardhan Giri and lifted it on His little finger just as one would hold an umbrella and asked everyone, with their animals, to come under the hill for shelter.

It rained and poured for 7 days and 7 nights. Finally after Indra's wrath wore out, thunder and rains stopped and calm returned to Braj.

The people of Braj settled down to a new lifestyle in awe of Krishna's feat and with respect for their work and Nature.

This Govardhan Giri episode is one of the defining stories among the legends of Krishna.

GROUND REALITY

On ground, 26 km west of Mathura, is a narrow sandstone hill, about 8 km in length. This hill is known as Giriraj or Govardhan and has been a pilgrimage site for thousands of years.

We have seen that Krishna left Mathura, Vrindavan, around the age of twelve, never to return to Vrindavan again. This indicates to us that this episode of Govardhan Giri must have occurred prior to that, when Krishna was a child, ten or eleven years old.

If Krishna is historical, is it humanly possible for someone to lift a hill, that too a little child, with the little finger?



Krishna lifting Govardhan Giri on His little finger - a panel sculpted in Mahabalipuram

LIFTING MOUNTAINS

We can find answers to our questions if we elevate ourselves and look at this episode from a symbolic perspective.

The word *Govardhan* has its etymological meaning. The word *Go* apart from meaning “cow”, also means “knowledge”. The word *Vardhana* means “increasing”, “uplifting”.

True knowledge uplifts a person. When we uplift ourself through knowledge, the heaviness, the mountain of ignorance is removed.

In this Govardhan Giri episode, Krishna was trying to turn the attention of people away from Indra.

Indra in the Vedic concept among other meanings, also means, “collective consciousness”. *Indra* also means, “senses”, “sensory perceptions”.

From this meaning of collective consciousness and senses, the word *Indra* in this context could well mean “mob or group psychology”. It denotes a state where people, society, blindly followed something without a proper understanding.



Indra

Different aspects assume prominence at different times, depending upon the dictates of time and needs – the physical and psychological needs of man. This has been changing periodically through time.

Krishna, in lifting the Govardhan Giri, lifts the veil of ignorance among the people, which collectively was on the way to becoming a blind, mob psychology perhaps following rituals blindly.

This incident of Govardhan Giri probably also indicates the shift, a lessening of the prominence of Indra with changing times.

GO-ING TOWARDS KNOWLEDGE

Go also means movement, achievement, freedom.

Krishna, through the Govardhan Giri episode, steered them towards achieving harmony with Nature by focussing their attention on performing their daily chores bearing in mind the dependency of man on Nature.

Through this Govardhan Giri episode and bringing people under the shade of Govardhan, Krishna was bringing people to the fountainhead of knowledge and re-emphasizing the need for rational thought, physical sciences and knowledge in one's daily life.

Rituals gain predominance with passage of time while the core ideals for which they were started get buried within. Krishna was for rationalizing, understanding knowledge and acting in accordance with it.

This day, when the veil of ignorance was lifted, is celebrated to this day, as Govardhan *Puja*. It is celebrated a day after *Deepavali*, the festival of lights, symbolizing how Krishna brought the light of knowledge back into the lives of the people of His times.



Giriraja Puja at Govardhan hills

This act speaks volumes for the rational, practical approach of Krishna even at a tender young age.

Krishna went on to scientifically and logically explain,

- the process of Creation of the Universe
- the concept of *Dharma*, the characteristic principle that rules the Universe and everything in it
- the cyclic and spiral principle in the Cosmos
- the structure and similarity in the Universe all the way from the Cosmic Egg, down to the structure of a society, for it to function as a cohesive unit

- the importance of doing one's *Karma*, duties, befitting one's role in society - one's *Dharma* and
- finally, the ability to discern one's consciousness from one's physical surrounds and act in an unemotional, detached manner aligned with one's *Dharma*, maintaining a balanced attitude to pain and pleasure, gain and loss as well as success and defeat.

The Parting Of Yamuna – A Miracle?

THE YAMUNA CROSSING



It was midnight when baby Krishna arrived on earth inside the prison of His wicked uncle Kamsa.

As though aware of the gravity of the situation, the new born baby lay quietly by the side of His mother Devaki. Vasudeva, Krishna's father, was anxiously shifting his gaze between his newborn son and the prison doors, afraid that the guards may arrive any moment and see the child. To his surprise, he found that the guards had all fallen asleep as though in a state of stupor. The chains at his feet had come loose and the prison doors too had come ajar. He immediately read the signs that he was being shown the way to save his child. He decided to take Krishna and leave Him with his friend Nandagopa on the other side of the Yamuna.

Making haste, he quickly bundled baby Krishna into a basket and walked out of the prison with the child, hoping to make it to his friend Nandagopa's house and back before daybreak, before the prison guards could find out anything amiss.

It was raining heavily that night and the winds were howling at a feverish pitch. Reaching the banks of the Yamuna, he wondered how he would manage to cross her safely with the child in such weather. Alone, he could have swum across. But he now had a baby.

Yet surprisingly, when he stepped into the waters, he found Yamuna parting and making way for them to cross over. The waters seemed to be leaping, wanting to touch the feet of Krishna but not daring to go any higher.



Krishna being carried by Vasudeva across the Yamuna River in spate

Vasudeva had a feeling that a hooded snake was following him, spreading his hood as an umbrella for Krishna. Overawed, he dared not to turn and look. He kept walking till he reached the other bank. He left Krishna with Nandagopa and returned to the prison just in time before the guards woke up.

Yamuna returned to flowing in her usual manner as though she had seen nothing, she knew nothing and she had done nothing.



**If Krishna is historical and not a myth, how can this be explained?
Was it a miracle, an exaggeration or an imagination?**

THE RED SEA CROSSING FROM THE BIBLE

On similar lines, various teams have been working to understand and solve the Biblical mysteries, one of them being the parting of the Red Sea when Moses led his people, the Hebrews, out of Egypt.



Moses



Parting of Red Sea

One of the theories that has been put up to explain this as a natural, but rare phenomenon, is based on the principle of Wind Set Down.

A WIND SET DOWN

One of the experts who has been working on this theory, is scientist Prof. Doran Nof, Oceanography Department, Florida State University.



Prof Doran Nof and Florida State University



University Logo

According to the Wind Set Down theory, when winds blow continuously for a sustained duration, from the shores of a water body, towards the inside of the water body, at speeds around 100 mph and if the water depths happen to be shallow in that region, the winds can succeed in pushing the waters further inside, away from the shore.



If the land under the water body also contains undulating ridges, then the receding waters could get contained within the troughs and can create stretches of dry areas within the water body, especially on top of the ridges.

Once the winds die down, the waters will gush back into that land at a much higher speed.

The time period for the event of the Red Sea crossing is estimated to have been around 1500 BCE.

Based on this Wind Set Down theory, the sea levels then, the Biblical descriptions and other logical analysis, Prof. Nof and Nathan Paldor of the Institute of Earth Science at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem have identified the route that must have been taken by Moses. They have zeroed in on the place where Moses must have crossed the Red Sea safely and

how once the winds died down, all the soldiers of the Pharoah would have got trapped and drowned by the parted waters gushing back.

MIRACLE ON YAMUNA

Similarly on the night of Krishna's birth, there was heavy rain, accompanied by gusty winds, thunder and lightning. The Yamuna was also in spate. The gusty winds accompanied by the other conditions described, could well have been an ideal condition for a 'wind set down' phenomenon to have occurred there in the Yamuna river too making it possible for Vasudeva to carry the just born Krishna, in a basket, and walk across the Yamuna.

Yamuna, a smaller river then

It is to be borne in mind that Yamuna was a smaller and shallower river then. Sarasvati was a much larger, flowing river then.

Tamas was then a tributary of the Sarasvati, before it turned east to join the Yamuna much later in time.

Even now in the Mathura Agra belt, Yamuna is a shallow river. This is noticeable before summer, when the water is lowest in the river. It is sometimes easy to ford the river then, on foot.



Dry Bed of Yamuna River

MYSTIFYING MIRACLES

Krishna is eulogized for the miracles He performed during His childhood as well as later in life. The list is long and the parting of the Yamuna is one of the first few miracles to find place in this list.

