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Pradyumna - The Son of Sri Krishna

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Lord Sri Krishna, the eighth avatara or manifestation of Sri Maha Vishnu, is a major deity in Hinduism. Considered to be a Poorna (complete) Avatara or a Supreme God in his own right, he is the central character of the great Hindu epic, the Mahabharata, the Bhagavata Purana and the Bhagavad Gita. Being the essence of love itself, Krishna had a great many female followers, devotees and wives as well. One of his dearest wives was Rukmini. Rukmini and Krishna had a son called Pradyumna.



Murlidhar Krishna with Cow

Marble Dust Statue

The handsome and valiant Pradyumna is the most beloved and famous son of Krishna. Believed to be one among the four vyuha avataras, he is also one of the 24 Keshava namas (names in praise) of Vishnu. In this post, we bring you the story of Pradyumna, the Son of Sri Krishna.

Pradyumna as a Vyuha Avatara of Vishnu

Maha Vishnu is vastly revered for his Chatur-vyuha (four-fold vyuha) avatars, namely, Vasudeva (the Creator), Samkarsana (the Sustainer), Pradyumna (the Destroyer) and Aniruddha (the Promulgator of Spiritual Knowledge). These vyuhas are related to four of the six causes of creation, representing the five aspects of God himself, namely, Narayana (thinking), Vasudeva (feeling), Samkarsana (willing), Pradyumna (knowing) and Aniruddha (acting). Each of these avatars controls a specific creative energy.



Mahavishnu

Reprint of Temple Mural

Attributes and Functions of the Vyuhas

Each of the vyuha avatars possesses certain attributes and performs certain functions. Vasudeva is endowed with all the qualities in full measure and hence, is equivalent to the Supreme Being or the Para Vasudeva. Samkarsana possesses jnana (knowledge) and bala (strength). Pradyumna is endowed with aishwarya (prosperity) and veerya (valour). Aniruddha glows with shakti (might) and tejas (effulgence).

Each Vyuha is assigned one function. Vasudeva exists primarily to give jeevatmas an experience of Divine Bliss and to give them an opportunity to serve the Lord. Samkarsana is given the task of dissolution of the universe and propagation of the Shastras. Pradyumna is entrusted with the creation of the universe and the maintenance of Dharma. Aniruddha protects the universe and imparts spiritual knowledge to all.

Hence, Vyuha Vasudeva is directly in charge of samashti, srishti, sthiti and samhara. He is the Supreme Controller of all in this universe. As Pradyumna, he enters the body of Brahma and

controls the process of creation through him. As Samkarsana, he enters Rudra, thus regulating the process of devolution in the universe. The process of preservation, however, is directly controlled by Vasudeva, in the form of Aniruddha. Aniruddha is an avatara of Maha Vishnu - he monitors and preserves the universe.

Birth and Life

Pradyumna was the son of Lord Sri Krishna; and also the 61st grandson of Adinarayana. He was born to Krishna and Rukmini in Dwaraka. He is commonly considered to be the reincarnation of Kama Deva, the God of Love, who was burnt to ashes by Shiva, in a fit of rage.

According to the Mahabharata, he was Sanathkumara, the son of Lord Brahma. In Jainism, the Pradyumna-charitra (an 18-canon poem) of Rajchandra relates the story of Pradyumna. This was written in 1618 AD.

Pradyumna as the Reincarnation of Kama Deva

Shiva, who had recently lost his wife Sati, was completely disillusioned with life. Sati, the daughter of King Daksha, had married him against her father's wishes. An angry Daksha insulted her and talked ill about Shiva, when she visited his yagna after her marriage. Unable to bear the insult, she jumped into the havan-kund and gave up her life. On coming to know about this, Shiva reached the venue of the yagna, destroyed it all and, lifting the lifeless body of Sati, left the place. Utterly grief-stricken, Shiva then proceeded to go deep into meditation for years and years.



Shiva with Sati's Corpse on His Shoulders

In the Sat Yuga, the Devas decided that it was now time for Shiva to come out of this self-imposed solitude and get back to both his worldly and divine duties. In order to achieve this, they called about Kama Deva to shoot his arrows of love at Shiva, thus distracting him from his asceticism and making him fall in love again.

