

The Temple in our Hearts



A GUIDE FOR CELEBRATING KṚṢṆA JANMĀṢṬAMĪ AT HOME

Śrī Kṛṣṇa Janmāṣṭamī mahā-mahotsava, the advent of Lord Kṛṣṇa on this earthly planet is the biggest religious festival in our vaishnava calendar and it is celebrated by hundreds of millions of people around the world. On this day, devotees flock to various temples including the holy land of Vrndavana to take darshan of the Supreme Personality of Godhead in his arca vigraha form and absorb themselves in the sweet nectarian programs beginning with mangala āraṭi at 4:30am and culminating with the beautiful final āraṭi at midnight (the exact time Lord Kṛṣṇa appeared).

This year we are faced with a global pandemic, with various restrictions in place throughout the world. We will thus be celebrating Janmāṣṭamī in a somewhat different way. For many this may be difficult to accept that one will not have personal darśana of the Lord.

However the Lord resides within the heart of His devotee and one can celebrate in one's own home.

Today we urge you to remember that Lord Kṛṣṇa is the Lord within your heart, and your home. The temple of Lord Kṛṣṇa is a place of sanctity, purity and love. Wherever He or His devotees reside, is a temple and a place of pilgrimage and in whatever way we worship Kṛṣṇa on Janmāṣṭamī, He will reciprocate with us accordingly.

JanmāṣṣamĪ is centered on the deity of Lord Kṛṣṣṇa, many of you are worshipping personal deities in your homes. Deity worship enthuses us in devotional service, imbibing the mood of a loving servant and master. Kṛṣṣṇa places Himself within the deity form to facilitate our service and enthuse us in developing loving exchanges with Him for our own rapid advancement in Kṛṣṣṇa consciousness.

ŚRĪLA PRABHUPĀDA WRITES IN HIS PURPORT TO SB 2.3.22:

“Especially for the householder devotees, the path of Deity worship is strongly recommended. As far as possible, every householder, by the direction of the spiritual master, must install the Deity of Viṣṣṇu, forms like Rādhā-Kṛṣṣṇa, LakṣmĪ-Nārāyaṇa or Sītā-Rāma especially, or any other form of the Lord.”

Engagement in such worship of the deity, under the direction of a bona fide spiritual master, will greatly help the householders to purify their very existence and make rapid progress in spiritual knowledge.

HERE ARE A FEW WAYS YOU AND YOUR FAMILY CAN CELEBRATE JANMĀṢṢAMĪ

WHILE AT HOME THIS YEAR



DECORATING THE ALTAR

This creates the mood of festivity and can be particularly fun for the children. Encourage them in helping to collect flowers and leaves from the garden, stringing garlands, beaded chains and such shiny paraphernalia, including strings of lights in the altar room in the mood of recreating the temple environment with decorations and making the house beautiful for Lord Kṛṣṣṇa’s appearance.

RECREATING THE TEMPLE PROGRAM



SINGING FOR THE DEITY

CHOOSE SOME OF YOUR FAVOURITE VAIṢṢNAVA BHAJANS OF OUR PREVIOUS ACARYAS TO SING. ENCOURAGE YOUR CHILDREN TO JOIN IN. KIDS LOVE PLAYING MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS AND SINGING. ALTERNATIVELY, PLAY RECORDED KIRTAN AND HEIGHTEN THE SPIRITUAL ATMOSPHERE. ENCOURAGE DANCING FOR THE PLEASURE OF THE LORD. YOUR KIDS WILL LOVE IT ESPECIALLY IF YOU DANCE AS A FAMILY.

If you have deities of The Lord, you can begin offering a nice plate of sweets when you wake their Lordships up and offer an āraṭi. If you do not have deities you can offer the sweets and an āraṭi to a picture of the Lord. Krishna is non-different from his name, form and pastimes. So, His picture is non-different from His deity form as well.

Here is the āraṭi procedure:

- 3 or 5 incense sticks (offered 7 circles around the Lord’s entire body)
- 5 wick lamp (offered 4 circles to the Lord’s lotus feet 2 circles the Lord’s waist, 3 circles around the Lord’s head, and finally 7 circles around his entire body)
- A conch full of water (3 circles to his head and 7 circles around the entire body)
- Cloth (7 circles around the Lord’s body)
- Fragrant flowers (7 circles around the entire body)
- Camara (a suitable number of times)
- Peacock fan (a suitable number of times)

ABHIṢĒKA

How to do a simple abhiṣĒka at home:

You can do so using the following 5 nectars:

1. Milk
2. Yogurt
3. Ghee
4. Honey
5. Sugar syrup

Ensure all items are at room temperature before bathing the deities. The deities should be nicely cleaned with warm water afterwards, dried and dressed. Engaging children in the worship encourages them and also teaches them the mood of reverence and ŚrĪla Prabhupāda encouraged instillation of this reverent mood in our children from an early age.