From the Red Sea parting study, we see that the parting of Yamuna too has a scientific explanation.

We have seen how the 16100 wives of Krishna and the dance with the *Gopi*, have an answer in the concept of *Yogamaya*.

We have also seen how the *Mahabharata* grew from the original 8800 verses to over 100,000 verses.

It is possible that over time, with increasing popularity of Krishna as divine, some incidents could have found their way into the epic or other allied texts, legends and practices of the land, in the form of miracles to convey awe of the divine.

It is also possible that over time, in future, as science advances, it could stretch into understanding some of the subtler aspects as well. This in turn

could lead to a better understanding of Krishna's miracles, acts.

Time alone can tell what really happened.

Time alone can tell what will happen.

Did Krishna Push For War?

Krishna's preachings to Arjuna to go ahead and fight against his own kith and kin in discharging his duty, has been quoted out of context as being provocative. Many have even called Krishna, "a war monger".

The reality is far from this for,

1. Krishna was the Peace Messenger before the war
2. Advising someone to do one's duty after coming to the battlefield cannot be construed in any stretch of imagination as war mongering.

The doubts that Krishna clarifies in the battlefield are similar to the doubts that every human being has in waging their daily battles of life. Thus Krishna uses the occasion to express what one's duty and purpose of life is for all, through Arjuna.

His message to Arjuna was a call to duty - in thought, word and action, which has stood the test of time for 5100 years both in debate and in action. Which is why, it is revered as *Bhagavad Gita*, the "Song of God".

ACTS TO THE CONTRARY

If Krishna were a war monger, then instead of leaving Mathura and going to Dwaraka, He would have stayed back for a fight to the finish, with Jarasandha and his army.

Probably, even at a young age, Krishna had felt that discretion was sometimes the better part of valour and had moved with His people to Dwaraka, to start a new life.

Strategically moving away, , inspite of having defeated Kamsa in an open battle and then installing Kamsa's father back on the throne of Mathura,

speaks of Krishna's maturity in not coveting what was not rightfully His. At that time, Kamsa's father Ugrasena, who was old by then, had offered the throne to Krishna.

Krishna however declined to accept the throne of Mathura and moved on to Dwaraka.

Krishna probably felt then, that if He continued to stay on in Mathura, there could be repeated reprisals from Jarasandha's army and the brunt of these attacks would have to be borne by the army and the people of Mathura. They would have to face the repercussions of these wars.

As Jarasandha's enmity was with Krishna, He probably felt, that if He moved away, then peace would prevail among the people of the two kingdoms, two big cities of those times.

This was a strategic move by Krishna. His decision, not to stay on in Mathura and fight with Jarasandha, shows his maturity in trying to avoid unnecessary bloodshed.

It also brings to light that Krishna was not a war monger, but a strategist.

RANCHOR – WALKING AWAY FROM BATTLE

For this selfless, strategic act of leaving Mathura to avoid constant wars with Jarasandha, Krishna has sometimes even been called *Ranchor*, *Ranchod*, “one who walked away from battle.”

This name however is not used derisively, which is why, even to this day, many people are called *Ranchor* or *Ranchordas*.

Rann is battle, *rann bhumi* is battlefield in the *Samskrta* language and many other languages of India and South East Asia.



Krishna as Ranchodrai in Dakor temple

PEACE AMBASSADOR

When it was time to go to the Hastinapura court to demand their rightful share of property, it was Krishna that the *Pandava* chose to represent them.

It was Krishna whom the *Kaurava* and the elders in the court of Dhritarashtra were willing to hold negotiations with, as a peace ambassador.

All these incidents prove with certainty that Krishna was not a war monger.

Then why did Krishna counsel Arjuna to fight the battle against his granduncles and cousins?

The answer to these questions lie within Krishna's *Upadesha*, counsel to the very same Arjuna, called the "**Bhagavad Gita**".

Dwaraka – A Short Lived City

Dwaraka city for all its name and fame was a very short lived city. Dwaraka was built by a *Vishwakarma*, at the request of Krishna, when He moved from Mathura to Dwaraka. When Krishna left Brindavan for Mathura, He was around 12 years old. At Mathura, He slayed Kamsa and restored peace and rightful rule in Mathura. But Krishna could not stay on in Mathura for long due to Jarasandha's constant call for war. He left Mathura after a few years and went down South, finally reaching Kushasthali, on the west coast. It was there that He built Dwaraka.

So, when Krishna had Dwaraka built, He must have been around 20 years old.

This city, Dwaraka, built on land reclaimed from the sea with dyke like retainer walls, earned its fame not just in India and the legends of India, but also the world over then. It evolved to become the port city of ancient India, earning it the name *Dvarika*, *Dwaraka*. *Dvar*, *Dwar* meaning “door way”, “gateway”.

Dwaraka became the ancient gateway to India from the western seas, attracting maritime traders from all over the world.



[Dwaraka](#)

This city was totally destroyed in a huge tsunami in the year 3031 BCE as we have seen. Krishna too departed from this world at this time. His age then was 81.

The difference between 81, the age when Krishna departed from this earth and 20, the age when Krishna had this city of Dwaraka built, works out to 60 years.

So, just 60 years after its establishment, this city was swallowed up by the sea and today it lies about 6 metres below sea level, off the coast of the present day town of Dwaraka. For all its name, fame and grandeur, this city was inhabited only for about 60 years and that too about 5100 years ago.

Its legacy though, has survived to this date.

This city finds mention among the 7 most ancient and holy cities, *Sapta Moksha Puri* of India, the relevant *sloka* being,

*Ayodhya Mathura Maya Kasi Kanchi Avantika Puri
Dvaravati chaiva saptaita mokshadayikah*

- *Garuda Purana I XVI .14*

This speaks volumes for the city of Dwaraka and for its historical leader Krishna.

Krishna Lingers On

KEEPING VALUES ALIVE

One of the defining factors that visibly distinguishes humans from animals, is the virtues that humans exhibit in their day to day living. It is values that make generations and civilizations into living models. When values perish, civilizations also perish. This land of India, this civilization, has survived because of its values.

Krishna has been one such person, who has defined values for mankind to live by, with His words and deeds indeed.

The various noble people across the land, who succeeded Him, took these virtues to the people through their songs, dances, paintings, sculptures and other art forms, making this land a virtuous place to live in. Krishna continues to live amidst us in all these forms.

Not many are aware that Krishna also continues to live amidst us through relics from His times spread across the geography of this land besides Dwaraka in the West and *Braj* in the North where He had spent most of His times on earth.

UDUPI – AN IDOL TO REKINDLE MEMORIES

In the south west coast of India, in the town of Udupi, Krishna continues to give us a glimpse of His childhood form through an idol that He had gifted to Rukmini, His wife more than 5100 years ago.

As legends tell, in order to satisfy His mother Devaki's desire to relive the moments of His childhood, Krishna had an idol sculpted out of *Saligrama*

stone by Vishwakarma, the architect. This idol was later given to Rukmini. After Krishna's and Rukmini's times, this idol in Dwaraka got buried and covered in the sand of that region called *Gopichandan*.

A sailor sailing out of Dwaraka, found this heavy piece of sand and used it as a ballast for his boat. While sailing near Udupi, his boat was caught up in a storm and was rescued by the local Saint, Madhvacharya who seeing this piece of *Gopichandan* requested for and obtained it from the sailor.

Madhvacharya then cleared all the sand and took the idol of Krishna inside to Udupi where he had it installed for all to gain a glimpse of Krishna's childhood form as sculpted under His supervision.



Madhvacharya carrying the idol to Udupi – a popular illustration and Udupi Krishna idol in the temple today

The idol that over 5100 years ago, was

- designed by Krishna Himself,
- sculpted by Vishwakarma,
- fondled by Krishna's mother, Devaki and
- safeguarded by Krishna's wife, Rukmini,

finally found its way to Udupi and Krishna has stood there since the last 800 years, the times of the Saint Madhvacharya.

DAKOR – AN IDOL TO RULE THE HEARTS

The famous Ranchodrai temple at Dakor near Anand in Gujarat, though constructed to its present form in recent times, in 1772 CE, traces its roots to a Rajput called Vijayanand Bodana who had brought the original Dwarakadeesh idol of Krishna from Dwaraka to Dakor.



