



Krishna

Politician and Lover Beyond Compare

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LORD KRISHNA

*Adharam madharam vadanam madharam
nayanam madharam hasitam madharam
hridayam madharam gamanam madharam
madhuraadhipater akhilam madharam*

"His lips are sweet; His face is sweet;
His eyes are sweet; His smile is sweet:
His Heart is sweet; His gait is sweet;
Every single thing about the Lord of Mathura is completely sweet!"

These are the very first set of verses of the Madhurashtakam, 8 sets of quartets in praise of Lord Sri Krishna, penned by the poet Vallabhacharya.

To the common man, the image of Lord Krishna immediately brings to mind a beautiful, joyous, flamboyant lord who spent his time in dalliances with the Gopis, romancing his childhood friend and soul mate, Radha. What many of us do not even give a thought to is the fact that Krishna was also a husband, father, king, ace politician and friend of the Pandavas.

The main mission of the Krishna avatar was to pass on the supreme knowledge of Dharma and Karma to Arjuna, during the Kurukshetra war. Krishna manifested himself in order to reinstate Dharma (righteousness) and re-establish justice. In his avatar, Krishna took on the mantle of a king, an ace diplomat and a politician par excellence, who thoroughly knew the ins and outs of the field.

Rarely has Krishna been viewed in such a light. Poets and writers often talk about his birth, his being with foster mother, Yashoda, his mischief as a child, the various leelas (miracles) he performed during his lifetime, his love for the flute, romance with the Gopis and, ultimately, his divine love for Radha. Indian mythology has always portrayed Krishna as a mystically romantic man, rather than a hardcore politician. But a detailed study of Krishna's life paints a very different picture.

Krishna was probably the most practical and pragmatic lord of our times. Each message he gave humanity, through his own actions and also the teachings of the Bhagavad Gita, are

perfectly relevant for now and for all time. He was a lord who actually practiced what he preached. No wonder he is still referred to as the 'Poorna Avatar' (the complete, ultimate, avatar). This manifestation of Sri Mahavishnu is indeed the most complete human being, showing the right path to humanity, setting an example with each and every one of his actions.

In this issue, we bring to light the aspect of Krishna as a Supreme Lover and as the lesser-known, though more important, politician. We take you on an enjoyable journey towards the unknown, a journey that will illuminate your very soul and open your heart and mind to a very different perspective of life itself.

Krishna as a politician

Krishna was probably the most complete and competent politician ever known. He was a loyal friend to the Pandavas of the Mahabharata fame. He knew that the five sons of Kunti and Pandu, the Pandavas, were always on the path of Dharma and so, he remained on their side throughout, supporting them and helping them out through the toughest of times, eventually also helping them win against the Kauravas in the great Kurukshetra War.

The Krishna avatar as against the Rama avatar

Krishna preached non-violence, just like all avatars and messiahs of all faiths did. What set the Krishna avatar apart from the rest, though, was his practical approach to living life on the basis of dharma. The Krishna avatar is very different from the Rama avatar, in that, Rama's teachings were limited merely to that particular age, the Treta Yuga (epoch). The Ramayana, of course, enthralls and enchants every one of us. It is indeed one of the greatest epics ever known.

Rama, the Maryada Purushottam, set an example of living a dharmic life, through his own life story. But a detached, in-depth analysis of the Ramayana reveals several flaws and loopholes, which leaves one a little, if not completely, disappointed with this avatar. For example, Rama's killing of Vali by attacking him, unseen, from behind; putting Sita through the Agni Pariksha (test of fire); then sending the pregnant Sita off to the jungle, in spite of her proving her purity; all create questions in the minds of thinking readers.

These and other incidents make one wonder how or why Rama emerged as the Maryada Purushottam. The Rama avatar preached idealism, but at what cost? None of us can afford, in today's life circumstances, to be so idealistic as to sacrifice our own lives at its altar. Today, adharma is rampant the world over. In this scenario, extreme idealism would never be able to work out to our benefit.

Here is where the Krishna avatar scores over the Rama avatar. Though both are aspects of Sri Vishnu, the Krishna avatar, which manifested during the Dwapara Yuga, emerges as the finest example of living a practical life in this very materialistic world. Krishna clearly exhibited, by way of tales from his own life, that one might have to employ not-so-dharmic methods in



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LORD RAMA

order to survive in a world ridden with adharma (non-righteousness). Krishna, of course, manifested only to re-instate the lost dharma, but his entire approach to this issue, unlike Rama, was completely shrewd and practical, even downright cut-throat, when required.

