



## **Form of Beauty : The Krishna Art of B.G. Sharma (Art of Devotion Series Art of Devotion Series)**

*By Swami Tripurari*

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World-renowned painter of Indian miniatures, B. G. Sharma, debuts his lifetime collection of Krishna art in this stunning, deluxe volume. Within the text, the artist's mastery and devotion are combined, depicting the magical life of Krishna. From herding cows to exquisite renderings of rasa-lila, the pastimes of Krishna are brought to life with the beauty and charm that only Sharma's unique style can portray.

Excerpts from classics such as the Bhagavat Purana and Gopal Champa accompany 180 paintings wonderfully illuminated by Swami Tripurari's poetic and captivating narrative.

The collector's edition is 208 pages, 13" x 12.5" and printed six-color on 110 lb. Japanese satin matte art paper. Each image is reproduced using a 200 line screen and individually varnished. The volume is hard back, covered in fine Japanese silk, gold stamped, and protected with a six-color french-fold jacket. Text includes four deluxe gate-folds displaying some of Sharma's greatest pieces in their entirety.

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## **Editorial Review**

### **About the Author**

Tripurari is the founder of the Gaudiya Vaishnava Society and the vice president of the World Vaishnava Association.

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" Charming Krsna of sweet form, sweet flute, sweet play, and sweet love is the concrete form of beauty of which the abstract language of the Upanishads speak."

Many have conjectured that truth is beauty. If this is so, can one relish beauty without form or image? Image and form are emblems of beauty. The canvas and the brush, the words and their order, make accessible the beauty of art and literature. Beauty itself is abstract, yet it requires form for its expression. From within the Hindu pantheon and beyond it, if we are to search all cultures and their myths, it would be hard to find a better candidate for the form of ultimate beauty than Krsna.

The idea of a transcendental form of the Absolute finds support in the Upanishads. When the Upanishads say that the Absolute is formless, they inform us that the Absolute is not limited. Yet, ultimate reality has no form because it is the form of beauty. The form of ultimate reality can be compared to the sun. While seemingly in one place, the sun pervades all. So it is with the Absolute, the form of eternity, knowledge, and joy. The Upanishads speak of this form thus:

"Salutations to Krsna, the destroyer of suffering, who is the form of eternity, knowledge, and joy."

Vedanta informs us of that by which we might experience the form of beauty, beauty personified. In the Upanishads, we find a description of this form as the object of meditation.

"Meditate upon the Absolute as having eyes like the fully blossomed white lotus, two hands bestowing ultimate knowledge [devotion], a body colored like rain clouds, wrapped in garments resembling lightning, and garlanded with forest flowers."

This is not a mentally conceived form for the convenience of meditation on a formless Absolute, but rather the Absolute itself. For only meditation upon the Absolute can bring realization of the Absolute.

While the highest form of divine revelation must be free from sectarianism and thus represent the greatest generality, it must also possess the greatest wealth of positive content. The Russian mystic and philosopher Vladimir Solovyov coined the phrase " positive universality" in his attempt to describe such. He opines in concert with the Upanishads that in seeking a universal religion and ultimate spiritual reality, it is insufficient to merely do away with all distinctive features of the Absolute. In doing so, we reach only the lowest common denominator of religion. We arrive at the minimum of religious content. Such an abstract form of religion under any name, he reasons, leads ultimately to nihilism and atheism. Are we not threatened today with such in the guise of postmodern relativism and pluralism?

Solovyov would have us take a step forward. Acknowledging the general religious principle that constitutes our common religious ground, he asked his audience to go higher. "The richer, the more alive and concrete a religious form is, the higher it is. The perfect religion is not the one that is equally contained in all religions [the indifferent foundation of religion]; the perfect religion is one that possesses and contains within itself all

religions [the complete religious synthesis]." This is the meaning of "Krsna," in which all forms of love find transcendental expression..

In devotion to Krsna, we do not encounter the fanaticism that holds only one spiritual revelation, for Krsna includes all forms of the Godhead, and thus all varieties of love of God. Nor do we encounter the abstract rationalism that evaporates the essence of religion into a fog of indeterminate concepts, fusing all religious forms into a formless, colorless, impotent generality or void.

The Sanskrit syllable krish , from which the name Krsna is derived, denotes existence. The suffix na suggests happiness. Thus "Krsna" indicates the most blissful existence. Krish also grammatically denotes "to draw near," and na "to renounce." Krsna is that ultimate happiness, the beauty that draws all near to himself, causing us to leave the unhappiness of material attachment behind. Charming Krsna of sweet form, sweet flute, sweet play, and sweet love is the concrete form of beauty of which the abstract language of the Upanishads speak. He is the form of beauty, without which the experience of beauty in transcendence is but half the truth.

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