Dakor Temple, Gujarat and The Deity of Dakor Temple



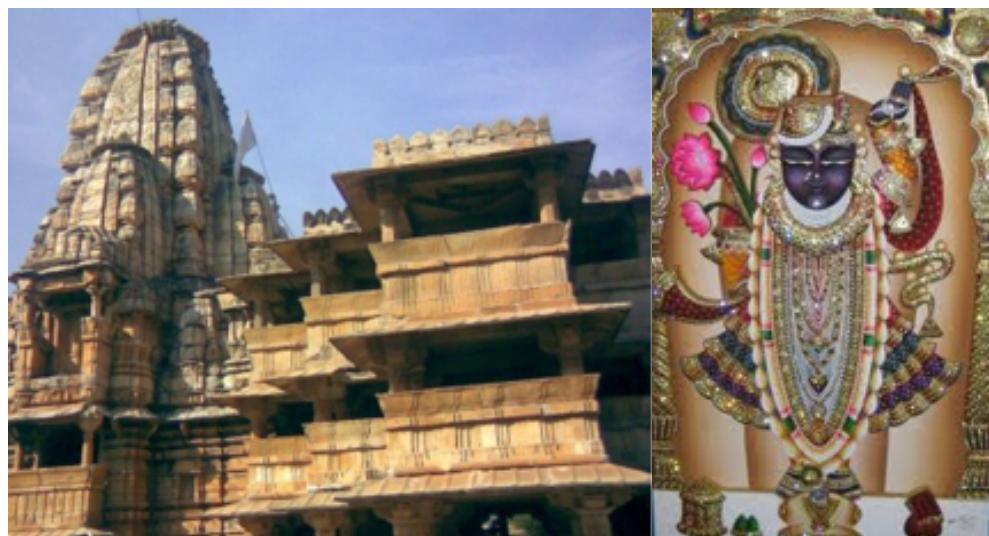
Sarasvati River Path

As Krishna, Balarama and the Yadava people had passed to and fro along the Sarasvati River more than a few times in their travels between *Braj Bhumi*, Hastinapur, Indraprastha and their own kingdom of Dwaraka, the popularity of Krishna and His deeds became folklore in that Sarasvati belt.

Much later, after the drying of the Sarasvati River, a couple of millennia later, this region came to be known as the Rajputana region and is now called Rajasthan.

From the medieval period, 8th / 9th century onwards, until the 18th century, for a millennia or more, the Rajputs ruled this region valiantly.

They were ardent followers of Krishna, which is evident from the great temples they got built for Krishna such as the Sreenathji temple in Nathdwara.



Sreenathji Temple, Nathdwara and Sreenathji, the Temple Deity

Such temples for Krishna were constructed with grandiose and embellished intricately by the illustrious Rajput lineage. This was their way of recognizing the greatness of Krishna. It was a continuity of valuing the values that Krishna had espoused.

These values adorned the walls of these temples in the form of sculptures and paintings. These temples were the medium where the stories of

Krishna embedded with these values were retold generation after generation, for generations to come, so that the people could live their daily lives with morals, ethics and values.

Among all these Rajput followers of Krishna, the name Mirabai stands out.



Mirabai

Inspite of many trials and tribulations, both personal and those that were put on her through statecraft and political machinations, her devotion to Krishna through her songs has endeared her to the people to this day.

Krishna ruled the heart of Mira and Mira's soulful songs and the form of Krishna eulogized by her songs and the idols of Western India continue to rule the hearts of the people across the lands and times.

PURI – AN IDOL WITH REMAINS

One of the ancient and important cities of the east coast of India is Puri, which is in the present day state of Orissa.

This Puri is famous for the temple of Jagannath, another name for Krishna.



Puri Jagannath Temple

The Physical Remains of Krishna

The idol in this temple is carved out of Neem wood from a particular forest and once every 12 years, is replaced through a strict, well defined process, *Naba kalebara*, that has come down as a tradition.

Legends talk of people who came east from Dwaraka, carrying with them, mortal remains of Krishna, *pinda*, which have been kept in a hollow cavity in the idol since the times of inception of this temple to this day.

Neither has this been kept a secret nor has it been hidden. It is well known through the land as retold by the *Sthala Purana*, local legend of the temple. These remains were not tucked away, way back in time and forgotten. Around every 12 years, on the assigned day, this bundle, *Brahmapotli*, has been removed and transferred to a fresh idol under due rituals.

The bundle with the remains is normally physically handled by the most aged priest of the temple, who is blindfolded - a rare honour indeed to be that seniormost priest on that occasion. Having handled these remains, the aged priest looks forward to early *Moksha*, deliverance, to attain *Goloka*, the abode of Krishna.

Being so venerated and done under such stringent, time honoured rituals, these remains, remain beyond the purview of scientific scrutiny.

The knowledge of its existence has been revived through these rituals every 12 years, in every generation and the remains of Krishna, have been venerated every day by millions of devotees who have thronged this temple.

This is the beauty in this temple – it is not only the beauty of the idol but also the beauty of how these remains and the memories they invoke have remained with us through this tradition across millennia.

The memories of Krishna

Puri is thus an ancient city dedicated to Krishna and those who settled here brought with them the legends of Krishna from the times of His childhood at *Braj* to the times of Dwaraka.

This is evident from the daily rites in the temple which give prominence to the childhood days of Krishna when he used to steal milk, butter, cream and curds. The most famous offering in their rites is *Kheer*, a milk and rice based sweet pudding. People of Orissa, even to this day, fondly call Krishna as “*Khiri Chora*”, meaning “one who steals *Kheer*”.

The famed *Rath Yatra*, chariot festival in Puri, itself is based on the childhood days of Krishna, His brother Balarama, called Balabhadra here and their sister, Subhadra.



Rath Yatra at Puri Jagannath Temple and The three idols

It will be interesting to know that Puri was also known by the name “Dwaraka of the East”, as it formed the eastern gateway to India from the eastern seas, namely the Bay of Bengal.

It will be further interesting to know that the English word Juggernaut for a huge rolling object has been inspired from this famed *Rath Yatra*, chariot festival of Lord Jagannath of Puri.

GURUVAYUR - AN IDOL THAT PREDATES KRISHNA

Guruvayur is a holy town in present day Kerala famed for its Krishna temple.

The deity in this temple is Lord Vishnu, worshipped in the form of Krishna. The idol is made of a stone variety called “*Patalanjana Stone*”. The origins of this idol go back in the mists of time, far beyond the times of even Krishna.

According to the legends, Vasudeva and Devaki, the parents of Krishna had worshipped this idol. When the *Yadava* clan moved from Mathura to Dwaraka, they dearly took it with them. Post the deluge of Dwaraka, Uddhava, a disciple of Krishna, recovered the idol and in turn gave it to *Brihaspati*, their *Guru*, their preceptor and his disciple Vayu, to install in a suitable place. Guru and Vayu together carried it south finally reaching the spot of present day Guruvayur where they found the environment to be salubrious to install the idol.

As the idol was brought to this spot by the preceptor Guru and his disciple Vayu, from thence, the place came to be called Guruvayur and the idol Guruvayurappan.



Guruvayur Temple and Guruvayurappan

This Guruvayur came to be renowned as the place where one could feel the breath *Vayu* of the *Guru*, perhaps implying that this was a place where one was under immediate tutelage or guidance of a *Guru*, where one was so close to the *Guru*. It also implied it to be a place, where the atmosphere was so spiritual that even the mere breath of the *Guru* showered grace on all.

This legend tallies with the fact that indeed based on Krishna's advice, a group of people from Dwaraka had moved southwards.

A DNA THAT RETRACES LINEAGE

Among the *Bhaktha*, devotees of Krishna, in the South of India, is the saintly king, Kulasekara of the *Chera* dynasty.

The *Chera* kingdom comprises of present day state of Kerala and the western parts of Tamil Nadu state.



Area of Chera kingdom

Raja Kulasekara sang paeans to Krishna praising His charm, visual appeal and virtues. This King Kulasekara is respectfully referred to as one among the 12 *Alwars* who propounded the *Bhakti* movement in South India. Through his poetry, he brought out the stories of Krishna and His life, making Krishna and the regions of the north familiar to the people in the South.