Around the same time, Parvati, an incarnation of Sati, was deeply in love with Shiva. She was the daughter of King Himavan and had always adored Shiva, right from a very young age. She used to visit his meditation spot every day, cleaned the place and meditated along with him. When he refused to respond, she vowed to take up severe penance in order to gain his grace. Shedding her clothes and refusing to eat even a morsel, she meditated for days and weeks on end.

The Devas asked her to stand in front of Shiva and asked Kama Deva to start releasing his arrows. Distracted from his penance, Shiva opened his eyes looked around and spotted the God of Love cowering in a corner. Enraged at the latter's behaviour, he opened his Third Eye and immediately burnt him to ashes.



Shiva Burning Kamadeva

Kama Deva's distraught wife, Rati, came up to the Lord and pleaded that her husband be returned to her. Taking pity on her, Shiva promised her that Kama Deva would be a part of Krishna in his next birth and that Rati would reincarnate as the daughter of Bhimkaraya Rukmi. He blessed her that she would end up marrying Kama in that birth, thus being reunited with him.

Pradyumna is Abducted by Sambara

According to the Bhagavata Purana, Pradyumna was abducted by the demon Sambara, when he was only a six-day-old baby. The demon took him and cast him into the sea. He was then swallowed by a fish. But the fish was carried back to the house of Sambara. When they opened it up, they found the child inside. Sambara then gave the baby to Mayawati, who worked there as a cook. She was only too happy to raise the handsome little child. Mayawati was in actuality the reincarnation of Rati, the wife of Kama Deva.

After a few days, Narada approached this woman and revealed the true identity of the child, also letting her know that this was her husband, Kama Deva, from her previous birth. Ever since then, Mayawati fell in love with the child and knew that she would eventually marry him.



Narada - Photographic Print

Mayawati was tremendously attracted to Pradyumna's physical appearance and longed for him to recognize her and give her that same love he had, in their previous birth. One day, not able to take it anymore, Mayawati narrated to him the story of their previous life and told him they were now free to get back together again.

She also revealed to Pradyumna that Sambarasura was adept at many kinds of illusionary arts, which made him almost invulnerable to attack. She then taught him an art named Mahamaya, which could destroy all of the demon's illusionary arts, thereby enabling the boy to kill him.

Pradyumna Kills Sambarasura

Once he felt prepared enough to fight Sambara, Pradyumna challenged him. This enraged the asura, who came charging at him with a mace in his hand. There ensued a terrible battle between the two. When the asura felt that his physical might would not be enough to fight the young man, he flew off to the sky and used his illusory powers to attack him with arrows and other astras (celestial weapons).

Undaunted, Pradyumna used his own Mahamaya art to fight the asura. Finally, Sambara's powers were all destroyed one by one by the valiant warrior. Pradyumna then pulled out the powerful Vaishnavastra, Vishnu's own weapon. The Vaishnavastra could be stopped or nullified only by Lord Vishnu himself. No one else; not even Indra, the God of the Devas, had the power to fight it. The astra found its mark and killed the fearful demon on the spot.

Pradyumna Returns to Dwaraka

Mayawati could travel in the air. She carried Pradyumna with her and reached him back to his father's capital, Dwaraka. As they flew over the palace of Krishna and began their descent, all the citizens mistook him to be Krishna. Such was Pradyumna's likeness with Krishna. However, seeing the woman who was accompanying him, they knew that this could not be their beloved Lord Krishna.

Once in the antahpura (interior chambers) of the palace, Pradyumna and Mayawati waited there for his mother, Rukmini. She came out a little later and, looking at him, was immediately reminded of her own son. She kept looking at him and, by sheer maternal intuition; also seeing his resemblance to her husband; she knew for sure that he was her own flesh and blood. Just at that moment, Krishna came out with his own parents, Vasudeva and Devaki. Pradyumna approached them and, falling at their feet, took their blessings.

At the behest of Krishna, Narada too turned up at the palace and narrated to everyone the story of how Pradyumna had been abducted by Sambara and how Mayawati had helped him slay the demon. He then revealed her true identity as the reincarnation of Rati, the wife of Kama Deva. He convinced everyone that the couple belonged to each other and must reunite as man and wife in this birth as well.

