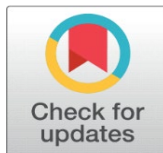


KRISHNA, THE INDIAN ANIMATED FIGURE: MYTHOLOGY AND DEPICTION IN MODERN ANIMATION

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ABSTRACT

Indian mythology has provided many stories that continue across painting, theatre, dance, sculpture, and cinema. Among all the figures, Krishna is one of the most loved and remembered. He is shown as a playful child, a cowherd, a hero, and later a teacher. In the last two decades, Krishna also became a common subject in Indian animation. Series like Little Krishna (2009) and films such as Krishna Aur Kans (2012) retell his adventures for young viewers. These works combine devotion, entertainment, and also moral lessons. This paper looks at how Krishna is represented in animation. It places his image in the background of mythology, studies how animators design and show him, and compares this with traditional forms of art. It also discusses the problems of putting spiritual depth into digital storytelling. The study suggests Krishna today is both a cultural symbol and a digital character who connects old narratives with modern media.

Keywords: Krishna, Indian Mythology, Animation, Character Design, Cultural Representation, Storytelling

1. INTRODUCTION

Indian mythology is full of stories told again and again through generations. People remember them in theatre, dance, paintings, and temple carvings. Krishna is one of the most important and most popular figures in these stories. He appears in many ways. As a child, he is naughty and playful. As a young man, he is brave and heroic. Later, he becomes a teacher and gives wisdom in the Bhagavad Gita [Bryant \(2007\)](#). Because of these different forms, Krishna has stayed alive in cultural memory for centuries.

In the late 20th century, television gave a new way of telling these stories. Ramanand Sagar's *Shri Krishna* (1993–1996) reached homes across India and created strong visual images of his life. Later, with digital animation, Krishna was shown again, now mainly for children. Animation made it easier to show demons, miracles, and magical events that are hard in live-action. It also made the stories simple, colorful, and enjoyable for kids and families.

This paper looks at how Krishna is represented in Indian animation. It studies examples like *Little Krishna* [Big Animation. \(2009\)](#) and *Krishna Aur Kans* [Reliance Animation \(2012\)](#), and compares them with traditional art forms. The aim is to see how old mythology changes when recreated in animation, and why Krishna is still popular today.

2. KRISHNA IN INDIAN MYTHOLOGY: A CULTURAL BACKGROUND

Krishna is the eighth avatar of Vishnu, and his life is told in many important texts such as the *Mahabharata*, the *Bhagavata Purana*, and the *Harivamsa* [Bryant \(2007\)](#). In these works, he appears in many roles. He is Bala Krishna, the playful child; Gopala, the cowherd; Parthasarathi, the charioteer who guides Arjuna in war; and Jagadguru, the universal teacher.

The stories of Krishna's childhood are especially popular. He is shown stealing butter, teasing his friends, playing the flute, and charming the gopis [Lutgendorf \(2015\)](#). At the same time, he also defeats demons and saves the people of Vrindavan. Later in life, he is remembered as a strategist and a wise guide. His words to Arjuna in the *Bhagavad Gita* are considered among the most important teachings in Indian thought, discussing duty, morality, and devotion [Bryant \(2007\)](#).

In art, Krishna is easy to recognize. His blue skin, yellow clothes, peacock feather crown, and flute appear again and again in paintings, sculpture, and dance. Modern animation also keeps these features, since they are essential for audiences to connect with Krishna. Scholars like [Taylor \(1870\)](#) and [Pattanaik \(2006\)](#) further highlight how these visual traits and colours were more than decorative choices they carried symbolic meanings of divinity, knowledge, and eternal joy. Such details shaped the ethical and emotional foundation of Hindu storytelling, continuing to influence both fine art and digital representation.

3. EMERGENCE OF KRISHNA IN INDIAN ANIMATION

In the 1980s and 1990s, television became popular in India and many mythological shows were made. Most of these were live-action. They gave strong images of gods and heroes. People started to imagine Krishna in a fixed way, with his crown, ornaments, and background. Later, when animators worked on Krishna, they repeated the same style.