His poetry, *Mukunda Mala*, written on Krishna is a treatise that has educated people on Krishna since then.



Kulasekara Alwar and *Mukunda Mala*, Kulasekara Alwar's poetry treatise on Krishna

A Descendant of Krishna

We have seen how a group of people from Dwaraka had migrated down south, on the specific advice of Krishna.

It was a predecessor of this King Kulasekara in the *Chera* Dynasty, who in the Tamil text, '*Purananooru*', has been referred to as King Irungovel of the *Chera* dynasty, the 49th descendant of the people who had migrated down south from Dwaraka.

Here, it is but poetic justice that a king of this lineage, with saintly qualities worthy of being respected by all as an *Alwar*, should compose poetry called *Mukanda Mala* on his ancestor, Krishna.

Through this lineage, the stories, deeds and values of Krishna as well as the genes from Dwaraka, spread to this part of the land too. Krishna continues to live in this region by the name Kannan, through the poetry of Kulasekhara Alwar amidst others as well as through the genes of his dynasty.



Commemoration of Krishna Across Geography

Fact versus Fiction

FACT STRANGER THAN FICTION

One of the factors that distinguishes a fictional story from reality, is the stark difference between the good and the bad, God and the devil, the hero and the villain.

Reality however is far from this. It comes in all shades of grey.

No villain is totally evil. No hero is exceptionally virtuous.

They both have shades of various qualities.

Similarly, the personages in *Mahabharata*, on both sides of the camp, the *Pandava* and the *Kaurava*, had their shades of good and the bad. This grounds them in reality instead of making them fictional in nature.

This aspect of the *Mahabharata* makes it a narration of people as they were and events as they happened – an *Itihasa*, a historical text.

DHRITARASHTRA, ONLY A REGENT

Dhritarashtra is often referred to as the king of Hastinapura.

In reality, of the two sons born to provide continuity to the rule in Hastinapura kingdom, Dhritarashtra, the elder son was born blind and was hence ineligible to be a king.

Pandu, his younger brother, even though pale due to ill health from childhood, was crowned the king.

King Pandu decided to go to the forest to recuperate and regain his health after his marriage to Kunti and Madri. He therefore appointed his blind, elder brother, Dhritarashtra as a regent of the kingdom.

Dhritarashtra thus was only a regent, looking after the Hastinapura kingdom. He was not the king of the land.

DURYODHANA, NOT A LAWFUL HEIR

After the death of Pandu, the sons born to Pandu had the right to the throne. As per the norms of those times, the regent Dhritarashtra's son, Duryodhana, did not have right to the throne of Hastinapura. But in Duryodhana's mind, he was the rightful heir to Hastinapura and was hence keen on becoming the king.

Since, Dhritarashtra was blind and he had enormous affection for Duryodhana, Duryodhana conducted himself as a defacto heir to the throne and wielded wide powers.

This lead to animosity between the cousins.

Duryodhana was further overpowered by jealousy at the exceptional skills displayed by each of the *Pandava* brothers in their own fields of specialization during the days when the *Pandava* and *Kaurava* studied together under a common *Guru*, Dronacharya.

DURYODHANA, THE GOOD ADMINISTRATOR

Duryodhana, however was a good administrator.

The people of Hastinapura did not despise him. Nor was he a tyrant.

Duryodhana had built friendly relations with other kings of his times. This is evident from the fact that at the time of Kurukshetra war, Duryodhana was able to muster support of many kings in order to put together a formidable battle force of 11 *Akshohini* as against the 7 *Akshohini* that the *Pandava* were able to muster.

DURYODHANA'S MOVES

His concern

The one burning fact in Duryodhana's mind was always that he did not want to cede any land to his *Pandava* cousins. He felt that if he did, they would obliterate him and his brothers.

Duryodhana enlists Yadava army

Duryodhana was such a master at his game and strategist, that even though he had abused Krishna at the Hastinapura court less than a month earlier when Krishna had come to Hastinapura as the *Pandava Duta*, he approached Krishna in order to enlist the *Yadava* forces to fight on the side of the *Kaurava* and he got what he wanted.

Duryodhana wins over Shalya, the uncle of the Pandava

Shalya, the king of Madra Desha was the maternal uncle of Nakula and Sahadeva, the *Pandava* brothers. The mother of Nakula and Sahadeva was Madri of Madra Desha. She was the second wife of Pandu and had died along with Pandu in the forest.

At the time of preparation for the Kurukshetra War, Shalya's allegiances were naturally to the *Pandava*, being their uncle.

But when Shalya came marching from his kingdom Madra to Kurukshetra, Duryodhana's people prepared camping sites all along the marching path and looked after them well, till they reached Kurukshetra and took them directly to Duryodhana's camp.

Having been the recipient of the hospitality of Duryodhana, Shalya was compelled to enter the war on the side of the *Kaurava*.

This incident shows the meticulous planning and cunningness that Duryodhana was capable of.

SHAKUNI, INITIALLY NOT DEVIOUS

Shakuni, the King of Gandhara Desha, the maternal uncle of Duryodhana, who cast the dice in the game between Duryodhana and Yudhishtira, was initially not a devious person.

Shakuni had advised Duryodhana early on, to befriend the *Pandava* brothers and give equal share to the *Pandava*. It was only when Duryodhana seemed adamant on holding on to the Hastinapura kingdom in its entirety, did Shakuni put in his lot behind his nephews, to ensure their success by any devious method possible.



Dice Game between *Pandava* and *Kaurava*

PANDAVA'S STRENGTH THROUGH ALLIES

The *Pandava* princes, though they were princes, had no kingdom to rule, no wealth and no friends when they came back to Hastinapura from the forest, after their father Pandu's early death.

Even though they had the right to the throne of Hastinapura, they were constantly denied the same by the *Kaurava*.

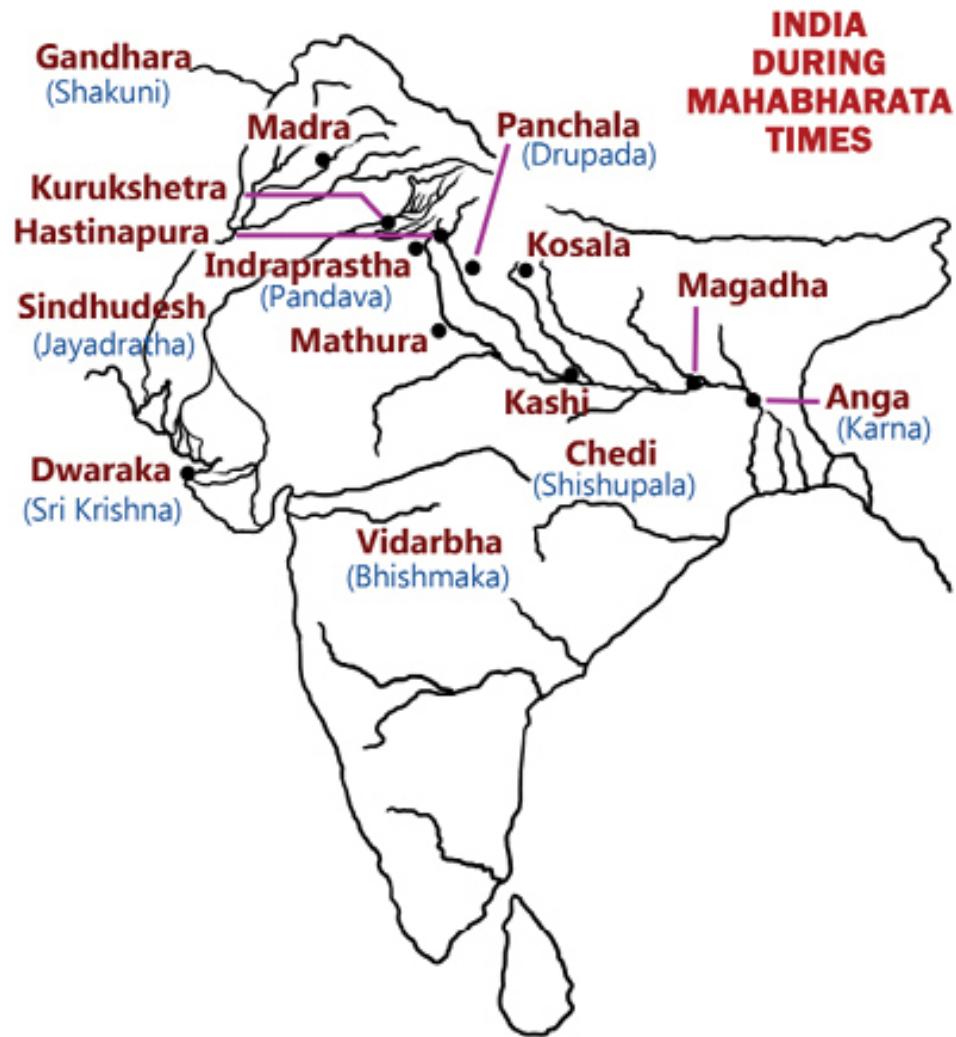
They therefore built a formidable alliance in course of time to match the might of their cousins, the *Kaurava*, who were ruling Hastinapura. They did this tactfully, through a series of marriage cum political alliances. The prominent ones being,