Krishna, as the ace politician that he was, gave us several messages and teachings through his life story. Let us now take a closer look at those messages.

Faith



KRISHNA SAVES DRAUPADI FROM VASTRAHARAN
(Painting courtesy: [Exotic India](#))

The first message was to have complete trust in his lordship, to surrender to him, completely. This has been beautifully illustrated in the Draupadi Vastraharan episode. Yudhishtira lost heavily to Duryodhan and his uncle, Shakuni, in the game of dice. Having wagered his kingdom and his brothers, he lost them all. Finally, he placed his wife (actually, the wife of the five Pandavas) as a wager. When he lost her too, Draupadi was unwillingly dragged before the court and humiliated in

public, in the presence of the oldest members in the family. Then Dusshasan, brother of Duryodhan, proceeded to disrobe her in public. Her pleas to all present in the court fell on deaf ears. No one stepped forward to help her and Dusshasan eventually started to disrobe her.

Draupadi started praying fervently to Krishna, her divine sakha (friend), to help her and protect her modesty from being outraged. She covered herself with one hand and raised the other in prayer to Krishna. But Krishna did not respond until she completely surrendered to him, lost herself and raised both hands in total and abject surrender to the Lord. Krishna immediately jumped to the rescue and began his unlimited supply of clothing to cover his sakhi. Dusshasan soon got exhausted trying to pull out her clothing and finally fell to the ground.

Sacrifice

Krishna's second message was self-sacrifice, yet to stick onto the dharma. Duryodhan and Arjuna came to Krishna for help just prior to the Mahabharata war. At the time, Krishna was lying on the couch, in Yoga-nidra (a yogic state of deep meditative slumber). Knowing very well that both warriors were present at the spot, Krishna kept feigning sleep till the time Arjuna came and sat by his feet. Duryodhana was standing at the head of the bed. He then 'innocently' asked the princes the reason for their arrival. When they mentioned the reason, Krishna coolly declared that since he had spotted Arjuna first and since Arjuna was also the

younger one, he had the right to ask first.

Krishna asks Arjuna to make a choice between selecting him (Krishna) and his army, the Satyaki Sena. Without batting an eyelid, Arjuna immediately states that he would like only Narayana (Krishna) to be on his side, and that he did not give any importance to anything else besides his divine presence. Duryodhan is very pleased to have received the added strength of an entire army, without realizing that this strength would be useless without Krishna's power backing him.

Arjuna had already confirmed his victory even before starting battle, thanks to the lordship being in his favour. Here, Krishna too sacrificed himself as king, by giving away his entire army. But he still set an example by winning the war, by holding onto dharma in the Dharma Yuddha (the battle of dharma).

Importance of being righteous

The entire epic of the Mahabharata focuses on the re-establishment of dharma or righteousness, through the teachings of the sacred Bhagavad Gita. The Gita is not merely a religious book of the Hindus, but is actually the very essence of human values and a lesson of life through Karma. This is indeed a lesson for the entire humanity as a whole. The message of the Bhagavad Gita was given just before the Kurukshetra war started, but this powerful message is so complete and so enduring that it will stand the test of time.

The teachings of the Gita were very relevant at that time, are relevant in today's time and will continue to be relevant forever. The Gita's commentary on how a human being must go about leading a meaningful life is articulated with such fineness, that no other scripture in the world can even hope to equal it in any way.

The essence of the Gita focuses on performing duties to the best of one's ability, being, at the same time, detached about the outcome. Expectation invariably leads to disappointment, and hence, keeping that aspect out of the picture and aiming merely at doing one's best, leaving the rest to God, is the dharma. This does not, however, mean that one simply sits around being inactive in the hope that God will take over. The Gita only says that you continue with whatever your duty is at a particular point in time and leave the results to the Supreme One.



