

## Krishna and the serpent

1. *Lord Krishna is one of the most revered deities (gods) in the Hindu faith and there are numerous stories involving him. The story of Krishna and the serpent, Kaliyan, is one of the most well known.*
2. Krishna lived in a village near the Yamuna River, which, along with the Ganges, is one of the most sacred rivers in India. He was dark, handsome and always wore beautiful clothes adorned with attractive ornaments.
3. Krishna had a charming personality and was liked by everyone. He delighted in playing music and was an excellent flautist. Whenever he played his flute, everyone would stop what they were doing to come and listen to his lilting tunes. Even the wild jungle animals would be subdued by the sound of his flute.
4. One of Krishna's tasks was to herd cattle to and from the jungle near the river. This location provided plentiful grass for grazing and an ample water supply. One day, as Krishna was playing a wistful tune to the other cowherds, a massive poisonous serpent named Kaliyan slithered past them and slunk into the river. He had chosen to make his home in the deepest part.
5. The river soon became contaminated by Kaliyan's venom and any living thing that drank from the river perished. Poisoned fish, wading birds and crocodiles floated upside down in the water. Even the forest trees and plants near the riverbank shrivelled up and died. The river had been the source of fresh water for all living things in the surrounding area and great suffering was endured by all.
6. Krishna decided to teach the treacherous serpent a lesson. He walked purposefully up to the riverbank, jumped in at the deepest point and swam to Kaliyan's home. Immediately, the serpent launched himself at Krishna, intending to crush him to death. In an instant, Krishna got hold of Kaliyan's head and stood on it. Kaliyan tried in vain to shake Krishna off and plummeted down, hoping to drown him. But Krishna had the power to hold his breath at will and it was Kaliyan who needed to surface first.
7. Throngs of terrified villagers gathered on the riverbank to witness the struggle. Kaliyan twisted his body in an attempt to bite Krishna, who managed to get both hands around the serpent's head and set about kicking him as hard as he could. Slowly but surely, Kaliyan began to weaken as he could not withstand the pain of Krishna's assault. Kaliyan started spurring poison but Krishna kept attacking him until all the poison left his evil body.
8. Finally, the once mighty serpent surrendered and pleaded with Krishna to spare his life. Krishna considered his plea and decided to be merciful. Kaliyan was banished from the Yamuna and slithered painfully away, never to be seen again.
9. The exhilarated villagers cheered Krishna as he swam ashore. Thanks to his almighty feat, the river was pure once more.