Once the residents of Dwaraka got over their initial shock at the sudden, unexpected turn of events, they were elated and cheered his arrival. The prince that they had lost and thought had gone forever; had come back to them. The city came alive with celebration, dance and music.

Pradyumna Weds Mayawati

As per Krishna's advice, Pradyumna married Mayawati, thus reuniting with her in this birth. They later had a son named Aniruddha, who went on to become Krishan's favourite grandson and was also considered a Vyuhā Avatara of Vishnu. Later, Pradyumna also wedded Rukmavati, the daughter of his mother's brother, Bhimkaraya Rukmi.

According to the Harivamsa; one of the important texts of Sanskrit literature; he had yet another wife named Prabhavati, the daughter of King Vajranabha. Legend has it that when he went to see her for the first time, he turned himself into a bee and lived in a garland of flowers, which had been especially prepared for her to wear.

Pradyumna Becomes a Maharathi

Soon after, Pradyumna joined hands with his father, to rule the land and also protect their land from all types of external attack. He was the beloved of the people of Dwaraka. In time, he became a mighty Maharathi warrior. Not only did he possess the rare Vaishnavāstra, but he also knew the secret of the Chakra Vyuhā, a highly complex battle formation, which was otherwise nearly impossible to get into and then come out of, alive.

According to the Mahabharata, Pradyumna trained Arjuna's son, Abhimanyu, and the Upapandavas in warfare. However, he himself did not participate in the Great War of Kurukshetra. Instead, he chose to go on a pilgrimage with his uncle, Balarama, and some other Yadavas.

Pradyumna was an active participant in the Ashwamedha Yagna (one of the most important sacrificial rituals in Hindu mythology), which was conducted by Yudhishtira later. Then he, along with his father, fought the demon Nikumbha. Nikumbha hung Arjuna in the sky. After some time, the latter began to vomit blood. Krishna beheaded the asura. Arjuna then began to fall down from the sky. Seeing this, Pradyumna immediately rushed to him and held him as he was about to hit the ground, thus saving his life.

Pradyumna Meets His End

The valiant Pradyumna led and won many a battle during his rule. However, he was killed in a way that was least befitting the mighty warrior that he was. He lost his life in a drunken brawl in Krishna's court at Dwaraka.

There is a legend behind his untimely demise and the destruction of the Yadava kula (clan)

itself. This is narrated in the Mausala Parva or the "Book of Clubs", which is the sixteenth of eighteen books of the epic Mahabharata. This treatise describes events 35 years after the end of the Great War of Kurukshetra. The sequence of events was revealed by Rishis to Krishna's son, Samba, who dressed as a woman to mock them.

The Mausala Parva

In the days after the Kurukshetra War, Krishna went to visit Gandhari, the mother of the Kauravas. She was still mourning the loss of her 100 sons and the Kaurava soldiers. In extreme anger and grief, she blamed Krishna for having caused all the destruction and the death of hundreds and thousands of people. She accused him, saying that he could have stopped the war if he wanted to, but did not. She then cursed him that his entire Yadava clan would be destroyed in a manner similar to the terrible death of her sons.

Krishna accepted the curse and tried to explain that he had tried several times to mediate peace with Duryodhana, her oldest son. However, the latter had refused to give up his arrogant attitude and had chosen the path of adharma. Krishna also described the Kauravas' many attempts to kill the Pandavas. No matter how he tried to console Gandhari, she was not prepared to listen to him. In any case, it was too late, as the curse had already been given and so, it would have to take effect at some time or other. Distressed and crestfallen, Krishna left Gandhari's quarters.

The Yadava Clan is Destroyed

35 years after the end of the Kurukshetra War, the Yadava clan was peaceful and prosperous. Without having to face any type of trouble or challenges, the youth population got frivolous and irresponsible. Krishna's son, Samba, was particularly infamous for his wayward behaviour. He once dressed up as a pregnant woman and, along with his friends, went to meet Rishis Vishwamitra, Durvasa, Vasishtha, Narada and others. They were visiting in Dwaraka for an audience with Krishna. The young man intended to mock the great sages, asking them to predict the gender of his "unborn child".