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KRISHNA PREACHES THE GITA TO ARJUNA

Inconsistencies during the Mahabharata War

The death of Karna



KARNA'S DEATH
(Book courtesy: [Exotic India](#))

Karna was Kunti's firstborn. She had received a boon that she just would have to think of a Devata (deity) to become blessed with a son from him. Wanting to test the power of the boon, she thought of Surya Deva (the Sun god). Immediately, she was blessed with a child. But she was still unmarried at the time and realized that she would cut a sorry figure in society for becoming an unwed mother. Hence, she placed the little infant in a casket and secretly and set him afloat in the river. The little boy, who was born with a Kavacha (armour) and Kundala (pair of earrings) was called Karna and was brought up by Adhiratha, charioteer of Dhritarashtra. That is why he also came to be derided as Sutaputra (son of charioteer).

Karna and Duryodhana were fast friends. This made him an enemy of the Pandavas. But he always showed good qualities and disliked deceit of any kind. He was very generous by nature and would give anyone anything they asked for. He would always caution

Duryodhana against taking the path of lies and treachery and would instead ask him to keep working hard and show his true prowess in an honest manner.

On day seventeen of the great Mahabharata War, Duryodhana went to Salya and said that Karna was planning to kill Arjuna that day, but could do so only if with Salya's help, if the latter turned charioteer for Karna. Salya was furious, because he, a King, could never imagine a Kshatriya such as him, doing that for a mere Sutaputra (someone much lower in caste and stature than himself). But Duryodhan was persistent and humbly requested him to help, telling him that it would be like Lord Brahma taking the reins of Shiva's chariot when he proceeded to kill Triparas. Salya was flattered by that and agreed to be Karna's charioteer.

Karna and Arjuna decided to fight each other to death. Though there were many lined up against Karna, no one was match for him that day. He fought them all valiantly. Finally, Karna and Arjuna faced each other. Krishna asked Arjuna to give his best, otherwise he would never be able to defeat Karna. Fate intervened at this moment. the earth became soft and Karna's chariot wheel sank deep to the ground. Arjuna, taking advantage of the situation, invoked the Aindrastra and took aim at Karna.

Karna pleaded with Arjuna to give him time to retrieve the chariot, as that was the dharma of righteous war. But Krishna just laughed at those words, because Karna had always sided injustice, by teaming up with Duryodhana. Arjuna sent the powerful arrow at Karna, which cut off his head instantaneously. A light left Karna's lifeless body and proceeded heavenward. This signified the end of Karna's life, also the end of the greatest support for the Kaurava side.

It was never right to kill a Kshatriya (warrior) when he was unarmed and helpless. Karna had

pointed this out to Arjuna and yet the latter had killed him in a cowardly fashion. Not only that, Krishna had actually abetted this dastardly act.

Bhishma Pitamaha's fall

Bhishma, the son of Maharaja Shantanu and Devi Ganga (the holy Ganges), was one of the strongest characters of the Mahabharata. He was also great-uncle to the Pandavas and the Kauravas, was also a valiant warrior and unparalleled archer. Though Bhishma knew that the Pandavas were innocent, he was forced to fight on the Kauravas' side. The Pandavas loved and respected Bhishma, but also realized that they would never be able to win the war unless and until Bhishma was slain. Bhishma was verily invincible – no one could even hope to equal him on the battlefield. Bhishma was blessed with the boon of *Ichha Mrityu*, that is, he could choose his own time for dying. Considering the Pandavas' plight and recognizing their need to win the war, Bhishma decided to let them in into a secret that could help kill him.



**BHISHMA LYING ON A BED OF
ARROWS**
(Painting courtesy: [Exotic India](#))

The Pitamaha (grandfather) had taken a vow never to take up arms against a woman, a man who had once been a female or who bore a feminine name. He told the Pandavas about Shikhandi's story. Shikhandi was a woman named Amba in his previous birth. Amba loved Bhishma very deeply, but the latter refused her advances, because he was sworn to bachelorhood. Amba wanted to kill Bhishma, not out of hate, but so that she could release him from this oath of bachelorhood. But she could not do so, because of the strength of Bhishma's power of *Ichha Mrityu*. Amba was reborn as Shikhandi and had the power of remembering his earlier birth. Bhishma told the Pandavas that he would lay down his bow if Shikhandi came in front of him and that, Arjuna could easily kill him then. The Pandavas were overwhelmed at their grandfather's generosity and, after touching his feet, took their leave.

Krishna smiled at Bhishma, who was shedding tears of joy. Krishna blessed him and assured Bhishma that he would have no more births and that he would also be known as the most illustrious in the whole Chandra Vamsha (lunar race).