One important step came in 2009 with the series *Little Krishna*. It was made by Big Animation with ISKCON [Big Animation. \(2009\)](#). The show told stories of Krishna's childhood in Vrindavan. Episodes included the fight with Kaliya, the lifting of Govardhan, and the defeat of Putana. The animation was colorful, made in 3D, and mixed Indian traditional design with CGI. Children liked the playful side of Krishna, while families liked the devotional feeling.

In 2012, the animated film *Krishna Aur Kans* was released. It showed Krishna growing from child to adult and defeating his uncle Kans [Reliance Animation, \(2012\)](#). The film talks about courage, justice, and the victory of dharma. The attempt

was big, but the animation quality also showed the limits of Indian studios compared to global films.

Later, Krishna also came in short cartoons on YouTube and streaming platforms. These were usually very simple, made for small children. They showed butter stealing, small pranks, or songs with morals. The quality was mixed, but they were easy to watch and share. This shows how Krishna continues to change with new media.

Recent studies by Madan (2015) talk about how Indian animation and comics try to tell old mythological stories in new ways for young people. These works mix devotion with entertainment so that children can enjoy and still learn something from them. In that way, animation becomes a link between the old style of storytelling and the new digital media. Madan also explains that characters like Krishna change their form with time but still keep their spiritual side when shown on screen.

4. VISUAL AND STYLISTIC REPRESENTATION

Animated Krishna takes many details from traditional art, but it is also adjusted for modern screens. The look is a mix of old and new. In that aspect, it is very essential to know about the colours that were used to portray Krishna as iconic and to identify him significantly.

Colors: The character of Indian traditional painting is decorative and design oriented. It is very essential to have knowledge of Indian art, which is very close to animation in character, especially in colour treatment. The Indian tropical situation allows the human eye to see things lucidly. Perhaps this is the reason for the choice of a bright palette by Indian painters more than any others in the world. In later times, the availability of lapis lazuli and gold enriched the palette. To give quality and a sense of decorativeness, unlike artists of the Western world, Indian painters avoided the use of broken colours—this may be termed as colour abstraction. It is noticed in traditional Indian painting as well as animated characters.

Figure 1



Figure 1 [https://www.relianceanimation.com/assets/images/little-krishna/release-posters/little-krishna-poster-\(6\).jpg](https://www.relianceanimation.com/assets/images/little-krishna/release-posters/little-krishna-poster-(6).jpg)

The repetition of colour in the Mewar School of Rajasthani painting is used as a tool for narration. To tell a story, figuration and colour repetition both played a pivotal role. Throughout the tradition of miniature painting, the image of Krishna was always painted in blue complexion with yellow robes. Here, yellow stands for auspiciousness and knowledge, while blue symbolizes the sky and spirituality. Throughout Rajput painting, this repetition of colour was strictly followed for the image of Krishna. It is a trait to universalize both the colour and image of Krishna. From a psychological point of view, repetition creates strong registration in the human mind, as seen in modern advertisements. Perhaps this was inspired by the contemporary folk theatre of those times, where long narrations would run through the night Rao, K. M. (2022).

Figure 2

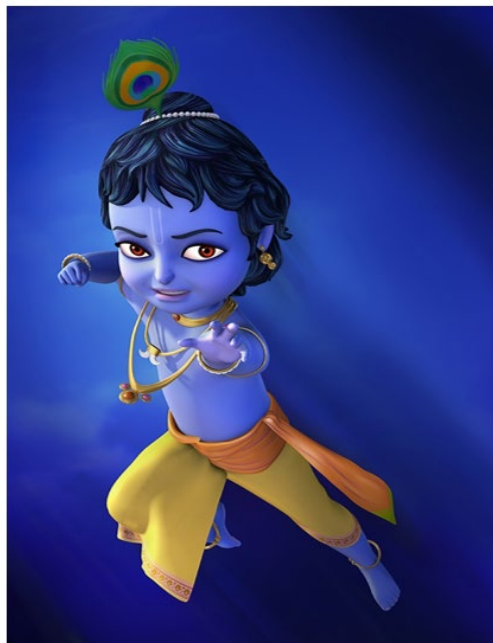


Figure 2 <https://i.pinimg.com/originals/d3/e1/3a/d3e13a0d1472332265d3a948549d975c.jpg>

The standards of Indian aesthetics also suggested a blue complexion for Krishna as a divine person. Similarly, the character of Krishna is almost always shown with blue skin and yellow clothes. These two colors are very important because people identify him quickly with them Bryant (2007).