- Kekaya through the marriage of Yudhisthira and Devika,
- Kasi through the marriage of Bhima and Balandhara,
- The Rakshasa through the marriage of Bhima and Hidimba,
- The Naga of Manipur through the marriage of Arjuna and Uloopi,
 - Dwaraka through the marriage of Arjuna and Subhadra,
 - Panchala through the marriage with Draupadi,
- Magadha through the marriage of Sahadeva and Vijaya,
- Chedi through the marriage of Sahadeva and Karenmayi and
- Matsya through the marriage of Abhimanyu and Uttara.

The *Pandava* Army had seven commanders for the seven divisions, *Akshohini*.

- Virata - King of Matsya.
- Drupada - King of Panchala
- Sahadeva - King of Magadha
- Dhrshtaketu - King of Chedi.
- Satyaki - Only prince from Dwaraka
- Shikhandi (Prince of Panchala).

Dhrshtadyumna was their Commander in Chief and Krishna, their Chief Counsellor.



Prominent kingdoms of Mahabharata Period

DRAUPADI'S MARRIAGE TO THE 5 PANDAVA

Draupadi's marriage to the five *Pandava* brothers is itself one of the unique events in *Mahabharata* and is a subject of many debates.

Draupadi Swayamvara

The *Pandava* brothers at the time of *Swayamvara* of Draupadi were living incognito in the forest and were young princes without a kingdom. They

came to the *Swayamvara*, not dressed as princes, but in simple white robes.

Why were the *Pandava* in white robes?

The multi layer negotiations, across years, between the *Kaurava* and the *Pandava* had reached stalemate. Duryodhana in a move to appease the *Pandava*, built a palace for them to live in. The motive here was devious. It was a palace made of wax, built to burn the *Pandava* alive.

The *Pandava* brothers who were warned of the heinous plan of the *Kaurava* by Vidura, their uncle and wise minister, escaped from the palace by building an underground tunnel, before it was set ablaze. Post this escape, they lived incognito in the forests for some time, before surfacing at Draupadi's *Swayamvara* in Panchala, dressed in simple white robes as mendicants.

In the *Swayamvara* contest, Arjuna, the ace archer, the third brother among the *Pandava*, won the contest and the hand of Draupadi by aiming correctly at the fish revolving overhead, using its reflection in the water below.

It was this display of an exemplary skill that made everyone take note of this extraordinary archer dressed in a simple garb. It became evident that they were no ordinary commoners but were remarkable men of royal blood.

It was here that Duryodhana, who had also come to the *Swayamvara*, realized that the *Pandava* had not perished in the palace fire he had setup.



Arjuna at Draupadi *Swayamvara*

Implications of Winning the *Swayamvara*

After winning the *Swayamvara* contest, the *Pandava*, by marriage, were getting a powerful ally.

If Arjuna alone were to marry Draupadi, then even though he was the third in line after Yudhishtira and Bhima, by virtue of becoming the son-in-law of a powerful King such as Drupada, he would gain primacy over his other brothers.

To ensure that there was parity between the *Pandava* brothers, in their fight for the Hastinapura throne which was their primary goal, Draupadi was married off to all the five brothers jointly as a strategy.

For this out of the norm marriage, different people in different times have given different interpretations.

1. Draupadi looked forward to five different qualities in her husband and these five brothers collectively met her criteria for a single husband.

2. Kunti, the mother of *Pandava*, during their stay in the forest was keen on ensuring that all the brothers got equal share of everything and that there would not be any heart burn amongst them. To keep them together for all times, she took such an out of the norm decision to divide Draupadi amongst them, as a wife too.
3. It was also a political strategy.

By winning over Draupadi for a wife, King Drupada as a father-in-law and the Panchala kingdom as a staunch ally, the *Pandava* became powerful in one stroke.

Code of Conduct with Draupadi

Given the unique and awkward situation of one woman married to five brothers, the *Pandava* were advised by their grandfather, Veda Vyasa himself, the author of the *Mahabharata*, to formulate a code of conduct amongst themselves. By this code, Draupadi would spend scheduled, dedicated time as a spouse, with each brother in rotation. If any of the others intruded into the private chambers of Draupadi during times when it was not their turn, they would have to go away on exile.

In this connection, there is an interesting situation that developed between Arjuna and Yudhishtira, in Indraprastha.

When it was Yudhishtira's scheduled turn to live with Draupadi, it so transpired that Arjuna had to visit Draupadi's quarters to retrieve his weapons to offer protection to a *Brahmin* who had appealed for help.

On completing his errand, Arjuna voluntarily apologized for breaking the code of conduct and offered to go on exile. Despite Yudhishtira excusing Arjuna, saying that it was a case of emergency and for a noble cause, Arjuna insisted on atoning for it and went on an exile.

Incidentally it is during this exile that Arjuna acquired 3 additional wives, namely Uloopi, the *Naga* princess, Chitrangada and then Subhadra, the sister of Krishna, along with the know how for using exclusive weapons such as *Pashupatastra*.

Polyandry – A Debate

Many critics of literature have, based on this fact of polyandry, even placed the time of *Mahabharata* before *Ramayana* arguing that *Ramayana* and Rama's advocacy of steadfastness to Sita was in order to wipe out polyandry practice from society.

From volume 1, **Dating of Krishna** and from our earlier work **Historical Rama**, we can see how these two periods in time can be dated with fair amount of accuracy, using multiple sources of inputs, to 5100 BCE as the time of Rama and 3100 BCE as the time of Krishna.

While polyandry was not a virtue, nor a norm in the times of *Mahabharata*, it was not looked down as a sin either. In the annals of history of those days, there were a few rare instances of polyandry.

A Boon Five Times Over

When Drupada, the father of Draupadi learnt that Draupadi was to be married to 5 brothers, he was shocked and crestfallen. He wanted to oppose the marriage even though the 5 brothers were the great *Pandava*.

At this juncture, he is advised by Vyasa, Krishna Dwaipayana, to allow the marriage to take place for two reasons. While on the earthly level, it would lead to a good, futuristic alliance, on an ethereal level, this was a pre-ordained marriage.

He narrates to him how Draupadi in her earlier birth was Nalayini who had prayed to the divinity Shiva for a boon of marrying an accomplished, skilled man. In her eagerness, she repeats this prayer five times and her wish is granted, save that it is deferred to her subsequent birth.

Thus in her birth as Draupadi, she was destined to marry five accomplished men.

Here again, many scholars, critics have tried to explain Draupadi's marriage to the *Pandava* from many angles, ranging from totally sublime to metaphysical to strategy.

This does not however take away its historicity. It takes this historical event to an ethereal level instead and shows a blend between the two.

Nowhere in the world do we have such a mega story with its shades of grey and with each nuance of the grey, well entrenched in the ethos of the land.

Such authenticity, such detailing cannot but be a historical account.

More than a 5000 Year Lineage

THE YADAVA

Krishna was called a *Yadava* as He was born in the *Yadu* lineage in the house of Vrishni. He is referred to as a *Yaduvanshi*, meaning a descendant of *Yadu*.

He is also lovingly called “*Yadukula tilaka*”, meaning the scion of the *Yadu* lineage.