On the tenth day of battle, Shikhandi was in front attacking Bhishma. But the mighty person just laid down his arms. A volley of arrows let out from Arjuna's Gandiva (bow) penetrated his body and Bhishma fell down. The arrows were so many that he ultimately ended up lying on a bed of arrows! His head and neck were supported by three more arrows. The grand old Kuru lay in that posture till the end of the war, till he knew that the Pandavas had emerged victorious. He chose to leave his body once he was sure that Hastinapura was in safe hands.

Dronacharya dies



GURU DRONACHARYA
(Painting courtesy: [Exotic India](#))

Ashwatthama was the son of the powerful Dronacharya, who was the teacher of both the Pandavas and the Kauravas. Ashwatthama, one of the eight Chiranjeevins (immortal souls), was very dear to Drona. The Pandavas knew that they would never be able to vanquish Drona in the war and so, Krishna suggested a sly means to destroy the great teacher. Krishna averred that the only way to kill Drona would be to tell him that his son was dead. He would be so broken by it, that he would finally collapse.

In the Pandavas' side was an elephant called Ashwatthama. Krishna asked Yudhishthira to spread the rumor that Ashwatthama was dead. The elephant was killed and all started shouting, "Ashwatthama is dead!" Drona, on hearing these words, thinks his son was killed in battle. He approaches Yudhishthira and asks him if this was really true, to which the latter replies, "Ashwatthama hataha iti kunjara", meaning, "Ashwatthama the elephant is dead". But he says the word "elephant" in a whisper, which Drona fails to hear, as planned.

Dronacharya loses his instinct to fight and is finally killed in the war. Yet another pillar of support for the Kauravas collapses with this incident.

The essence of the Mahabharata war

The Mahabharata was akin to what we know today as a World War. Krishna was merely fighting here for justice. Those who truly know the Mahabharata acknowledge that it clearly mentions therein, "Non-violence is religion in grandeur". Krishna was never one for violence. He had advised the Pandavas to adopt non-violent ways to the extent possible. But when there was no other path to adopt to destroy injustice, he had to take recourse to war. That is how the Kurukshetra war took place. Many thousands of innocent soldiers were killed as a consequence and there was tremendous destruction. Though Lord Krishna's side attained victory, he was never pleased by the terrible outcome of it all. He did not for as much as a second, gloat over it. The cycle of Karma had demanded for this to happen and so, the war finally took place, in spite of Krishna's best efforts to stop it.

Krishna as a lover

The name, Krishna, immediately conjures up the image of the mischievous lover in our minds. Krishna, veritably the Prema Avatar (the avatar of love), is vastly known for his dalliances with the Gopis and the Brajbalas (the womenfolk of Braj). He would often come in their way, tease them, throw stones at and break the pots of water they carried on their heads, steal their clothes when they bathed and so on and so forth. Though the Gopis were oft-times irked by his behaviour, they would soon forget all that and rush to Krishna when he started playing his flute. It is said that the gopis would get so mesmerized by the strains emanating from the flute, that they would stop their work halfway and rush towards the location where he would be sitting, blissfully playing his flute. At that point, the gopis would forget they even had families, husbands and children – all they would care about was to be with Krishna.



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RADHA KRISHNA

So sweet was their love and so great was Krishna's grace, that the gopis' husbands and families would find them sitting right at home, when they would actually be spending time with their beloved Krishna. Krishna saw to it that none of the families ever missed having the gopis around when they left their homes to meet him.

Lord Krishna was especially close to the gopis. He had spent all his childhood in the forests of Vrindavan with the Gopas and the Gopis (cowherd boys and girls). He would play the flute and the gopis would dance in absolute elation. This has a deep inner meaning as well – the union of the Jeevatma (or the Individual Soul) with the Paramatma (the Universal One).

The fabulous Raas Leela



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RAAS LEELA

Krishna took great pleasure in performing the Raas Leela, a joyous dance, where the entire Gopi clan joined in, along with his childhood sweetheart, Radha. The Gopis were possessive of Krishna, to the extent of demanding that he dance with each and every one of them. Krishna would acknowledge the innocent and pure love of the Gopis by manifesting himself several times over, so that each Gopi got to dance with 'her own'

Krishna, all at one and the same time!

