

Basic Detail Report



Krishna playing the flute

Date

20th century

Primary Maker

Artist not recorded

Medium

Unpainted wood

Description

A unpainted carved wood sculpture depicting Krishna playing the flute, or venu, in front of a cow. A venu is a musical instrument common in Krishna iconography.

Krishna is a major Hindu deity and an avatar of Vishnu (evident from the chakra and conch shell). He is known as the god of love and compassion and a key figure in Bhagavad Gita and Mahabharata. Krishna's consort is Radha and there are many love stories involving the two. He is characteristically portrayed with a flute, which represents devotion and surrendering oneself to the divine. Krishna also charms gopis (female cow herders) with his flute playing (among other things). This particular image is a familiar depiction of Krishna, playing his flute, with his cow, Surabhi. Krishna's association with cows is deeply rooted in Hindu mythology, theology, and cultural symbolism. As a child, Krishna is often depicted as a gopāla (cowherd), tending to cattle in the pastoral landscape of Vrindavan. This imagery is central to his identity as a divine protector and nurturer, reflecting his role as Govinda ("one who brings satisfaction to the cows") and Gopala ("protector of cows"). In the Bhāgavata Purāṇa, Krishna's childhood is filled with episodes of herding cows, playing his flute to call them, and engaging in playful yet profound interactions with them, reinforcing the sacred connection between the divine and nature.

Dimensions

36 × 23 × 10 in. (91.4402 × 58.4201 × 25.4001 cm)