

## Krsna Janma-Ashtami - 18<sup>th</sup> (Smartha) / 19<sup>th</sup> (ISKCON) August (The Appearance day of Lord Krishna)



The day of Lord Krishna's divine appearance in this world is called Janmashtami, Janma (birth and Ashtami (the 8th day of the dark moon)). This year this most the auspicious day falls on **18<sup>th</sup> for Smartha Hindu' and 19<sup>th</sup> August for Vaishnavas (ISKCON).**



Most Hindus in South Africa follow the Smartha tradition. Smartha followers include five deities in their daily worship – Vishnu, Shiva, Surya, Ganesh, and Shakti. These five deities are treated as equals. Most Hindu temples in South Africa fall in the Smartha tradition since Vishnu (his incarnations), Shiva, Surya, Ganesh, and Shakti enjoy equal importance.

The Vaishnava tradition only gives prominence to Lord Vishnu and his incarnations (Rama, Krishna and others).

There are various rules for determining the date of observance of Krishna Janmashtami, depending on whether one is a Vaishnava or Smartha.

The followers of Vaishnavism give preference to Ashtami Tithi and Rohini Nakshatra. According to Vaishnava rules, Janmashtami day always falls on Ashtami or Navami Tithi on the Hindu calendar. The Vaishnava community emphasises the prevailing Ashtami tithi at sunrise to determine the date of Krishna Janmashtami, even if the tithi is not present at midnight or Nishit Kaal. The Vaishnava will not accept a Saptami stretching into Ashtami at Arunodaya time (96 minutes before sunrise). Therefore, the Vaishnava date for Krishna Janmashtami is 19 August 2022.

Rules followed by Smartas give preference to Nishita Kaal or Hindu midnight. The preference is given to the day, either Saptami Tithi or Ashtami Tithi, when Ashtami Tithi prevails during Nishita, and further rules are added to include Rohini Nakshatra. The Smartha will opt for that day on which Ashtami tithi is present at midnight, even if the said tithi (Ashtami) commenced after sunrise.

Most Hindus in South Africa follow the Smartha tradition, i.e., their domestic worship includes five deities, Shiva, Vishnu, Surya, Ganesh, and Shakti, all treated as equals. Therefore, the Smartha date for Krishna Ashtami is 18 August 2022.

On this most auspicious day, many will fast and spend the day focused on Lord Krishna, meditating and chanting the Hare Krishna mantra and other prayers or songs devoted to Lord Krishna. Often times, there will also be plays and enactments of the birth and pastimes of the Lord Krishna. Thus, offering their obeisances and focusing their minds on Lord Krishna, the devotees hold themselves in such single pointed concentration throughout the day. This, along with the fasting, indicates the overcoming of the false ego and the attachment to the body. After relieving ourselves of such hindrances, we engage in the worship of the Lord as the evening brings us closer to the occasion of His divine appearance. Therein, after a full day of purification, the Supreme appears at midnight and we realize our own connection with Shree Krsna, who then manifests as the ultimate worshippable object of our purified consciousness. Then at the stroke of midnight Lord Krishna makes His divine appearance, which is commemorated by a midnight arati ceremony. Thus, this climax at night represents our overcoming the darkness of ignorance and reaching the state of purified spiritual knowledge and perception. Therein we overcome the influence of the mind and senses and enter the state of steady awareness wherein there is full spiritual awakening. If one can follow this process, then he or she can experience the real meaning of Krishna Janmastami.

The Appearance of Lord Krsna: {from the Srimad Bhagavatam - 10<sup>th</sup> canto} (please read this auspicious katha on the **18<sup>th</sup> / 19<sup>th</sup> August** and the benefits that you will receive will be unlimited.) Over 5000 years ago in India, there lived a King called Ugrasen. He had two children, Kamsa/Kansa and Devaki. Kamsa was evil by nature. When Kamsa grew up, he imprisoned his own father Ugrasen and made himself king.

Soon, his sister Devaki was married to Vasudev. However, after the wedding, Kamsa heard a divine warning from the sky, "O King! Your sister's eighth son will grow up to kill you." After Kamsa heard this, he was afraid. Immediately he imprisoned his own sister Devaki and her husband Vasudev, and kept them under continuous watch. Each time Devaki gave birth to a child in the prison, Kamsa arrived personally and killed the child. When Devaki became pregnant for the eighth time, Vasudev's friend's (Nanda Maharaj) wife Yashoda was also pregnant. The eighth child, Lord Krishna, was born to Devaki at midnight in the prison. As soon as the child was born, Lord Vishnu appeared in divine form and the prison was filled with a dazzling light. Both Devaki and Vasudev prayed to Lord Vishnu. At the same time as Lord Krishna was born in the prison, the divine energy of Lord Vishnu was born in Gokul, as a baby girl to queen Yashoda.

