

## Dancing Krishna

India, Tanjore, Tamil Nadu, Chola dynasty, 14th century Bronze

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Christian H. Aall and The Jhamandas Watumull Family Endowment, 1997 (8640.1)

Images of Krishna dancing were very popular in India. The stories surrounding images of Krishna dancing refer to the time he stole butter from his mother's pantry and danced with joy at his accomplishment. He is depicted here as an energetic young boy whose face reflects the mischievousness of youth.

DANCING KRISHNA - (8640.1) - BRONZE Tanjore, Kerala, Chola period, 13th C. Gift of Mr & Mrs Christian Aall and the Jhamandas Watumul Family Endowment (1997 From an article published in ORIENTATIONS Dec.1999

In the ninth century. the Vaishnava (worshipper of Vishnu) poet-saint Periyalvar composed a set of fifty poems dedicated to various episodes of Krishna's childhood. These helped to popularize a host of delightful antics among artists and devotees alike. The Image in the HAA collection depicts a joyful three-year-old child posed in dance, with his right leg raised while his other leg supports his weight and is slightly bent. His left hand is outstretched in a southern Indian hand gesture called the lambahasta, which literally signifies a hand hanging down, while his right hand performs the abhaya mudra (gesture of protection and reassurance).

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He is naked except for a variety of ornaments. His hair is arranged in a high jatamukuta (crown of locks) with a large flame motif in front and a shirashchakra with multiple petals and two tassels behind. Particularly interesting is a broad necklace with a central medallion from which hang a pendant and two chains, which are attached to the necklace at the back. Both pendant and chains swing back and forth as the young child dances, with the bells on his girdle and padasaras furnishing the music



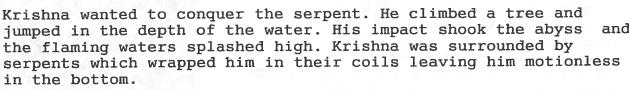


DANCING KRISHNA - (8640.1) Chola period - 14th Dynasty - BRONZE Gift of Mr & Mrs Christian Aall and the Jhamandas Watumul Family Endowment (1997)

Vishnu plucked two hairs from his head, a fair one and a dark one which will descend to the Earth to rescue it by conquering its demons.

The hairs became a brother-pair of earth saviors. The dark one became Krishna and the fair one Balarama or Rama. They were raised as normal children, playing in the woods and fields and tending the flocks.

As a seven year old Krishna came to the banks of the Yamuna. The great serpent King Kaliya lived in there, making the waters impure.



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However, Balarama, remembering the divine nature of Krishna told him to display his infinite power, arise and conquer the King of Serpents.

With a burst Krisna released his limbs from the coils, placed his foot on the serpent and began to dance on the mighty head. Krishna continued his dance until the great serpent king lay stiff.

The queens and other serpents implored Krishna to save their Lord. Krishna, in his mercy, banished Kaliya from the Yamuna and sent him to reside in the wastness of the ocean

By not eliminating Kaliya, the counter-play between the productive and destructive energies would not be disrupted as such an eventuality was far from the intent of the Highest Being.

## Krishņa as a Child

India, Kerala, 15th century Bronze

Gift of The Christensen Fund, 2001 (10642.1)

Kṛishṇa is the most popular avatar, or incarnation, of Vishṇu. Here he is shown as a mischievous child holding butter in both hands. As a young boy living among cow herders, he amused himself with various pranks involving stealing butter and curds from his mother and upsetting pails of milk. "Butterlover," one of his divine names, displays the love and honor his devotees have for his childhood pranks.