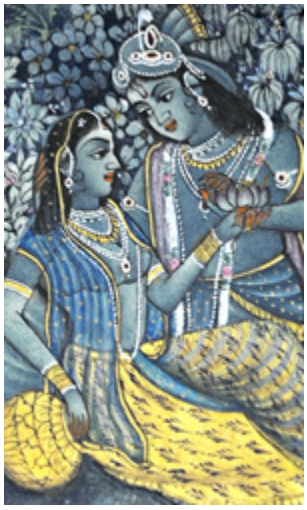
Radha-Krishna



Krishna and Radha are one of the greatest loves stories of all time

One of the greatest love stories of all time is the Hindu legend of Radha and Krishna. Krishna, the incarnation of Lord Vishnu, grew up in the small cow-herding village of Vrindavan and fell in love with a *gopi*, or milk maid named Radha. According to ancient mythology, among the thousands of gopis, 108 are prominent and of them, eight are principal. Among the eight, Radha and Chandravali are the most important and of the two, Radha is superior. Legend states that since their childhood, Radha and Krishna were very close – they played, danced, fought, grew up together and wanted to be together forever. However, fate pulled them apart.



Krishna is known as the God of Love, and Radha his favorite milk maiden

Krishna left Vrindavan to safeguard the virtues of truth. Years passed with no word from Krishna, but Radha waited dutifully for him to return. Stories of Krishna vanquishing his enemies were carried back to the village and Radha still waited patiently. Finally, news arrived of Krishna becoming king and being worshipped as the lord of the universe. Radha waited even though a king was above her station in life. In fact, she was prepared to wait for eternity because she never doubted the truth of their love. At long last, Krishna returned for Radha and she became his greatest consort. Their love was so great that Krishna-worship was thought to be incomplete without the deification of Radha and she became venerated as a supreme goddess. Henceforth, devotees uttered their names, "Radha-Krishna" as a single term.

The enduring love story between Radha and Krishna inspired not only devotees but also poets, painters, sculptors and musicians age after age. Together they have come to represent the ultimate union of what can be called the true embodiment of love. In fact, Radha is widely seen as the incarnation of Lakshmi, who is Vishnu's primary consort. Radha is therefore acknowledged as Krishna's *shakti*, or divine feminine counterpart. A god without his shakti is considered incomplete and essentially powerless. Indeed, Krishna may enchant the world, but it is Radha who leaves the God of Love spellbound. Their partnership ultimately represents the highest form of devotion between two people, the quest for union with the divine and the transcendental nature of eternal love.