PUṢPA ABHIṢĒKA

Another nice way of bathing the Lord is with flower petals. This will really excite the children and keep them enthusiastic in their services. Various kinds and colours of flowers can be petaled and offered individually in sprays of colors over their Lordships. The same maha flower petals can be distributed to the family members in a respectable way.

COOKING

Just as you enjoy your favorite preparations on your birthday so too does the Lord. Having said that, His favorite above all others is your love and devotion. You can make a special endeavor in cooking a wonderful feast for him as you would do for a family member’s birthday. He is a major part of your household so cook for him as you would for your child, meditating on what He would like. A simple cooking standard would include rice, dhal, roti/puri/ĉapati (flat bread), subjis (vegetable preparations of different variety and flavours), savoury such as katĉori or pakora, sweet and a drink.

BHOGA OFFERING

Once prepared, all items should be served in individual little bowls (preferably stainless steel) and placed on a tray. After purifying your hands and the offerings with acamana water, place the tray of bhoga (unoffered food stuff) in front of the Lord. Then, follow the simple procedure for offering below:

- Invite the Lord to come and take his meal
- While ringing a bell in your left hand
- Recite the following mantras 3 times each.

We should have the mood of pleading/begging the Lord to please accept what we have prepared for his pleasure.



nama om viṣṣnu-padaya Kṛṣṣṇa-preṣṣṥhaya bhutale srimate bhaktivedanta-swamin iti namine

"I offer my respectful obeisances unto His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, who is very dear to Lord Kṛṣṣṇa, having taken shelter at His lotus feet."

namas te sarasvate deve gaura-vani-pracharine nirviṣṣeṣa śunyahvadi paścatya deṣa tarine

"Our respectful obeisances are unto you, O spiritual master, servant of Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Gosvami. You are kindly preaching the message of Lord Caitanya deva and delivering the Western countries, which are filled with impersonalism and voidism."

namo maha-vadanyaya kṛṣṣṇa-prema-pradaya te kṛṣṣṇaya kṛṣṣṇa-āitanya-namne gaura-tviṣṣe namaha

"O most munificent incarnation! You are Kṛṣṣṇa Himself appearing as Sri Kṛṣṣṇa Caitanya Mahāprabhu. You have assumed the golden color of Srimati Rādhārāni. and You are widely distributing pure love of Kṛṣṣṇa. We offer our respectful obeisances unto You."

namo brahmanya-devaya go-brahmana-hitaya ā jagad-dhitaya kṛṣṣṇaya govindaya namo namaha

"I offer my respectful obeisances unto Lord Kṛṣṣṇa, who is the worshipable Deity for all brahmanas the well-wisher of the cows and the brahmanas and the benefactor of the whole world. I offer my repeated obeisances to the Personality of Godhead, known as Kṛṣṣṇa."

Clapping your hands or ringing the bell signaling the end of the offering. Remove the plate and transfer the offerings and wash the Lords eating utensils. We should endeavor to offer the best but within our means.

Leave the offering for the Lord to relish for about 20 minutes then by clapping your hands or ringing the bell signaling the end of the offering. Remove the plate and transfer the offerings and wash the Lords eating utensils. We should endeavor to offer the best but within our means.

ONLINE STREAMING

There will be various live streaming channels available to you.

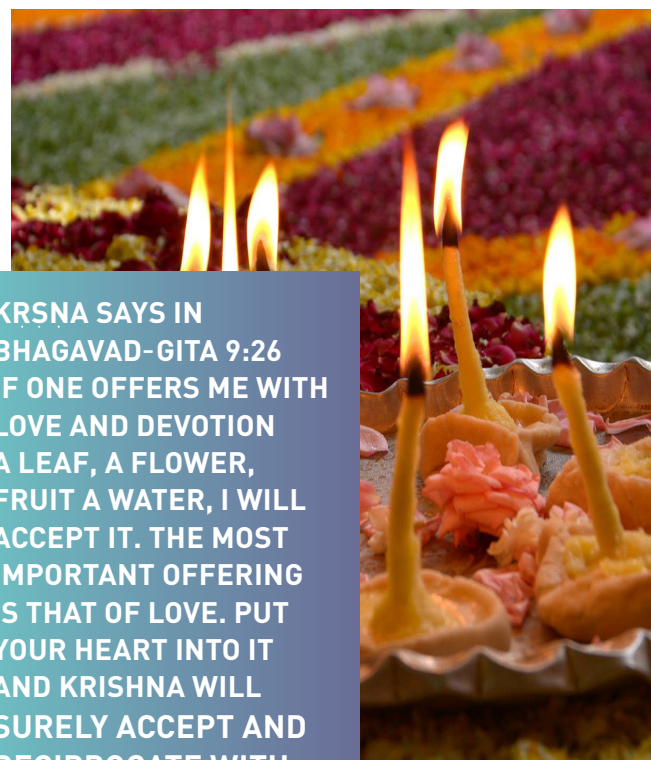
- Mayapur.tv
- Vrindavan.tv
- YouTube
- Facebook Live
- Instagram