One of the Rishis saw through the prank and, in anger, cursed Samba that he would give birth to an iron bolt, which would destroy the entire Yadava race. Frightened, the young man fled from the spot and went to King Ugrasena to tell him what had happened. He asked Samba to powder the iron bolt and cast it all into the Prabhasa Sea. The ruler then ordered that no intoxicating spirits or substances should be produced or distributed in the Yadava kingdom.

Soon after this, the residents of the town experienced several dark omens, including the

mysterious disappearance of the Sudarshana Chakra, the Panchajanya (Krishna's Conch), his chariot and Balarama's weapons. The place was infested with pests and people suddenly started committing crimes for no apparent reason. Cheating was rampant and no one seemed to have any sense of values or remorse. Everyone started having terrible dreams as well.

Seeing all this, Krishna became restless, knowing that something bad was going to occur there. He asked his subjects to go on a pilgrimage to the sacred Prabhasa sea. They agreed and reached the banks of the sea. Once there, they started making merry as usual, making noise, consuming alcohol and so on.

In this fracas, a heavily inebriated Satyaki went to Kritavarma and accused him for scheming with Ashwatthama and killing the remaining Pandava army, while they were sleeping. A terrible argument ensued, wherein each one tried to prove the other side more wrong. Pradyumna applauded Satyaki, which further angered Kritavarma. He, in turn, taunted Satyaki, saying that he had killed the armless Bhurshiravas, who had held no hostility towards anyone. Thus, both kept hurling insults at each other.

As the debate heated up more and more, Satyaki ended up killing Kritavarma. Not stopping here, he also killed all the warriors on Kritavarma's side. Krishna hurried to Satyaki, in order to stop him. By that time, the Bhojas and the Andhakas surrounded Satyaki. Knowing he could do nothing more, Krishna stepped away and watched in a detached manner. The Bhojas and Andhakas started hitting Satyaki with whatever they could find.

Pradyumna, who was also watching all this, could no longer control himself. He rushed forward to rescue Satyaki. However, they were outnumbered by the warriors and, after fighting for some time, were slain, right in front of Krishna's eyes.

In grief, anger and shock, Krishna took some eraka grass in his hand. This grass was growing in abundance along the banks of the Prabhasa. To everyone's surprise, the eraka turned into a club. With this club, Krishna began to kill the violent people there.

Seeing this, everyone else picked up the eraka grass, which also transformed into clubs. Everyone was under the influence of alcohol and attacked everyone else. Soon, all of them were dead, except Vabhru, Daruka and he Krishna. Balarama was safe because he was not part of the crowd and was also not inebriated.



Krishna Balaram

Poster

Balarama and Vabhru, however, did not survive long after that. They were the next to die. Krishna asked Daruka to go to the Pandava and tell them what had happened. He was sure Arjuna would come with help. Daruka immediately left to visit the Pandavas.

Krishna Sheds His Mortal Coil

In the meantime, some of the powder that had been cast in the Prabhasa had been swallowed by a fish. It transformed into a metal piece inside the fish. Jara, a hunter, caught that fish and found the metal. Shaping it into the tip of an arrow, he proceeded to go hunting. At that time, a sad Krishna was lounging under a tree, with his feet stretched out in front of him. Mistaking him for game, Jara shot the arrow at him. The poisonous tip pierced Krishna's toe and took effect almost immediately. Realizing his great folly, the hunter was dismayed and tearfully apologized to Krishna. The latter merely smiled, blessed him and then proceeded to shed his mortal coil. Taking his four-armed avatara, he ascended back to Heaven and to his abode.

Vasudeva was the next to die. Arjuna rushed to help the old people and children who were the only survivors of the battle. He took them, along with the 16,000 wives of Krishna, to Indraprastha. As they were leaving, the waters of the Prabhasa rose, sinking the entire city of Dwaraka. The women, children and Arjuna's army were attacked by Mlechhas and robbers. Arjuna fought hard to defend them, but was severely outnumbered. His weapons were exhausted and his power to invoke astras did not work. The women and children panicked and ran in different directions. The surviving Yadavas walked along with Arjuna to reach Indraprastha.

