



Alternative Krishnas: Regional and Vernacular Variations on a Hindu Deity

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Going beyond the standard depictions of Krishna in the epics, this book uses regional and vernacular sources to present a wide range of Krishna traditions.

Krishna—widely venerated and adored in the Hindu tradition—is a deity of many aspects. An ancient manifestation of the Supreme God Vishnu, or the Godhead itself, Krishna is the bringer of Yoga philosophy and the creator of the universe, the destroyer of evil tyrants, and the hero of the epic Mahabharata. He is also described in classical Sanskrit texts as having human characteristics and enjoying very human pursuits: Krishna is the butter thief, cowherd, philanderer, and flute player. Yet even these playful depictions are based upon descriptions found in the Sanskrit canon, and mostly reflect familiar, classical Pan-Indian images.

In this book, contributors examine the alternative, or unconventional, Krishnas, offering examples from more localized Krishna traditions found in different regions among various ethnic groups, vernacular language traditions, and remote branches of Indian religions. These wide-ranging, alternative visions of Krishna include the Tantric Krishna of Bengal, Krishna in urban women's rituals, Krishna as monogamous husband and younger brother in Braj, Krishna in Jainism, Krishna in Marathi tradition, Krishna in South India, and the Krishna of nineteenth-century reformed Hinduism.

Guy L. Beck, a religious historian, teaches Hinduism and Asian Religions in the Religious Studies Program at Tulane University. He is the author of *Sonic Theology: Hinduism and Sacred Sound*.

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