Face and Body: His face is usually soft, with big eyes and a gentle smile. In many shows, his eyes are made larger than normal to make him look cute and childlike Lutgendorf (2015).

Gestures: Animators often show Krishna in action modes like jumping, running, or dancing, which are basic traits of animated characters and are preferred by viewers. In some scenes, he folds his hands in prayer or waves to people.

Background and Setting: The main settings are Vrindavan, the Yamuna River, and Mathura. These places are recreated with digital art. Some backgrounds take ideas from miniature paintings or temple carvings.

Figure 3



Figure 3 <https://i.pinimg.com/736x/0d/79/7d/0d797d9ecb08a9e6fa2863e3ba4a4059.jpg>

Music and Sound: Music plays a key role in Krishna's image. The flute is always present, often at the start or end of scenes. Background music mixes Indian ragas with modern instruments Bryant (2007).

Overall, Krishna in animation keeps traditional features but uses modern style.

5. NARRATIVE THEMES IN ANIMATED KRISHNA

In animation, the stories of Krishna are not told in full. They are reduced to a few common themes. The first is always his childhood play. This is the most popular image. Butter stealing, teasing his mother, or small pranks with friends are repeated again and again Bryant (2007). These scenes look funny, but they also hide a meaning. The butter is not only food; it is devotion. Taking it is like taking the love of people. Animation uses these moments for comedy, with exaggerated expressions and playful music, and this makes Krishna appealing to children.

Another theme is his bravery. Episodes like the fight with Kaliya or the lifting of Govardhan Hill are good for action Big Animation. (2009), Reliance Animation (2012). In traditional art, these moments are calm, with Krishna smiling while protecting his devotees. In animation, the same event becomes full of sound and movement. Villagers run, demons roar, and Krishna is shown as a strong hero. This creates excitement but reduces the symbolic calmness of older depictions.

Figure 4



Figure 4 <https://i.ytimg.com/vi/JQX2xOWwqMk/maxresdefault.jpg>

The role of Krishna as teacher is less often shown. His guidance to Arjuna in the Bhagavad Gita is too heavy for children's cartoons [Bryant \(2007\)](#). Some shows try to put small versions of his lessons, like doing your duty or being honest. These are simple, but at least they bring philosophy into the story. Animation here struggles, but it shows an attempt to keep the spiritual side alive.

6. GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF ANIMATED PORTRAYALS

When we look across different films and shows, Krishna is presented with certain fixed features. As a child he is playful, naughty, and curious. As he grows, he is brave and intelligent. In texts, he is more complex: a trickster, strategist, and teacher [Lutgendorf \(2015\)](#). Animation cannot carry all this. It selects a few qualities. Children's shows choose his humor. Larger films prefer his strength. His compassion and wisdom are less often seen. Yet his smile, his charm, and his courage stay the same in all versions.

The stories themselves are shortened. A long myth becomes one small episode [Big Animation. \(2009\)](#). This helps children follow, but it removes deeper layers. At the same time, most shows keep a devotional element. Even during comic moments, background prayers or songs are added [Lutgendorf \(2015\)](#). This mix of fun and devotion makes Indian animation different from global cartoons.

Visually, Krishna is a blend of old and new. The blue skin, yellow dress, and peacock feather are taken directly from tradition. But the style is modern: 3D graphics, motion capture, and CGI. This makes him familiar but also current. The stories also teach values. Honesty, respect, and courage are repeated again and again [Bryant \(2007\)](#). And of course, his flute, the cows, and the butter pot appear in nearly every adaptation. These symbols remind the audience who he is, even when the medium is different.