A divine message came to Vasudev soon after the birth of Lord Krishna, "Take this child across the Yamuna River to Gokul and exchange him with Yashoda's daughter. You will return to the prison before anyone comes to know about the birth of this child." Vasudev immediately followed the advice. As he carried the child in his arms, he found that the prison doors opened automatically and the guards were put to sleep by God. Vasudev approached the Yamuna River, (view the picture below) which was very turbulent due to fierce winds and rain. However, as soon as Vasudev reached the riverbank, the river parted and made way for Vasudev carrying the divine child. Vasudev reached the opposite bank of the river safely and found all the people of Gokul fast asleep. He entered the palace of Nanda and Yashoda, and put the baby Krishna in the place of Yashoda's baby girl. Then Vasudev returned to the prison with the baby girl.



As soon as Vasudeva laid the baby girl by Devaki's side, the prison doors shut automatically. The guards were now awake and were startled by the cries of the baby girl. The guards ran to Kamsa and announced the birth of the eighth child. Kamsa rushed to execute the child in the prison, remembering the divine warning that the eighth child would kill him. Devaki appealed, "O Kamsa, this baby is a girl, and not the boy that the divine warning told you about. How can this child harm you?" However, Kamsa ignored her, snatched the child from her lap, and hurled the child against the prison wall. The child did not fall down; instead, she flew up and appeared in the sky as a Goddess with eight arms, each arm carrying a weapon. She said, "O evil king! You will gain nothing by killing me. The one who will destroy you is elsewhere." Then the Goddess disappeared. (Who is this Goddess? Well she is none other than Ma Durga. So Mother Durga is also the sister of Lord Krishna). Kindly view the picture below.



Meanwhile, there was great rejoicing in Gokul, hailing the birth of a son in the household of Nanda Maharaj. Nanda Maharaj named the child Krishna. The entire Gokul wore a festive appearance. The streets were swept clean and all the houses were decorated with flags and flowers. Cows were smeared with turmeric, and adorned with peacock feathers and garlands. All people of Gokul danced in joy and flocked to Nanda's house to see baby Krishna and to offer gifts.

**How to observe this extremely auspicious day:** After you have taken a bath in the morning and put on clean clothes, proceed to your prayer place and offer incense, lamp and flowers (all seven times clockwise around the picture) to a picture of Radha and Krishna. You should not have anything to eat or drink until midnight of the 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup>. For those that are diabetic well try your best to observe the fast to the best of your abilities. Then you can break your fast just after midnight with food that has been offered to Lord Krsna. Please try to chant the maha mantra (hare krishna hare krishna krishna krishna hare hare, hare rama hare rama rama rama hare hare) as many times as you can on this most auspicious day. In the evening visit your local temple offer fruits and milk or any foodstuffs that you can afford to the Deities. Jai Shree Krsna.

### Additional notes on Lord Krishna

**Who is Shree Krishna?:** Lord Krishna is God, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. This fact is stated and corroborated in the Vedic scriptures and by various authorities. Lord Brahma in Brahma Samhita says, "Krishna who is known as Govinda is the Supreme Godhead. He has an eternal blissful spiritual body. He is the origin of all. He has no other origin and He is the prime cause of all causes" (BS 5.1). In the Srimad Bhagavata Maha Purana Shree Krishna becomes the chief object of devotion. After describing various incarnations of the Lord such as Lord Rama, Lord Balarama, Lord Vamana, Lord Nrsimha, and Lord Vishnu, Srila Sukadeva Goswami states, "All of the above mentioned incarnations are either plenary portions or portions of the plenary portions of the Lord, but Lord Krishna is the original Personality of Godhead" (SB 1.3.28). Lord Shiva in Gita Mahatmya, states, "there's only one God - Lord Krishna, the son of Devaki" (Verse 7). In the Padma Purana it is stated, "By scrutinizing reviewing all the revealed scriptures and judging them again and again, it is concluded that Lord Krishna is the Supreme Absolute Truth, and thus He alone should be worshipped". Similarly it is said in the Skanda Purana, "In the material world, which is full of darkness and dangers, combined with birth and death and full of different anxieties, the only way to get out of the great entanglement is to accept loving transcendental devotional service to Lord Krishna. This is accepted by all classes of philosophers". The position of Shree Krishna as God is confirmed by great personalities like Narada Muni, Asita, Devala, Vyasadev-ji, Parashara Muni, Lord Brahma and Lord Shiva. Finally Lord Krishna Himself confirms this fact in the Bhagavad-Gita to His friend, cousin, devotee and disciple, Shree Arjuna. Lord Krsna clearly says that He is "the Supreme Lord of all planets and devas" (BG 5.29), that "there is no truth superior to Me" (BG 7.7) and - "I am the source of all spiritual and material worlds. Everything emanates from Me" (BG 10.8).