The platforms above are not an exhaustive list. Practically all ISKCON temples will be live streaming their programs so tune in and relish the Nectar while safely in your homes.

OFFERING OF GIFTS

One of the six loving exchanges between devotees as explained in the Nectar of Instruction is giving and receiving of gifts. It is natural that this principle of loving exchange would also be practiced with the Lord. On your special day you appreciate a special gift and so does Kṛṣṣṇa. Buy or make him something special as a birthday gift. Examples of gifts could be:

- Jewelry
- New clothes
- Garlands



KRṢṢNA SAYS IN BHAGAVAD-GITA 9:26 IF ONE OFFERS ME WITH LOVE AND DEVOTION A LEAF, A FLOWER, FRUIT A WATER, I WILL ACCEPT IT. THE MOST IMPORTANT OFFERING IS THAT OF LOVE. PUT YOUR HEART INTO IT AND KRISHNA WILL SURELY ACCEPT AND RECIPROCATE WITH

- Peacock feathers
- Turban pieces or crowns
- Flutes
- A buffalo horn
- New puja paraphernalia
- Water cups
- Incense
- Fruit
- Offering plate
- New blankets
- Any gift that can be used in his service is acceptable

FASTING

Śrīla Prabhupāda's purport in Bhagavad-gīta 11.54 states:

"There are so many rules and regulations, and if one at all wants to understand Kṛṣṣṇa, he must follow the regulative principles described in the authoritative literature. One can perform penance in accordance with those principles. For example, to undergo serious penances one may observe fasting on Janmāṣṣṥtamī, the day on which Kṛṣṣṇa appeared..."

Fasting from all foods until midnight is recommended, we should endeavor to follow this injunction but if fasting is too difficult due to health reasons then try to eat only light foods during the day (like ekadasi type preparations). Kṛṣṣṇa will see your sincere endeavor to fulfill the rules and regulations and reciprocate with you accordingly.

CHANTING

Chanting the Hare Kṛṣṣṇa maha mantra is the essence of our devotion. It is an intimate exchange of love with Lord Kṛṣṣṇa, pleasing him for devotional service unto his lotus feet. Try to chant more than your normal quota and be more attentive being absorbed in loving thoughts of the Lord. A very nice verse is mentioned below in this regard

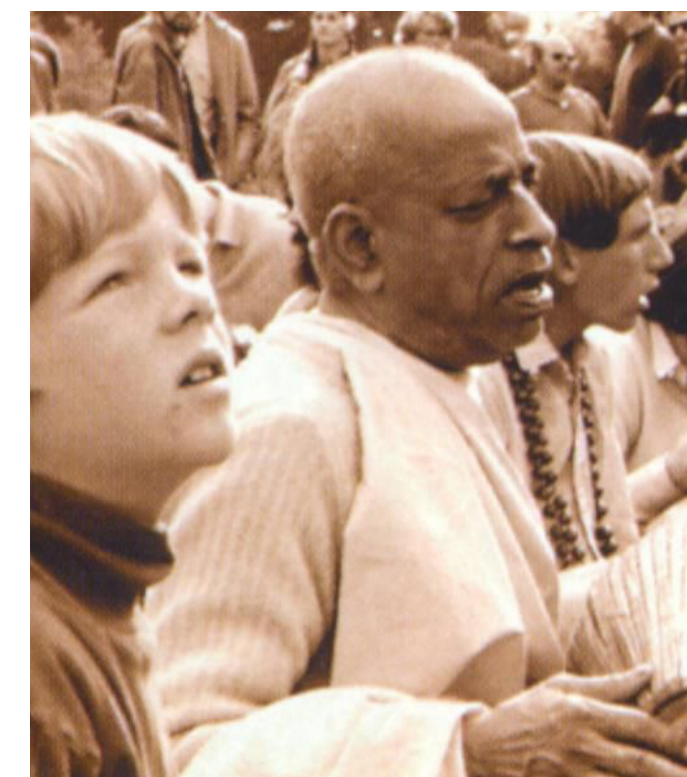
CC Madhya 17.133

nāma cintāmaṇiḥ kṛṣṣṇaś caitanya-rasa-vigrahaḥ pūrṇaḥ śuddho nitya-mukto 'bhinnatvān nāma-nāminoḥ

