

How to observe Janmashtami Vrata?



Morning Duties (prātaḥ-kṛtya)

On the day of Janmāṣṭamī one should wake up early in the morning during the brāhma-muhūrta (one and half hour before sunrise). While waking up, it is recommended to chant the prayers for spiritual master and then the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra. Then one should do ācamana (gargle) danta-dhāvana (brushing the teeth) and snāna (taking bath for external cleanliness). Then one should decorate his body with tilaka.

Mantra Meditation (mahā-mantra Japa)

One should chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra as many times as possible on this day.

*hare kṛṣṇa hare kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa hare hare
hare rāma hare rāma rāma rāma hare hare*

If you chant this mantra 108 times then it is one round. It takes 7 to 8 minutes to chant one round of Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā -mantra. Śrīla Prabhupāda recommended devotees to chant 16 rounds of Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra every day.

Remember Kṛṣṇa (kṛṣṇa-smaraṇa)

One should hear the glories of the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, as explained by the scriptures, from bona fide ācāryas belonging to one of the four authentic sampradāyas. Śrīla Prabhupāda (who is a bona fide ācārya from Madhva- Gauḍīya-sampradāya descending from Lord Brahma) wrote the Kṛṣṇa book (a summary study of the tenth canto of Bhāgavata Purāṇa) which speaks about Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the summum-bonum. Devotees can read Śrīla Prabhupāda's Kṛṣṇa book on this day, especially the chapters that describe the advent of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Devotees can also read from Bhagavad-gītā.

Fasting (upavāsa)

One should fast on the day of Janmāṣṭamī. It is better to fast till midnight and then break the fast with anukalpa (fruits, roots and milk) One should not take grains, beans and other prohibited vegetables.

Worship of the Lord (Śrī-vigraha Seva)

Those who have the Deities of Śrī-Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa at home, can worship Them on this day of Janmāṣṭamī. One can perform abhiṣeka (ceremonial bathing of the Deities), śṛṅgāra (dressing the Deities with new clothes, flowers and jewels) bhoga (offering of varieties of food items) and ārati. The worship of the Lord should be accompanied by the chanting of auspicious mantras and/or hare kṛṣṇa kīrtana.

Janmashtami Abhiṣeka



Bhāgavata Purāṇa describes how Yaśodā and Nanda Mahārāja celebrated Kṛṣṇa's first birthday. All the cowherd men and women were invited to participate in the jubilant celebration. A nice band played, and the assembled people enjoyed it. All the learned brāhmaṇas were invited, and they chanted Vedic hymns for the good fortune of Kṛṣṇa. During the chanting of the Vedic hymns and playing of the bands, Kṛṣṇa was bathed by mother Yaśodā.

If you are performing abhiṣeka for Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa

on Janmāṣṭamī day, you may call your neighbors, friends and relatives to participate in this event. You can also arrange for hare kṛṣṇa kīrtana and chanting of Śrī Brahma-saṁhitā prayers during the abhiṣeka or just chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra.

Abhiṣeka Arrangements

First clean the place of worship and purify it by sprinkling water mixed with cow dung and cow urine. Wash all the pots and arrange it near the place of worship. Fill the pots with various items for abhisheka listed below.

- 2 pots of water
- 1 pot of milk
- 1 pot of curd
- 1 pot of honey
- 1 pot of water mixed with jaggery
- 1 pot of luke warm water
- 1 pots of water mixed with turmeric powder ghee in a small vessel

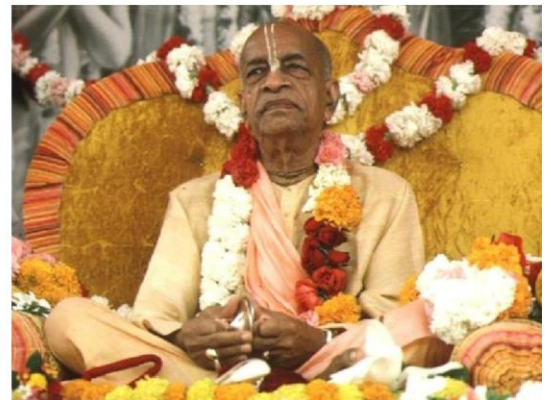
Put a tulasi leaf in each of the item.

Change the dress of the Deities. They shall wear the abhiṣeka dress (yellow color for Kṛṣṇa, blue color for Balarāma, red color for Rādhārāṇī) Place them on the abhiṣeka plate. Keep the photo / deity of Śrīla Prabhupāda next to them.

Guru-pūjā

Start with guru-pūjā. Offer incense sticks (3 nos. or 5 nos.) followed by a lamp and then the flowers. While doing guru-pūjā chant the following mantras.

*om ajñāna-timirāndhasya jñānāñjana-salākayā
cakṣur unmīlitaṁ yena tasmai śrī-gurave namaḥ
nama om viṣṇu-pādāya kṛṣṇa-preṣṭāya bhū-tale
śrimate bhaktivedānta-svāmin iti nāmine
namas te sārāsvate deve gaura-vāṇī-pracārīne
nirviśeṣa-śūnyavādi-pāścātya-deśa-tāriṇe
hare kṛṣṇa hare kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa hare hare
hare rāma hare rāma rāma rāma hare hare*



After performing guru-pūjā you can place the photo/deity of Śrīla Prabhupāda in a comfortable place.

Abhiṣeka

The sequence of items to be offered are as follows:

Śuddhodaka snāna: 1 pot of water

Pañcāmṛta snāna: 1 pot of milk, 1 pot of curd, ghee, 1 pot of honey and 1 pot of water mixed with jiggery

Uṣṇodaka snāna: 1 pot of luke warm water

1 pot of water mixed with turmeric powder (also smear the Deity with turmeric powder)

Perform ārati to Their Lordships.