The other historical hero of the land, Rama, born 7000 years ago, was called “*Raghukula Tilaka*”, meaning the scion of the Raghu lineage, as He was born in the dynasty of the King Raghu and was a *Raghuvanshi*.

The *Raghuvamsa* belonged to the Solar dynasty, *Suryavamsa*.

The *Yaduvamsa* came from the Lunar dynasty, *Chandrvamsa* also called *Somavamsa*. It was started by *Yadu*, the son of King *Yayati* of the *Chandrvamsa* dynasty.

King *Yayati*’s other son *Puru*, continued the lineage of the *Chandrvamsa* which came to be called the *Paurava lineage*.

The *Yadu* were thus the cousins of the *Paurava*, the descendants of *Puru*.

The father of Krishna, *Vasudeva*, came from the *Yadu* dynasty. He was the son of King *Surasena*. He had two sisters, *Pritha* and *Shrutvata* and a brother called *Devabhaga*.

Pritha was adopted by King *Kuntibhoja* who was issueless. *Pritha* later married into the family of the *Paurava* as the wife of King *Pandu* and became the mother of three sons. This *Pritha* is better known to us as *Kunti* and her three sons -*Yudhishtira*, *Bhima* and *Arjuna* as *Pandava*.

The 100 sons of Dhritarashtra, elder brother of King Pandu, were collectively called the *Kaurava*.

Krishna was thus related to both the *Pandava* and the *Kaurava* on His paternal side.

Pritha, the mother of the *Pandava*, being Vasudeva's sister, Krishna also became the maternal cousin of the *Pandava* and was thus closer to the *Pandava*.

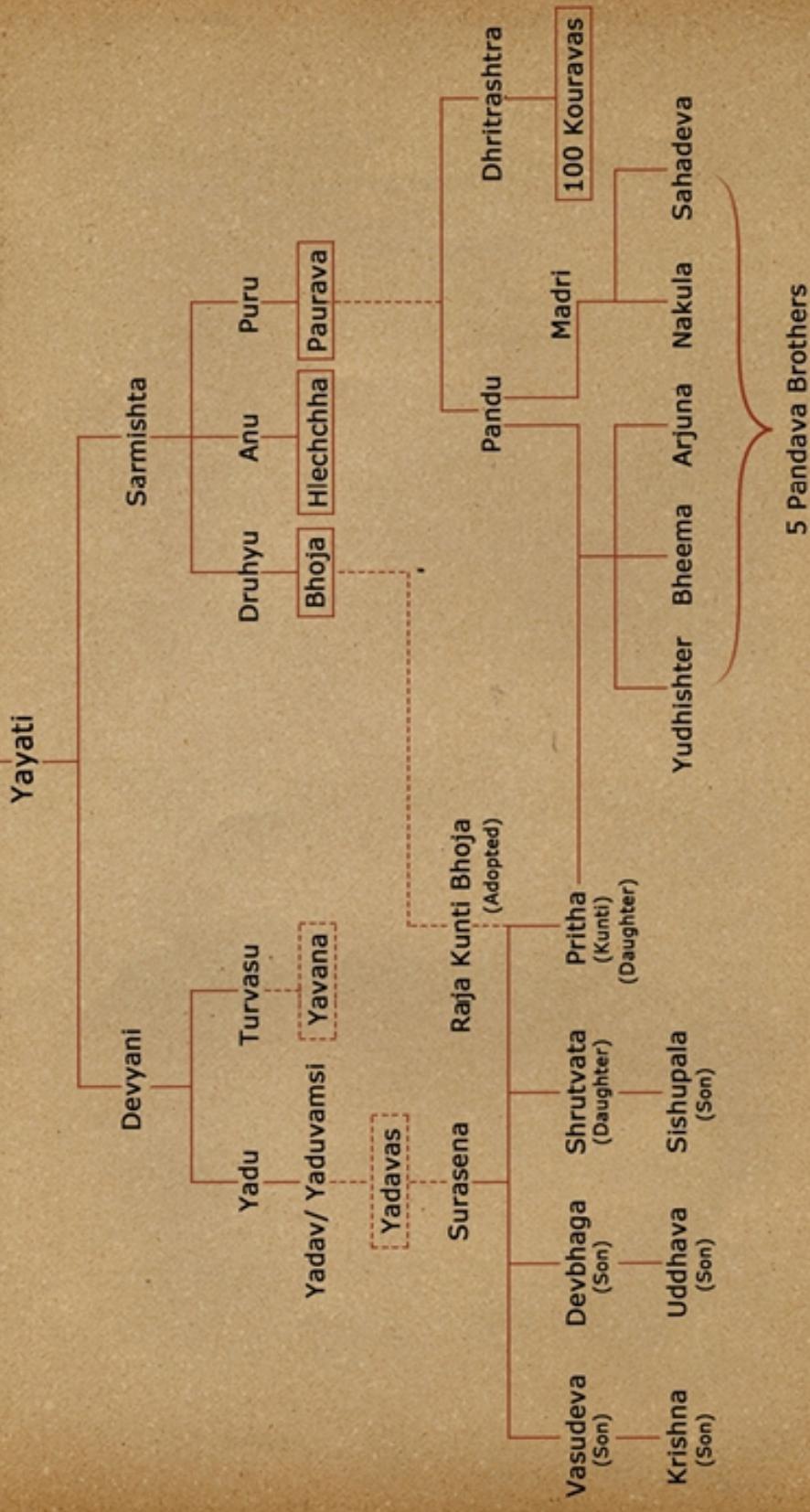
The other sister of Vasudeva, Shrutvata married a *Chedi* King and became the mother of Sishupal, who considered himself to be an arch rival of Krishna and kept insulting Krishna on every pretext.

Devabhaga's son Uddhava became a disciple of Krishna and Krishna's teachings to Uddhava have come down to us as *Uddhava Gita*.

Krishna had many sons through His eight wives. Prominent among them all was Pradyumna, the son of Rukmini and his son was Anirudha. Krishna had another son called Samba, through his wife Jambavati. This Samba is described as having brought disgrace to the *Yadava* clan by teasing and inviting the wrath of many learned *Rishi*.

Many of the *Yadava* living in Dwaraka perished in the civil war post the departure of Krishna from Dwaraka and the ensuing submergence of Dwaraka in the sea. There remained however those *Yadava* who, having paid heed to Krishna's advice, had moved away from Dwaraka in different directions. There were also the other *Yadava* who were ruling other kingdoms of the land.

Chandramansi Raja "Nahusha"



These *Yadava* continued to propagate the *Yadu* dynasty all over India. Many claim descent from the *Yadava* clan even today in India with surnames such as Yadav, Jadhav, Jadeja and so on.

The name *Yadava* today is held synonymous with cowherd and cattle rearing alone, based on Krishna and His connection with cows, which He had acquired during His upbringing by Nandagopa, the Nanda chief.

However history also shows this clan in a different light of having ruled over large tracts of ancient India, of having been initiated by *Yadu*, who was well known for his just rule and deeds, who, by starting this lineage, lent his name to it. Dwaraka too, the city of Krishna and His *Yadava* people, as we have seen, was a port city with a flourishing trade practice and vast hinterland.

The lineage of the *Chandravamsa* and the *Yadu* dynasty is well documented in the various *Purana* and *Harivamsa*. The names and deeds of the kings mentioned, tally across these texts too.

How many lineages in the world can claim ancestry in such detail, tracing back to such a long period of over 5000 years?

Then again, if someone such as Krishna is described as having been an integral part of this historical lineage, how can He not be historical?

How can Krishna be mythical when all these clans, all over the land, trace back their lineage to this *Yadu* dynasty? How can they all be collectively wrong?

Krishna – Historical or Divine?

HISTORICITY AND DIVINITY

While historicity is a matter of existence, divinity is a matter of faith.

Faith transcends speech and script. Divinity and faith are thus a matter of experience, *Anubhava* as is called in *Samskrt*.

The fascinating beauty lies in how Krishna's relationships and other facets of His life speak of a divine story alongside His history. Both divinity and historicity can be seen merging into the being called Krishna.

Historicity anchors divinity in the case of Krishna.



Only Halo and Halo anchored by Krishna

We have seen Krishna to be historical but Krishna is also said to be an *avatara*, a divine incarnation.