'The holy name of Kṛṣṣṇa is transcendently blissful. It bestows all spiritual benedictions, for it is Kṛṣṣṇa Himself, the reservoir of all pleasure. Kṛṣṣṇa's name is complete, and it is the form of all transcendental mellows. It is not a material name under any condition, and it is no less powerful than Kṛṣṣṇa Himself. Since Kṛṣṣṇa's name is not contaminated by the material qualities, there is no question of its being involved with māyā. Kṛṣṣṇa's name is always liberated and spiritual; it is never conditioned by the laws of material nature. This is because the name of Kṛṣṣṇa and Kṛṣṣṇa Himself are identical.'

READING

Śrīla Prabhupāda has kindly provided us with the story of Lord Kṛṣṣṇa's advent and other exciting pastimes in Kṛṣṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead or in Srimad Bhagavatam Canto Ten. Reading these pastimes on Janmāṣṣṥtamī will greatly benefit us and help understand the glories of the Lord more deeply.



JANMĀṢṢTAMĪ FOR CHILDREN

Janmāṣṣṥtamī is a celebration for the entire family so let's also keep our children engaged in Kṛṣṣṇa conscious activities on the day. Depending on their ages, they can help cook, colour in pictures of Kṛṣṣṇa, play musical instruments, assist with the abhiṣṣek, dance and chant Hare Kṛṣṣṇa. Here's a few more ideas to help you keep your children enthused:

- There are many children's books about Kṛṣṣṇa as well as DVDs of Kṛṣṣṇa pastimes accessible.
- Children also enjoy dressing up as Rādhā, Kṛṣṣṇa and their associates, and re-enacting Kṛṣṣṇa's pastimes. This helps them to learn and remember the pastimes.
- Jewelry and garland making, kids love stringing beads and flowers together and are extremely encouraged when they see the Lord wear their offering afterwards.
- Story time. Reading Kṛṣṣṇa's pastimes and encouraging your children to enact the pastimes are extremely fulfilling and light hearted. Kids really enjoy this.
- Get creative and help them make a birthday card or two. Display this on your altar for the Lord's pleasure.
- Older children can write letters with personalized prayers to the Lord
- Face painting is always welcomed and adds to the mood of festivity.

THE 9 PROCESSES OF BHAKTI

There are many ways one can create the Janmāṣṭamī atmosphere as explained above in your own home. In whichever way you decide to celebrate Janmāṣṭamī this year, try to incorporate the nine processes of bhakti.

Śrīla Prabhupāda states in his purport to SB 7.5.23-24 “These are nine processes of devotional service, of which sravanam, hearing, is most important. Without hearing, nobody can understand the science of God. Therefore, the Vedic mantras are called śruti. Śruti means it is to be heard. It is not to be experimented in the laboratory. It is simply to be heard. Therefore, it is called sruti. So śravanam kirtanam visnoh smaranam pada-sevanam, arcānam vandanam dasyam. Vandanam, offering prayer. We also offer prayer. The other religious sect, just like the Christians, they offer prayer; the Muhammadans, they offer prayer. So, prayer, offering prayer is also one of the items of bhakti. Chanting, hearing, meditating, offering prayers, arcanam, worshiping the Deity in the temple, all of them are together devotional service. So out of the nine... If you can execute all the nine, it is very good. But it is not possible. So even if you can execute one item, you become perfect. It is so nice.”



OFFER SUPPORT TO ISKCON TEMPLES

Although we are celebrating Janmāṣṭamī at home this year, all temples will still be continuing with their elaborate worship of the deities behind closed doors. They will still require your support for the pleasure of Their lordships. Please find it in your hearts to facilitate these services and give generously.

Kṛṣṇa is all merciful and He is able to reciprocate perfectly with each one of us. In the transcendental realm, everything that we offer to the Lord with love and devotion will benefit us unlimitedly, and those benefits will stay with us eternally. We at the ISKCON Deity Worship Ministry wish you a very happy Śrī Kṛṣṇa Janmāṣṭamī and pray to Lord Kṛṣṇa for you all to remain safe, protected and enthused in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

**Your servants,
ISKCON Deity Worship Ministry**

