

Of Lore and Legends—The Udupi Krishna Temple

The Udupi Shri Krishna Matha is an important religious centre for Hindus and is considered one of India's holiest pilgrimage sites. The Matha area resembles a living Ashram, a holy place for daily devotion and living. It was established by the founder of the Dvaita school of Hindu philosophy, **Saint Madhvacharya**. This Hindu philosophy is founded on the belief that Lord Vishnu (the Supreme Soul) and the individual souls have independent existential realities. These eight Mathas were created to preach and disseminate the lessons of the Vedas, Vedanta and the Tatvavada philosophy.

From Dwarka to Udupi

According to Indian mythology, Lord Krishna's birth mother Devaki yearned to experience the mischievous and carefree childhood antics of Lord Krishna, which she had missed due to her imprisonment by her cousin brother Kansa. To respect her wishes, Krishna promptly turned into a child again and performed his famous trick of stealing butter. On witnessing this episode, Krishna's wife, Rukmini, fell in love with Balakrishna, his innocent childhood form. She requested the acclaimed celestial architect Vishwakarma to make an idol of Balakrishna from the Shaligram stone (sacred stones found on the Gandaki riverbed in Nepal, which is considered to be manifestations of Lord Vishnu) for her daily worship.

At Dwarka, the idol got completely shrouded by layers of sandalwood paste slathered on it by thousands of pious devotees of Krishna. However, at the end of the era of Lord Krishna, Dwarka witnessed a massive flood that submerged the entire city and washed away the sandalwood paste-covered statue.



The Balakrishna Idol at the Udupi Shri Krishna temple [Image Credits: Divine Avatars]

Hundreds of years later, in the 13th century, a sailor heading from Dwarka found the idol lying ashore on an island and, mistaking it to be a rock, decided to utilise it as ballast for his ship. While travelling across the west coast of India, the sailor's ship was hit by a violent sea storm and was about to capsize. Sensing the sailor's peril during his meditation on the beach, Saint Madhvacharya prayed to Lord Vishnu to alleviate the tempestuous weather. He also aided the sailor to anchor on the shores of Udupi, now prominently known as Malpe Beach.

In order to express his gratitude, the sailor humbly bestowed the rock into the hands of Saint Madhvacharya. To his extreme elation, as the outer covering of the rock chipped off, it was revealed to be the long-lost statue of Balakrishna. He immediately washed and placed the idol as per the rituals at his Matha (monastery), thus bringing about the advent of the

illustrious Shri Krishna Matha temple at Udupi.

Facing West–One of a Kind

The intriguing story about the unusual positioning of the Balakrishna idol involves Kanakadasa, an ardent devotee of Krishna. Initially, the statue had been installed facing east as per the customs. According to a legend, Kanakadasa, after being rejected entrance to the temple due to his birth in a lower caste, tried to pray to the idol from the western area through three holes in the wall as a last resort. His grit and determination impressed Lord Krishna, who turned around to face the west to give him his blessings. The small window is thus named *Kanakana Kindi*. Thus began the unique pattern of offering prayers and worship through a silver-plated window with nine holes called the *Navagraha Kitiki* (window of Nine Planets).



Navagraha Kitiki, the 9-holed window, through which the

Balakrishna idol is viewed. [Image Credits: Blogspot]

The Udupi Paryaya Festival

The Udupi Paryaya is the main religious event that takes place once every alternate year in the Ashta Mathas (eight monasteries) of Udupi to signify the transfer of responsibility from one Swamiji (head priest) to the other. The Paryaya tradition has completed 500 years as of 2021. The celebrations begin a week before *Sankranti*, with the streets of Udupi bustling with artists and performers from all over Karnataka at night, which continue till the eve of the *Paryaya* ceremony. From fireworks lighting up the sky to the repeated gonging of the temple bell resonating with the lively atmosphere, the city—home to quiet, and mostly shy natives—comes alive with activity. The ascension of the Swamiji commences with a dip in *Dandathirtha*, a pond near Kaup, followed by a puja at Jodukatte with the Swamijis being carried in customary palanquins. Meanwhile, the previous Swamiji spends the entire night in worship at the Krishna Matha.



Colourful festivities being carried out with much grandeur at the Udupi Paryaya festival [Image Credits: Kannadiga World]

The congregation of Swamijis then seek blessings from Lord Krishna through the *Kanakana Kindi*, followed by a visit to two Shiva temples, and are then finally received by the outgoing Swamiji into the Krishna Matha temple. The ascension is concluded by the ritual of handing over of the *Akshaya Patra*, and shrine keys at the *Sarvajna Peetha* (the utensils and the spiritual seat respectively of Saint Madhavacharya), by the descending Swamiji to the one ascending.

To avoid bankruptcy of new players, experienced users, who have been coming to the casino regularly for a long time and have already known the taste of victories and the bitterness of defeats, often come to the rescue with wise advice to play here <https://joocasinoau.com/>.

Apart from the Udupi Paraya festivals, all major Hindu festivals like Janmashtami, Sri Rama Navami, Vijaya Dashami,

Deepavali are celebrated with great pomp and enthusiasm here.

Food in Udupi

The famous Udupi cuisine traces its roots to the Ashtha Mathas (eight Hindu monasteries) and is *satvik* to the core-vegetarian and mainly prepared using whole grains, vegetables, and fresh fruits. The food or Prasadam served every day at the temple to thousands of devotees is rich with flavours of jaggery and coconut. No garlic or onion is used in its preparation. The main course usually consists of rice, *sambar*, *rasam*, vegetables and sweets (*payasam*) served on banana leaves.



The delicacies that are served at the temple feast at the Udupi Shri Krishna temple. [Image Credits: Hindu Blog]

Lunch is usually served at noon from 11.30 am to 2:30 pm while the evening timings are from 8.00 pm to 9.30 pm. The number of devotees rise to nearly 30,000 during important religious events like the Paraya festival. A special delicacy served during lunch is called 'Gojju', which is prepared using

pineapple, brinjal, and bitter gourd. The expenses of the entire Udupi Krishna Matha are borne by the voluntary contributions of the devotees and by the Ashta Mathas that manage the Sri Krishna Matha. Devotees can contribute in either cash or kind.

The Udupi Shri Krishna Temple has a rich and illustrious history, aptly reflected in the culture and tradition which has been preserved to date. One of the holiest pilgrimage sites in southern India, this temple dedicated to Lord Krishna is a must-visit to experience His divine presence.

Featured Image Credits: Navrang India