



NEW

September 2010

Glory of Bharath » INDICA

Janmashtami



Krishna Janmashtami, also known as "Krishnashtami", "Saatam Aatham", "Gokulashtami", "Ashtami Rohini", "Srikrishna Jayanti", "Sree Jayanthi" or sometimes merely as "Janmashtami", is a Hindu festival celebrating the birth of Krishna, an avatar of the Hindu deity Vishnu. Krishna Janmashtami is observed on the Ashtami tithi, the eighth day of the dark half or KrishnaPaksha of the month of Bhadrava in the Hindu calendar, when the Rohini Nakshatra is ascendant. Rasa lila or dramatic enactments of the life of Krishna are a special feature in regions of Mathura and Vrindavan, and regions following Vaishnavism in Manipur. While the Rasa lila re-creates the aspects of Krishna's youthful days, the Dahi Handi celebrate God's playful and mischievous side, where teams of young men form human pyramids to reach a high-hanging pot of butter and break it. This tradition also known as Uriadi is a major event in Tamil Nadu on Gokulashtami.

The ritual is to fast the previous day (Saptami, seventh day), which is followed by a night-long vigil commemorating the birth of Krishna at midnight in the jail where his maternal uncle Kansa was keeping them captive, and his immediate removal by his father Vasudeva to a foster-home for safe-keeping. At midnight, the idol of the infant Krishna is bathed, adorned in new clothes and jewellery, placed in a cradle and worshiped. The fast is completed after Aarti, a special prayer. At day break, ladies draw patterns of little children's footprints outside the house with rice-flour paste, walking towards the house. This symbolizes the entry of the infant Krishna into his foster-home i.e. their homes.

Rituals and Traditions

Fasting

The most common and essential ritual followed on the day of Janmashtami is the fasting by devotees. Most of Lord Krishna's devotees fast for on this day and open the fast at midnight when it is assumed that Lord Krishna has been born. At the time of midnight also, the people who have observed fast whole day prefer to have only milk and milk products as they are considered auspicious as well pure. Some of the ardent devotees of Krishna observe the fast for the entire day even without consuming water- it is called 'Nirjal Vrat'. There are other devotees who observe two day fast in the honor of Lord Krishna.

Chanting

It is said that chanting Lord Krishna's name with entire devotion brings immense joy and pleasure in the life of the devotee. So, on the birthday of Lord Krishna, devotees indulge in continuous chanting of Krishna's name for the entire day. They chant sholkas, mantras, richas from the Veda. They also read Bhagwat Geeta and sing bhajans in the name of Krishna. It is said that chanting 108 names of Lord Krishna brings auspiciousness in one's life.

Devotional Songs & Dances

Bhajans are a vital custom of the Janmashtami celebrations. Devotees sing and dance with fervor in the name of Lord Krishna. In many temples of Mathura and Vridavana, you will find devotees mesmerized and overwhelmed with their love and devotion for Shri Krishna. In the midnight celebration, people gather at a place and sing several kinds of bhajans to highlight his feats and his divine characteristics.

Plays On Lord Krishna

Very much like the Ramleela, devotees of Lord Krishna organize plays on the life of Lord Krishna called Krishnaleela. In these plays organized by professional as well as amateur artists, several important deeds and legends associated with Lord Krishna are staged.

- History
- Aims
- Concept
- Parenting
- Events
- Training Programmes
- Expansion
- Development
- Syllabus
- Bal Vikas Administration
- Past Students
 - June 2010 **NEW**
 - September
- Home

[Activities from States](#)[At the Lotus Feet](#)[Gurus Corner](#)[Children's Corner](#)[From the Annals of the World History](#)[Special Page](#)[Glory of Bharath](#)

Offering Sweets

It is known to everybody that Lord Krishna was extremely fond of sweets and dairy products. So on the day of Krishnashtami, devotees of Lord Krishna prepare umpteen varieties of sweets and dairy products and offer them to the idols of Krishna. This ritual is called 'bhog'. Later, these sweets are distributed amongst the devotees as 'Prasada'.

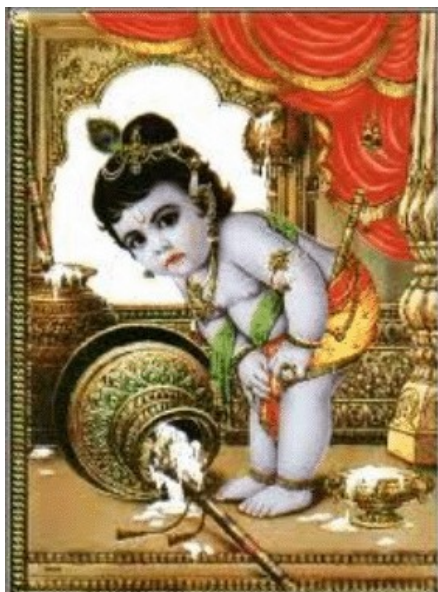
Swings

At many places in the country, devotees tie swings on the trees and take rides on that. It is said that taking a swing ride on the occasion of Janmashtami is considered auspicious. This ritual is extremely popular in the rural parts of the country.

Celebrations

Mathura, the birthplace of Lord Krishna, where his parents lived in captivity of the evil Kansa and Lord Krishna as a young boy came and vanquished his maternal uncle Kansa to ascend the throne and free his parents, celebrates Janmashtami with great enthusiasm. The main celebrations are performed at the Dwarkadhish temple, Mathura in the form of Jhulanotsava and the Ghatas during the entire month of Shravan.