Krishna loved each gopi deeply. He would rush to rescue them when they fell into any kind of trouble. They were always under his protection and thrived under his loving gaze. It is said

that the gopis were actually highly evolved saints and sages in their past lives, who got the great good fortune of being with Krishna, to live along with him as the gopis.

The divine love of Radha and Krishna

The aspect of Krishna as a lover would be incomplete without speaking about the famous mythological romance of Radha and Krishna. The Radha-Krishna romance epitomizes real love, their lovemaking going beyond barriers of all kinds. To date, Radha and Krishna are adored and revered to a great extent. One can find Radha-Krishna temples not only in India, but the world over. Though Radha and Krishna never married, they are revered as a divine couple and stand for pure Love in all its glory.

Radha and Krishna were very close to each other, right from childhood. Starting off as playmates during childhood, they went on to become sweethearts and eventually, lovers. One day, Radha's father requested Krishna to accompany her to a trip through the forest. On their way back, they both realized the true impact of their love for each other and surrendered to the waves of feelings arising within them.

Radha and Krishna were at the bank of the river Yamuna, when they were deeply aroused by each other for the very first time. Krishna seduced Radha, who was actually yearning for his physical demonstration of love.



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LORD KRISHNA

Krishna, as a lover, was as passionate as he was compassionate. They made love that day, after which they came to be known as the Eternal Lovers. The divine love between Radha and Krishna and their eternal lovemaking has been immortalized by way of poetry and literature. Jayadeva's Gitagovinda talks about the romantic, even erotic, relationship between Radha and Krishna. Many of his verses in the Ashtapadi even talk about Krishna's deep love for the Gopis.

These writings illustrate the true extent of Radha's and Krishna's love for each other. They defied all social bindings to upkeep that pure love. Radha was older than Krishna, but that did not seem to matter at all to them. All that ever mattered was that they be with each other all the time.

Krishna is said to have had 1008 wives, including Rukmini and Satyabhama! But finally, it was only Radha who he is always seen paired with. His love for his beloved went beyond the worldly and even the spiritual planes. It was a pure, untainted love that bound Radha and Krishna together - a love far, far beyond human understanding.

The Radha-Krishna union in the Kamasutra

The Kamasutra, a treatise on love and lovemaking techniques, is India's greatest contribution to erotica. No other treatise on the subject, worldwide, is ever known to be so extensive or so exhaustive, covering all aspects of lovemaking.



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RADHA KRISHNA BENEATH KADAMBA TREE

with flower bracelets. Her tinkling anklets, glass bangles and waist belt make melodious music along with their sounds of love. Finally, the divine union between Radha and Krishna takes place. Their sweet, tender and passionate love making goes beyond words and remains an experience beyond all human comprehension.

This angle of physical lovemaking between Radha and Krishna has not been explored much. Indeed, some sects of Hinduism may not even approve of this concept of actual, physical lovemaking between Radha and Krishna. But the works that are there on this subject are simply brilliant and bring out the entire episode very beautifully and realistically. Simply trying to visualize the scene presented in the writings takes the reader to a different spiritual level altogether - so wonderful and meaningful indeed was their love for each other.

Conclusion

There are indeed many facets to Lord Krishna - the naughty kid, the majestic prince, the most romantic lover, the valiant warrior, and, above all, the shrewdest politician ever seen. His soft face concealed a sharp mind, the machinations of which would be unfathomable for us. Human-like in appearance, he was truly divine in his traits as well.

Krishna, through his life story, shows us the way to live a full, rich life - always fight injustice, do the right thing without having attachment towards the outcome of those actions and most importantly, never hurt anyone, but at the same time, never hesitate to use sly means to fight and destroy your adversary if he can only function slyly!

The Kamasutra talks in great detail about the love between Radha and Krishna. It describes how Radha, in a state of arousal, approaches her beloved Govinda, sitting under a bower. Her face shines with her unspoken love for him. Her lips are parted and her eyes speak of her desire for making love with him. She seats herself on a soft bed of leaves, strewn with flower petals and her beautiful wide eyes speak of her intense desire. She coquettishly asks him to place flowers in her hair, along with peacock feathers, so that they may wave like the Lord Kama's (the God of Love) banners.

Krishna too is eager for her love. He accedes to her request and also playfully places musky spots on her forehead and bosom and dyes her temples with various hues. He decorates her eyes with kaajal (black kohl) and ornaments her hair and neck with fresh garlands and her wrists

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