

Sri Radha Krishna & Swami Narayan

RADHA KRISHNA:

The Sanskrit word KRISHNA has the literal meaning of "black", "dark" or "dark-blue", and is used as a name to describe someone with dark skin. Krishna is often depicted in murtis as black, and is generally shown in paintings with blue skin. The lotus-eyed, dark skinned Krishna is the complete and perfect man of Indian mythological traditions. He was the eighth incarnation of Vishnu, the Preserver of Universe. He took the human form to redeem mankind from evil forces. Krishna was physically irresistibly appealing. Ancient texts dwell at length on his exceptionally alluring countenance: a blue complexion soft like the monsoon cloud, shining locks of black hair framing a beautifully chiseled face, large lotus like eyes, wild-flower garlands around his neck, a yellow garment (pitambara) draped around his body, a crown of peacock feathers on his head, and a smile playing on his lips, it is in this manner that he is faithfully represented since the ancient times to the modern.



Krishna was born in a prison cell more than 3000 years ago in Mathura. Legend has it that Mathura was ruled by a king called Ugrasena. One day, Ugrasena and his wife were taking a walk in the gardens, where a demon saw the queen and fell in love with her. In this lust for her, he diverted the attention of Ugrasena, assumed his form himself and fulfilled his desire. The child born of this union was Kamsa. Kamsa grew up to dethrone his father and imprison his sister Devaki (daughter of Ugrasena) and her husband Vasudeva. Devki later became the mother of Krishna. It so happened that on the day Kamsa was driving his newly married sister and her husband Vasudeva to their new home, a voice from the heavens intercepted him. The voice conveyed to him that the eighth child of Devaki would kill Kamsa. Consequently, he imprisoned the couple and started killing their children, year after year. Seven children were lost but the eighth one - the Lord escaped the hands of the butcher and lived on to slay Kamsa later.

Lord Krishna was born at midnight on the 8th day of the dark half of the month of Bhadrapada (August-September) and was brought to Vrindavan by Vasudeva (Krishna's father) on the same night to save Him from Kamsa. He was brought up in Vrindavan by the cowherd family of Yashoda and Nanda Raja. Krishna led a very pampered and amorous life in the Gokul, alongside thousands of gopikas, the cowherdresses who were all enthralled at His beauty and were thrilled whenever He played the flute. There are numerous playful instances of Krishna, playing mischief with the gopikas including breaking their butter pots.

Krishna's youthful dalliances with the 'gopikas' are interpreted as symbolic of the loving interplay between God and the human soul. Radha is recognized as the loveliest of all the cowgirls. She was the daughter of the cowherd Vrishabhvanu and his wife, Kamalavati. She was a childhood friend and soulmate of Krishna and the two were inseparable as playmates and later as lovers. Radha's utterly rapturous love for Krishna and their relationship is often interpreted as the quest for union with the divine. This kind of love is of the highest form of devotion in Vaishnavism.

He had to leave Vrindavan, and Radha, to safeguard the virtues of truth. He vanquished his enemies, became the king, and came to be worshipped as a lord of the universe. She waited for him. He married Rukmini and Satyabhama, raised a family, fought the great war of Ayodhya, and she still waited. So great was Radha's love for Krishna that even today her name is uttered whenever Krishna is referred to, and Krishna worship is thought to be incomplete without the deification of Radha. Most of Krishna's images are considered complete when Radha stands by his side.

SWAMI NARAYAN:

Sahajanand Swami (April 2, 1781 - 1830) or Bhagwan Swaminarayan (i.e. Lord Swaminarayan), is the central figure of the Swaminarayan Faith and the founder of the Swaminarayan Sampradaya in which followers offer devotion to Lord Swaminarayan as the final manifestation of God. In this particular tradition, Sahajanand Swami is respectfully addressed as Bhagwan Swaminarayan by his followers. Sahajanand Swami was born in Chhapaiya, Uttar Pradesh (Northern India). He settled in the west Indian state of Gujarat, where he then preached his doctrine until his death in 1830. Sahajanand Swami is also known as Ghanshyam Pande, Ghanshyam Maharaj, Shreeji Maharaj and Shri Hari.



Lord Swaminarayan, having mastered the scriptures by the age of 7, renounced His home at 11 to embark upon a 7 year spiritual pilgrimage on foot across the length and breadth of India. Eventually settling in Gujarat, He spent the next 30 years spearheading a socio-spiritual revolution. With a faithful following of 500 Paramhansas, He established the Swaminarayan Sampradaya, introducing social reforms, serving the poor and the needy, challenging superstition, addictions and blind faith. His work concentrated on promoting personal morality and molding spiritual character. In a life span of 49 years, He enriched humanity with six majestic mandirs, revealed the Vedic philosophy of Akshar Purushottam worship, and imparted deep spiritual wisdom in the sacred scripture - Vachanamrut. In His own lifetime, He was worshipped as the supreme God by hundreds of thousands of devotees. And He promised to remain ever present on earth through a succession of spiritual Gurus - Aksharbrahman Gunatitanand Swami, Bhagatji Maharaj, Jaga Swami Maharaj, Shastriji Maharaj, Yogiji Maharaj and presently Pragat Brahmawarup Pramukh Swami Maharaj and Pragat Brahmawarup Mahant Swami Maharaj.