Figure 5

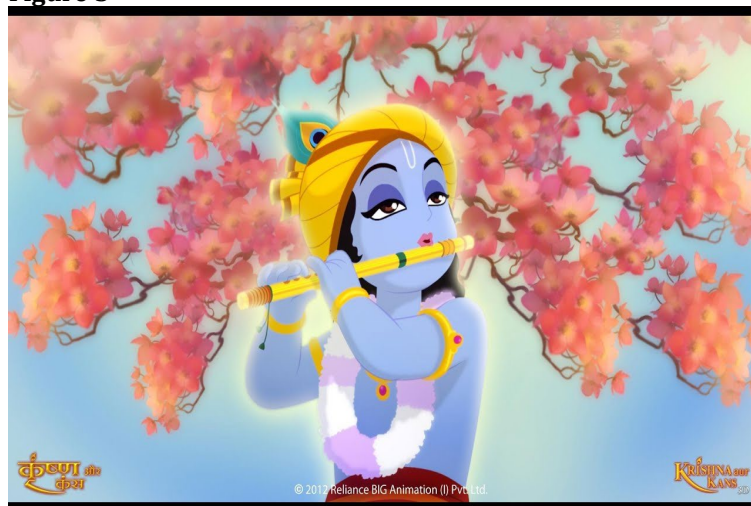


Figure 5

7. COMPARATIVE STUDY: TRADITIONAL VS. ANIMATED KRISHNA

Traditional depictions and animated Krishna are the same figure, but their purpose is not the same. In painting or temple art, Krishna is shown calmly, as a god

with deep meaning [Bryant \(2007\)](#). The scene of him lifting Govardhan Hill is one example. In Nathdwara paintings, he holds the mountain easily with one finger, smiling, while gods and villagers gather around. It feels devotional and peaceful. In animation, the same story becomes fast and full of tension [Lutgendorf \(2015\)](#). The mountain shakes, the people scream, and Krishna struggles. The calm is lost, but the drama is increased.

The flute is another case. In classical art or dance, the flute means love and the call of the divine. In cartoons, it is magical and sometimes funny. Animals start dancing, or enemies fall asleep [Big Animation. \(2009\)](#). The meaning is changed. Instead of being spiritual, it becomes entertainment.

So traditional art asks the audience to sit, to meditate, and to feel devotion. Animation wants the audience to laugh, to watch quickly, and to enjoy. Both are ways of keeping Krishna alive, but the experience is different.

8. CHALLENGES AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Telling Krishna's story in animation is not easy. One challenge is quality. Indian studios often do not have the budget of Hollywood or Japan, so the animation looks less smooth. Another challenge is philosophy. The Bhagavad Gita is central to Krishna, but it cannot be easily shown in a short cartoon [Bryant \(2007\)](#). The result is that much of the wisdom is left out.

There is also the problem of audience. Indian viewers know Krishna's background, but global viewers do not. To reach both, producers sometimes cut or simplify the details [Lutgendorf \(2015\)](#). This helps in one way, but it weakens authenticity.

In the future, new technologies like Virtual Reality and Augmented Reality may bring fresh ways of telling these stories. A viewer might be able to walk in Vrindavan or listen to Krishna's flute in an immersive space. These methods can add excitement and also deepen understanding. But again, there is a danger that the focus will go only to spectacle, and not to meaning. Balancing both will be the real test.

9. CONCLUSION

Animation has given Krishna a new place in modern culture. Today he is seen on television, in films, and in short online videos. In all of them he is the same familiar figure: the playful child, the brave hero, and sometimes the wise teacher [Big Animation. \(2009\)](#), [Reliance Animation \(2012\)](#). These forms help carry his stories to children and families who may not read the old texts.

At the same time, animation changes the way he is understood. Traditional art was made for devotion. It showed him calm and divine, with symbols that had deep meaning. Animation shows him more for fun, with jokes, action, and quick morals. This is not wrong, but it shifts the experience from meditation to entertainment.

There are still problems. The quality of animation in India is not always strong. The deeper philosophy of Krishna's words in the Bhagavad Gita is difficult to present in short films [Bryant \(2007\)](#). Global audiences also do not know the cultural background, so producers make changes that sometimes reduce authenticity [Lutgendorf, P. \(2015\)](#).

Yet Krishna continues to be adapted again and again. This shows his lasting power. New technologies like VR and AR may bring him to audiences in new ways. Whether he is on a temple wall or a computer screen, Krishna stays relevant. He is both the ancient god of devotion and a modern figure of the digital age.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

None.

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