Arjuna, who failed to protect the women and children of his land, fell into deep depression.

He met sage Vyasa, who advised that he and his brothers had served their mission and that now, it was time for them to gracefully retire and let the next generation take over. Arjuna then went to Yudhishtira to tell him everything that had happened.

Genealogy

Pradyumna sired a brilliant son called Aniruddha. When he came of age, Aniruddha married Usha, the daughter of Bana Daitya and granddaughter of the great King, Mahabali. Again, he is said to have been very much like his grandfather, Krishna. Some believe that he was a jana avatara, an avatara of Vishnu himself.

Aniruddha had a son named Vajra or Vajranabha. The youngster was an invincible warrior and was one among the very few Yadavas to survive the battle. When he became king, Vajra got 16 idols of Krishna and other Gods carved from a rare, imperishable stone called Braja. He then built temples in and around Mathura, to house each of those idols. He was extremely devoted to Krishna and wanted everyone to feel the presence of the Lord everywhere, at all times.

Pradyumna as Sanathkumara

In Hindu mythology, the Four Kumaras, namely, Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanatana and Sanathkumara are the four manasaputras or the mind-born sons of Lord Brahma. Featuring prominently in Puranic literature, their mention is also found in the Upanishads. They are great yogis, who received the boon of remaining forever five years old, from Brahma himself. They were created with a view to advancing creation. However, they decided to undertake a vow of Brahmacharya or lifelong celibacy.

After being initiated into the Sri Gopala Mantra, the four brothers entered deep meditation and realized the Supreme Power of the Highest Being, Lord Sri Krishna. Being initiated into Vaishnava tradition, they then began to spread the teachings of the path of renunciation. During the process of initiation, they received the Sri Shaligrama Shila, known as Sri Sarveswara Bhagawan. This had been passed on through the Guru-Shishya parampara (teacher-student tradition) prevalent at that time.



Lord Vishnu with the Four Kumaras - Photographic Print

The name Sanathkumara is derived from Sanskrit "Sanath", which means "Eternal Youth"; "Ku" means "with difficulty" and "Mara" means "mortal". He receives mention in the Chandogya Upanishad text. There is a shrine dedicated to him, situated in the town of Kataragama, Sri Lanka, which attracts people from all religions and faiths.

Sanathkumara is believed to reside in the most sacred place; at the very center of our planet. This place is called Shamballa or Shambhala. He has several names, relating to the sahasrara centers; associating with the different spiritual and cosmic planes. At the supra-cosmic plane, he is called Sanatana; at the cosmic plane, he is Subrahmanya; at the solar plane, he is known as Sanaka; at the planetary plane, he is Sanandana and, on this planet, he is the Sanathkumara.

According to the Mahabharata and several other scriptures, Sanathkumara comes to Earth to help the divine plan of creation. He synchronized his arrival with that of the Krishna avatara. He was born to Krishna and Rukmini as their son, Pradyumna.

He goes through a complicated life process, dies a violent death and, at the end of his mission; goes back to his original position as Sanathkumara in Shamballa. In its last chapters, the Mahabharata talks in detail about his life story.

Shamballa in Hinduism and Buddhism

Sanathkumara is said to live in Shamballa, which is the sahasrara of the world. In Hinduism and Tibetan Buddhism, Shamballa is a mythical kingdom, which is believed to be laid out in the form of an eight-petal lotus, surrounded by a chain of snowy mountains. In the center lies the palace of the King of Shamballa, who ruled from the city called Kalapa. Some texts refer to

Shamballa as Shangri-La.

Interestingly, the Vishnu Purana and some other Hindu texts mention the village of Shamballa as the birthplace of Kalki, the final incarnation of Sri Maha Vishnu. It is believed that Kalki will manifest in order to end the present Kali Yuga and usher in the new Age of the Satya Yuga.

According to the Buddhist Kalachakra teachings, Shambhala is ruled over by Maitreya, the future Buddha. The Kalachakra tantra prophesies that, when the state of the world declines to the maximum possible extent and all is lost, the 25th Kalki king will come forth from Shambhala, with his vast army, in order to destroy the "Dark Forces". He will usher in a worldwide Golden Age. The date for this event is estimated around the year 2424.

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