The ghatas are a unique feature of the month long celebrations. During the ghatas of a particular colour the whole temple is covered with decoration in the same colour. Even the Lord dresses up in the same colour.



The twin cities of Mathura-Vrindavan take on a festive look and spirit of devotion runs high among the people. It was on the banks of the Yamuna River where Lord Krishna played during his childhood and indulged in pranks and tricks with his friends and the gopis. There are about 400 temples dedicated to Lord Krishna in this sacred city and the major festivities are held at the Banke Bihari, Rangaji, Shri KrishnaBalram temple and Gopinath temple. The Raslila of Braj is thematically the basis of many performing arts.

The Birth of Lord Krishna at midnight is followed by performance of pooja and other ceremonies. The idol of Lord Krishna is bathed with milk and curd and then rocked in the cradle. A popular belief of the inhabitants is that any wish made while rocking the cradle is fulfilled on this day. The entire Mathura echoes with the sound of the conch (shankh) and ringing of bells. Devotees pray and welcome the lord with slogans of 'Jai Shri Krishna'. After the prayers have been performed, Panchamrit, a mixture of honey, gangajal, curd, ghee is distributed. Lord is fed with the customary prasad of 'Chhapan Bhog' (Fifty six dishes). Devotees break their fast with 'Prasad' of the Lord. Lot of eatables made of milk and milk products are relished by the devotees. Kheer, Laddoo, Butter, Shrikhand and Singhare ki Poori are few of the main dishes prepared on the day.

In **Tamil Nadu**, Uriadi or climbing a stick containing a pot of sweet curds is a major event in Varahur and other parts of Tamil Nadu. The pooja is performed late in the evening, timed according to the Hindu calendar to coincide with the birth of Krishna at midnight. Generally, most of the sweets and savouries are prepared on that day. Normally, a Kolam (rice flour drawings on ground), also known as rangoli, drawn specially for the occasion, called ezhakoolam, decorates the front yard. Footprints representing those of Krishna are drawn from the front yard to the pooja room, representing the god entering the devotee's home.

In **Karnataka**, Madhwas (followers of saint Madhwacharya), Iyengars and Srivaishnavas, (followers of saint Ramanujacharya) and Smarthas make elaborate preparations for the festival. The idol of Lord Krishna is placed in a decorated Mantapa. Bhakshanam (snacks and sweets in Sanskrit), that are specially prepared for the festival, are offered to Lord Krishna along with fruits and are considered to be his favourites. In some parts of Karnataka, Chakli, Avalakki and Bellada Panaka are prepared especially for the festival. Hand made Avalakki is prepared in memory of Krishna's friend Sudhama. Legend has it that Sudhama had once offered Avalakki to Krishna, as it was considered to be one of his favourite snacks. Gamaka vachana and other devotional activities are held in the evening.

In Maharashtra

Janmashtami, popularly known in Mumbai and Pune as Dahi Handi is celebrated with enormous zeal and enthusiasm. The handi is a clay pot filled with buttermilk that was positioned at a convenient height prior to the event; the topmost person on the human pyramid tries to break the handi by hitting it with a blunt object, and when that happens, the buttermilk is spilled over the entire group, symbolizing their achievement through unity. Various Handis are set up locally in several parts of the city, and groups of youngsters, called Govinda Pathaks, travel around in trucks trying to break as many handis as possible during the day.



Dahi Handi

In Manipur

Janmaashtami, popularly known in Manipur as Krishna Janma, is a significant festival celebrated at two temples in Imphal, the capital city of Manipur. The first festival is at the Govindaji temple and the second is at the International Society for Krishna Consciousness temple.

Significance of Janmashtami

The birth of Lord Krishna and the rituals associated with it portray the symbolic significance of the highest truth. The prayers, bhajans and the fast are all the spiritual Sadhanas or the spiritual practises that aid in the purity of mind to attain the truth which is the Lord. They prepare one to be capable of realising the truth. Only a pure mind is capable of grasping the subtle truth which is the Lord in his formless self. A mind that is constantly turned outwards (towards the world) is gross owing to its continuous association with objects and forms. Such a mind is not suited to grasp the formless truth.

The drawing of Krishna's footprints from the entrance of the house to the Pooja room reminds us to turn the mind from the outward (endless worldly activities) and to take it inwards towards the shrine of one's true self or the heart which is none other than the Lord. The observances on the day when Krishna is to be born in the midnight (Janmashtami), marks one's preparation with spiritual practises to receive the truth (the birth of Krishna)

Since the path to the Lord itself is beautiful for the one who knows what true devotion is, needless to say about the bliss on finding Him. Since Krishna is said to be of 'Anandaswarupa' (blissful form) finding Him alone is pure bliss. The observances and rituals involve singing bhajans and dancing in devotion that simply portray the 'Ananda' that a devotee undergoes while on the path. Bliss envelops the heart at the sight of the little manifestation of the mighty Lord at the culmination of the observances that were steadfastly observed.

Thus Janmashtami serves as yet another reminder to seek the Lord or one's true self, the ultimate truth, which alone can bestow true bliss.



**Old
Edition**

- » December 2009
- » March 2010
- » June 2010
- » September 2010
- » January 2010
- » April 2010
- » July 2010
- » February 2010
- » May 2010
- » August 2010