Is there a conflict here?

AN AVATARA

First, let us look at the word *avatara*. *Avatara* literally means “to come down”. It is not coming down from heights, vertically in space. It is a coming down or a step down from the original, in terms of might, features, capability.

Another word we need to examine is the word for divinity in Indian context. It is *divya*, which stems from the root word *div*. The root *div* forms the root for not only *Deva*, the Indian word for gods but also forms the root for many of the English language words denoting God, for example, divine, divinity, deity etc. In other languages too, this word is a root for God, such as *diva*, *theo* etc.

Let us look at what *div* really means. *Div* means to glow, to shine, to radiate.

Glowing and shining happen when a body radiates energy in some form - light or subtle.

From that perspective, all living beings are divine because they radiate energy in some form or the other. Be it a plant life, animals, insects or humans, we all take inputs from the Nature around us to produce and radiate energies in different forms. So do various cosmic bodies in the Universe. These are all capable of producing and generating energies. Hence, each one of us is divine and based on our individual attributes generate divine energies appropriately.

From that perspective, Krishna is historical and also divine. However, in all His deeds, knowledge, behavior, character and other attributes, Krishna far excelled any other being in the display of divine attributes.

From the divine attributes and the connect with the cosmos that He displayed, he conveyed that He was a *Poorna Avatara*, complete *Avatara*, which meant that He was an embodiment of the divine with the maximum number of attributes that could be portrayed through a physical form. Krishna exhibited 16 qualities, the highest that has been attributed to any personage in legends so far.

Purpose of Krishna's Birth

Krishna by far has been one of the most popular personages of India. Krishna lived at the cross-roads of time, at the juncture, *Sandhi* of *Dwapara Yuga* and *Kali Yuga*, an astronomical event, a time marker, as we have already seen.

The various facets of Krishna show Him to be a beautiful intertwining of contrasts:-

- historical and at the same time divine
- mischievous as well as heroic
- innocent as well as a strategist
- playful and scholarly
- simple as a cowherd and royal as a prince
- down to earth, yet able to hold forth on the subtle
- Nature loving and at the same time technical to reclaim land to build a port city

Krishna is an embodiment of how life is complementary, full of contrasts, which is what makes it wholesome.

BHU BHARA HARANAM

Krishna is regarded an *avatara* - one who has descended on the earth.

For one to descend on the earth there must be a purpose. Each person who is born on this earth, looks for a purpose in this life.

Some are fortunate to realize it during their life time itself.

Many live through life without knowing its purpose. They just go through the motions of it.

For a fortunate few, it is recorded for posterity to know.

In the case of Krishna, the purpose of His life is given in the *Bhagavata Purana*, 10th chapter, *Dasame Skandam*. Here it is stated that,

“one of the primary objectives of Krishna avatara was Bhu Bhara Haranam – to relieve the burden of the earth”.

Mother Earth is *parthava*, meaning “being wide”, “having great extent” because of which she is called *Prithvi* in *Samskrt*. It comes from *prthu* meaning “expansive”, “extensive”, and “abundant”.

She is also the base, foundation and floor on which live her children. Hence, she is also called *Bhudevi*.

She is also tolerant and patient, as all mothers are of her children. She willingly accepts the *Bhara*, “load”, “pressure” placed on her by children through their deeds and misdeeds.

But Nature, of which she is also but a part of, will not be a silent observer for long. Nature has its way of getting back and when it does get back, it can be pretty harsh.

Anything that tampers with the sustainability of life and Nature on the earth will not be tolerated for long and will be eliminated naturally, to restore balance in Nature.

Bhu Bhara Haranam means to destroy that which creates a load, pressure on the earth.

BHU BHARA HARANAM IN CONTEXT

This message is nothing new. We have had this message with us for the past 5100 years. Yet we do not pay sufficient heed to it.

Among other aspects, Krishna's role has been to highlight this reality to us humans. But this message has been lost on us, as we are after all humans.

For how many individuals on this earth, are we able to identify and discuss their purpose of life with such clarity, as we are able to do for Krishna?

Why did we come to live here?

Who am I?

What is the purpose of life?

These have been eternal questions of mankind from time immemorial.

These far reaching soul searching questions, for which the answers seem elusive, have actually been answered. The answers to these questions were given by Krishna, to a troubled mind - his friend, cousin and brother-in-law Arjuna on the battlefield.

These questions have been answered in a very lucid, easy to understand form, in the language of those times and these answers have held good for the last five thousand years.

Load off the Mind

Today, our minds are as troubled as Arjuna's was, 5100 years ago.

Today, in the 21st century, everyday of our life that we lead, is itself the battlefield. Krishna's answers are as much valid for us today if we contemporize it for our needs and situations today.

Bhu means to exist, to be. *Bhara* is stress, load. *Haranam* is to remove, destroy. The phrase *Bhu Bhara Haranam* in this context can also be seen as Krishna's effort to educate mankind with the essence of life so that he can

lead his life on the earth without the stress that relationships and situations can pose on a day to day basis.

Through this book we have tried to place beyond doubt the historicity of Krishna, thereby once and for all removing the tag of mythology given to the *Mahabharata* and establishing Krishna as one of the foremost historical heroes of this land.

We can now look up to Him as a genuine hero of the land.

If He has been a hero for over 5000 years and has even been regarded as a divinity, both while alive as well as across all these millennia, then there must have been something to Him.

We need to experience this divine hero Krishna for ourselves along with the whole gamut of knowledge that He embodied.

We now need to make a personalized effort to understand Him, His qualities and His messages from a wholistic, profound perspective that the epic has conveyed, in the language of those times, without getting mired in literal or later interpretations of a few.

There are two key messages of Krishna that are essential for our life in this century, in this modern, complex world.

Krishna's Messages

DUTY WITHOUT ANY EXPECTATIONS

Krishna's message to Arjuna, on the battleground of Kurukshetra, which stays foremost in people's memory even today, is

कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन ।
मा कर्मफलहेतुभूमा ते सङ्गोस्त्वकर्मणि ।

Gita 2.47

*"Karmanyevadhikarasthe ma phaleshu kadhachana"
Ma karmaphalaheturburma te sangostvakarmani*

"You only have the right to do your duty. You are not entitled to the fruits of your action. You are not the cause for the results of your actions. But do not shy away from action in doing your duty.

- Bhagavad Gita 2.47

This advice forms part of the *Bhagavad Gita* delivered by Krishna to Arjuna. This advice is a part of Krishna's teachings on *Dharma*, "duty" as it is sometimes loosely translated.

Through this advice, Krishna was explaining to Arjuna that, if each one performs one's duty without bias or expectations, then the whole Universe

will behave as per its expected principles.

What happens as a result of one's act, does not arise directly out of one's current action alone, but arises as a collective response from the Universe, *Karma*.

Hence one only has to act "rightfully", do one's *Dharma*. The rest, *Karma*, the effect arising out of one's act, follows on its own and is beyond the individual.

FAILURE, NOT AN EXCUSE FOR NOT TRYING

The other message is evident from the tragedy that surrounds the lifetime of Krishna and the *Mahabharata*.

Krishna, for all His greatness, in spite of His mission as a peace messenger, failed to prevent the Kurukshetra war. He failed to prevent His *Yadu* clan from destroying themselves in the Yadava Civil war.

The forces of human folly and the flow of *Karma* proved strong, even for Krishna.

This brings out the historical angle of Krishna from a human angle.

After the event of *Pandava Dhuta*, i.e., Krishna taking on the role of a peace ambassador on behalf of the *Pandava* to the Hastinapura court, Vidura, the venerable old counsellor, half brother of King Dhritarashtra, asked Krishna why He had bothered at all, considering that war was inevitable. Krishna tells Vidura,

"I am thinking not of my place and my time, but of the future. Future generations will think that I allowed a great calamity to befall the world without my lifting a finger to prevent it. Fear of failure is not an excuse for lack of effort..."



Vidura and Krishna

This indeed is a great message of activism. We cannot allow things to flow by. We need to take responsibility for our actions and inactions.

Krishna repeats this ideal, a couple of months later on the Kurukshetra battlefield, in His *Bhagavad Gita* message to Arjuna, wherein He says,

“There is nothing in the three worlds that I want for Myself. There is nothing for which I need to work. But if I let Myself follow a course of inaction, so will others follow me... I shall Myself be the cause of degeneracy in the world.”