**What is the position of Shree Krishna?:** As God, there is no one equal to or greater than Lord Krishna. He is the original, unborn, eternal person, the most ancient, completely independent, and the cause of all causes. Parashara Muni, the father of Srila Vyasadeva, very nicely defines the position of God as one Who is complete in six kinds of opulence namely - wisdom, beauty, fame, power, wealth and renunciation. While there are many great personalities who are very famous or very wealthy, only Lord Krishna as God

is replete in all six opulence. The scriptures not only give us the unique position of Lord Krishna but also give us a detailed description of all His aspects. They tell us that above this temporary material universe is an eternal spiritual world called Vaikuntha, and Lord Krishna lives in the topmost planet of this universe called Goloka Vrindavana which is full of palaces made of touch-stone, with trees that are capable of fulfilling all desires and cows that are called Surabhi. Here Shree Krishna eternally resides, served by hundreds and thousands of goddesses of fortune. He sports with His most confidential and intimate devotees, headed by Srimati Radharani. He has a form just like us but His body is spiritual and thus eternal. His complexion is dark blue, like that of a rain filled cloud and His eyes are like lotus petals. He is ever youthful; full of bliss and His beauty excels that of thousands of cupids. He likes to play the flute, He sports a crown with a peacock feather and the exquisite kastuba jewel adorns him.

**What is a Krishna avatar?:** In Chaitanya-charitamrita (2.20.263-264) it is stated that the "Avatar, or incarnation of Godhead, descends from the kingdom of God for creating and maintaining the material manifestation. And the particular form of the Personality of Godhead who so descends is called an incarnation, or avatar. Such incarnations are situated in the spiritual world, the kingdom of God. When They descend to the material creation, They assume the name avatar." The Srimad Bhagavatam states that there are countless incarnations just like the waves of the oceans. They fall in various categories like lila (pastime), yuga (period of yuga), manavantara (period of Manu), purusa (Vishnu expansions) and shaktivesa (empowered). These avatars perform various pastimes based on the time, place and circumstances, but their purpose is always the same - "to attract the conditioned souls back to their eternal spiritual abode". The incarnations emanate from Lord Vishnu. Shree Maha-Vishnu is the original cause of all material creation and from Him Lord Garbhodakashai-Vishnu expands and then Lord Ksirodakasayi-Vishnu. Generally all incarnations appearing within the material world are plenary portions of Lord Ksirodakasayi-Vishnu (also known as Lord Hari). However only once in a day of Lord Brahma (which lasts for 4.32 billion earth years), does Lord Krishna descend in His original form, as the avataree, the cause of all avatars. When Lord Krishna appears all the incarnations join with Him. The Supreme Personality of Godhead is the complete whole and all the plenary portions and incarnations always live with Him. So when Lord Krishna appeared, Lord Vishnu was always with Him, and while Lord Krishna enjoyed His pastimes in Vrindavan, the killing of the demons was actually carried out by the His Shree Vishnu portion. Since Shree Krishna eternally resides in Vrindavan, when He left Vrindavan at the age of ten, it was His Shree Vasudeva expansion that actually left.

**Appearance of Shree Krishna:** In the era of the Svayambhuva Manu, Sutapa and his wife Prsni were instructed by Lord Brahma to have progeny. They performed severe austerities for twelve thousand years of the devas to have the Lord as their child. Pleased by their austerities the Lord appeared and granted them this benediction. Since He gave them this benediction three times, in Satya-yuga He first appeared as the son of Prsni and Sutapa and was called Prsnigarba. In Treta-yuga they were Aditi and Kashyapa Muni and the Lord appeared as Vamanadeva. Finally in the Dvapara Yuga, Lord Krishna in His original form appeared as the child of Devaki and Vasudeva. Shree Krishna appeared specifically on the request of Bhudevi, the presiding deity of the Earth planet. Distressed by the burden of many demons that had appeared as powerful Kshatriyas and were ruling the planet impiously, she assumed the form of a cow and pleaded to Lord Brahma for help. Lord Brahma with all the devas prayed to Lord Vishnu in Svetadwipa by chanting the Purusa-sukta prayers. At this time the Lord informed Lord Brahma that in order to

establish religiosity and destroy evil, He would soon appear as His original Self. In the meantime the various devas were instructed to take birth in various families in the Yadu dynasty and prepare for the appearance of the Lord.

**Lifeline of Shree Krishna time on this planet:** Historically, Lord Krishna appeared in the Dvapara Yuga, on the midnight of the 8<sup>th</sup> day of the dark half of the month of Hrsikeshya/Shravan. This corresponds to July 19<sup>th</sup> 3228 BC. Lord Krishna exhibited His pastimes for a little over 125 years and ended His pastimes on February 18<sup>th</sup> 3102 BC on the new moon night of Phalgun. Lord Krishna's departure marked the beginning of the current age of corruption known as Kali-Yuga. The great scholar Srila Vishvanatha Chakravarti neatly outlines Lord Krishna's activities in this way. He was born in Mathura in the prison cell of Kamsa and carried to Gokul. The first three years and four months were spent in Gokula, then equal lengths of time in Vrindavan and Nandagram. At the age of eleven He left Vrindavan for Mathura where He lived for eighteen years and four months, and finally ninety-six years and eight months in Dvaraka totalling about 126 years of manifest pastimes. At the time of Mahabharata, when Shree Krishna spoke the Bhagavad-Gita, Shree Krishna was about ninety years of age.

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