Krishna was a reformer, a practical philosopher, the propounder of *karma yoga*.

Epilogue

KRISHNA, A TIMELESS PERSONAGE

There have been many a great men born in different parts of this world, in different civilizations, through time at different times.

Of all these, the personage of Krishna is unique. His timing is also unique.

The story of the personage of Krishna has survived the ravages of time.

He has not just been eulogized but has been an inspiration for a whole civilization, through the land, through the times.

His views and acts have been debated and re-debated. His views, in the *Bhagavad Gita* have always been at the cutting edge of science.

How has this been possible?

KRISHNA, THE DIVINE

Worldover, through time, in different civilizations there have been many a men of God, who have claimed different status for themselves or such statuses have been thrust upon them.

Some have been called God. Some despite showing signs of divinity have shied away from being called God. The case in point here is Rama, the other legendary hero cum divinity of India, who maintained that He was only human.

Some have called themselves a messenger of God.

Some have called themselves the son of God.

In contrast to all of these, Krishna, during His lifetime, explicitly says that He is the Supreme God Himself.

He follows this up with exhibitions of His cosmic form on atleast three different occasions in His life.

Showing Yashoda the Cosmos

First is, as a child, when the baby Krishna, crawling in the garden, eats some grains of sand.

His ever watchful mother, Yashoda, observes and tries to prise out the sand from His mouth. Prising His mouth open, she sees the whole earth, solar system, galaxy and universe, all inside His mouth.

This vision of the universe and the reality of Krishna that He gave Yashoda, startled her, to put it mildly.



Mother Yashoda seeing the universe in Krishna's mouth

Pandava Dhuta

Later as events unfold, Krishna goes as a peace ambassador, negotiator, *Dhuta*, to the *Kaurava* court, on behalf of the *Pandava* camp.

There Duryodhana sets a trap door below the seat of Krishna to trap Him. When Krishna is seated, Duryodhana opens the trap door below the seat, for Krishna to fall into. Krishna reading fully well, the treacherous mind of Duryodhana, assumes His cosmic form to outwit Duryodhana. He also intended to awe him into submission with His fearful cosmic form.



Krishna as Pandava Dhuta in Kaurava Court, a Ravi Varma Painting

Gitopadesha – Discourse of The Gita

The other well known incident where Krishna reveals His true nature, is in the course of the *Bhagavad Gita* discourse. Inspite of answering all of Arjuna's doubts, when something continues to still hold Arjuna back, Krishna gives Arjuna *Vishwaroopa darshana*, a view of His Universal form, to settle Arjuna's doubts once and for all.



Krishna's Vishvaroopa Darshan to Arjuna

Thus, on at least three occasions, Krishna exhibits and expresses explicitly that, He indeed is the Divine. Through these episodes among others, Krishna tells one and all unambiguously of his Divinity.

In stark contrast to this, in the earlier *avatara* of Rama, where we consider Rama as also divine, Rama Himself never states that He is divine.



Rama Vanquishing Ravana

After the victorious battle against Ravana, while those present there, heap praise on Rama, calling Him divine incarnate, Rama responds by saying ,

*Athmanam manusham manye
Ramam Dasarathathmajam
Soham yascha yadascha
bhagavam sthath pravethumae*

I am a son of Dasaratha.
I am a human.
The God almighty
knows where I have come from.

English translation of the verse from *Ramayana*

ALL IN ALL, HISTORICAL

History is a mind bender.

A historian determines how the world perceives the past and thus shapes the thoughts, ideas and actions of the man of tomorrow.

From this entire compilation, we get a new and true perspective on the history and geography of India.



We see that

•

- Vrindavan is historical,
- Mathura is historical,
- Dwaraka is historical,
- Govardhan Giri hills are historical,
- Kurukshetra is historical,
- Sarasvati River is historical,
- Balarama is historical,
- Pandava Princes are historical,
- Veda Vyasa is historical and
 - Krishna is historical.

We see that besides Krishna,

- Radha is historical and
- Krishna's wives are historical too.

The historicity of Krishna also establishes and brings forth the historicity of the times, the land and its people.

DIFFIDENCE TO CONFIDENCE

This volume shows us how much of the mystery and controversy surrounding Krishna are a myth. It also presents the rationale in the events surrounding the life of Krishna and elucidates how historicity need not preclude divinity.

An understanding of the historicity and divinity of Krishna gives us the key to release Him from the realm of mythology to appreciate Him holistically.

Unveiling Krishna from the shrouds of mythology, does not just bring to focus a legendary hero but equally brings to our knowledge, a whole host of other facts about events that occurred during that period. It tells us about the world of those times.

There is indeed much for us to learn from the past, that which is authentic. It gives us the knowledge, the strength, the confidence and the faith in ourselves, as we look to the future and move forward.

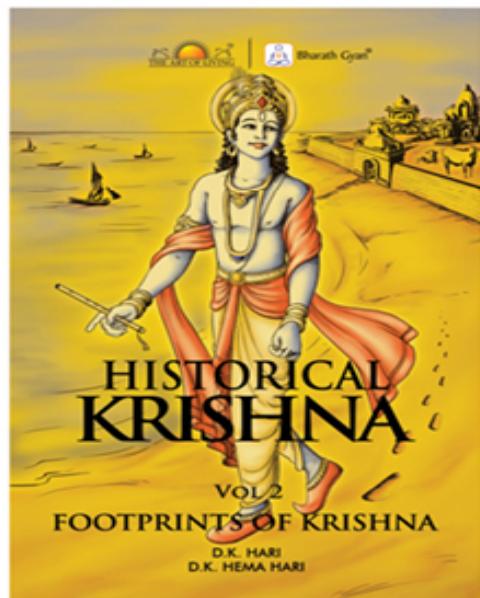
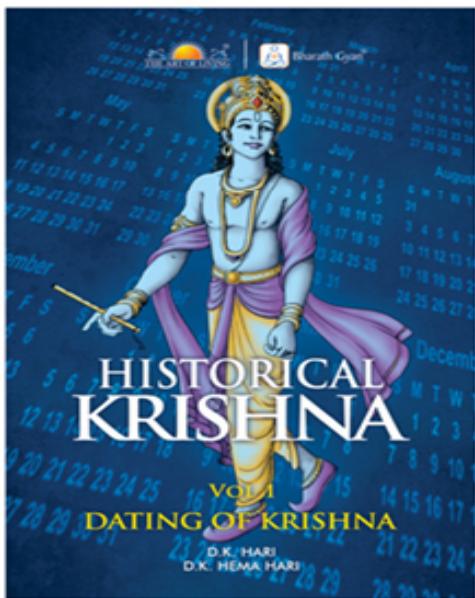
A ridiculed past spawns an air of inferiority and insecurity, sapping the confidence of the civilization.

With an understanding of one of the key personages of our remote history and His times, let us look to the future with confidence.

*When History meets Tradition and
Tradition meets Science and
Science meets Nature,
Can we advance as truly mature people.*



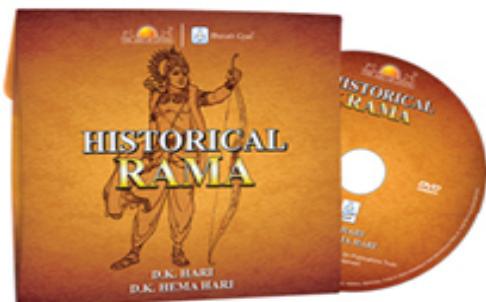
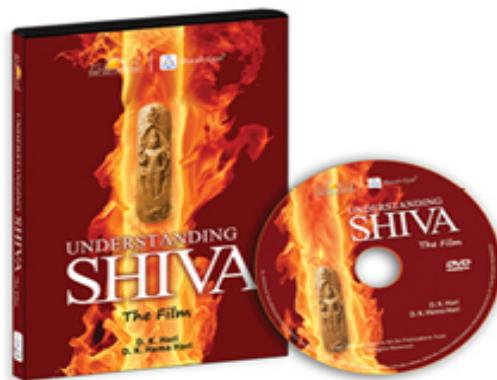
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