Śuddhodaka snāna: 1 pot of water

Varieties of flowers can be showered on the Deities

(optional) Offer cāmara and vyajana (optional)

With the lemon rub the Deities and clean them with water.

Dry them using the towels and shift them to the altar.

Śṛṅgāra & Bhoga-offering

Decorate the Deities with jewelry and new clothes. Arrange all the bhoga-offerings in front of the Deities. On each of the item place a tulasi leaf. Chant each of the following mantras 3 times as you ring a bell with your left hand.

*nama om viṣṇu-pādāya kṛṣṇa-preṣṭāya bhū-
tale śrīmate bhaktivedānta-svāmin iti nāmine
namas te sārāsvate deve gaura-vāṇī-pracārine
nirviṣeṣa-śūnyavādi-pāścātya-deśa-tāriṇe
namo mahā-vadānyāya kṛṣṇa-prema-pradāya te
kṛṣṇāya kṛṣṇa-caitanya-nāmne gaura-tviṣe namaḥ
namo brahmaṇya-devāya go-brāhmaṇa-hitāya ca
jagad-dhitāya kṛṣṇāya govindāya namo namaḥ*

Leave the bhoga in front of the Lord for 10 to 15 mins. Come out of the altar room. After 15 minutes, clap your hands gently and enter the altar room. Ring the bell and remove the plate.

Ārati

Items required: Bell, ārati lamp, incense sticks, ghee wicks, matchbox, conch to offer arghya, conch stand, a handkerchief, small plate to keep flowers, fragrant flowers, ācamana cup, cāmara and vyajana (peacock feather fan), a big plate to keep all the paraphernalia.

Offer the ārati in the following sequence:

dhūpa (incense sticks): 4 rounds to Lord's lotus feet, 3 rounds to Lord's navel and 7 rounds to Lord's body

dīpa (ghee lamp): 4 rounds to Lord's lotus feet, 3 rounds to Lord's navel, 2 rounds to Lord's face & 7 rounds to Lord's body

arghya (water in a conch shell) - 7 rounds above Lord's head. After offering, pour the water into a pot. vastra (handkerchief) - same as the lamp

puṣpa (fragrant flowers) - 4 rounds to Lord's lotus feet. And then keep the flowers on Lord's lotus feet

cāmara (fan made of yak-tail hair) - Wave it suitable number of times

vyajana (peacock-feather fan) - Wave it suitable number of times

Offer obeisances and beg for forgiveness from the Lord for the offenses committed unknowingly while rendering the services.

Appendix 1: Qucik Checklist of Items Required for Abhiṣeka

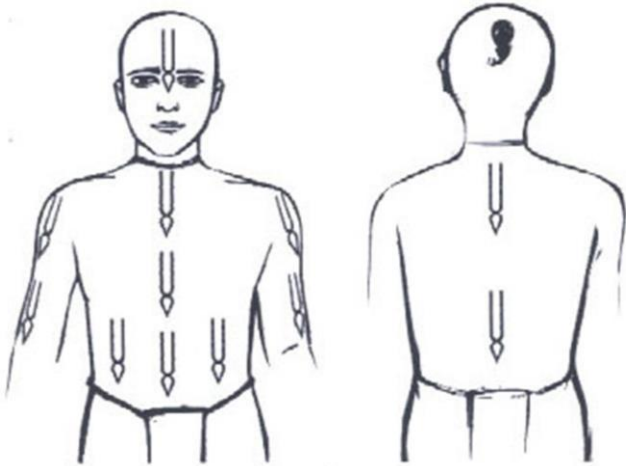
2 pots of water	bell to ring during abhisheka
1 pot of milk	Lemon (seeds to be removed)
1 pots of curd	abhisheka dress for deities
1 pot of honey	abhisheka plate
1 pot of water mixed with jaggery	incense sticks
1 pot of luke warm water	varieties of flowers
1 pots of water mixed with turmeric powder	camara and vyajana
ghee in a small vessel	arati lamp with single wick for guru-puja
tulasi leaves to be put into each item	arati lamp with multiple wicks / camphor for Lord

Appendix 2: How to decorate the body with Tilaka

While decorating the body with tilaka, we give protection to the body by chanting twelve names of Vishnu.

*dvadaśa-tilaka-mantra ei dvadaśa nama
acamane ei name sparśi tat-tat-sthana*

When putting the twelve tilaka marks on the twelve places of the body, one has to chant the mantra consisting of these twelve Vishnu names. After daily worship, when one anoints the different parts of the body with water, these names should be chanted as one touches each part of the body.



While marking the body with tilaka, one should chant the following mantra, consisting of 12 names of Lord Vishnu:

*lalate keśavam dhyayen narayanam athodare vakshaḥ-
sthale madhavam tu govindam kanṭha-kupake vishnum ca
dakshine kukshau bahau ca madhusudanam trivikramam
kandhare tu vamanam vama-parśvake Sridharam vama-
bahau tu ḥṛshikeśam tu kandhare pṛshṭhe ca
padmanabham ca kaṭyam damodaram nyaset*

When one marks the forehead with tilaka, he must remember Keśava. When one marks the lower abdomen, he must remember Narayana. For the chest, one should remember Madhava, and when marking the hollow of the neck one should remember Govinda. Lord Vishnu should

be remembered while marking the right side of the belly, and Madhusudana should be remembered when marking the right arm. Trivikrama should be remembered when marking the right shoulder, and Vamana should be remembered when marking the left side of the belly. Sridhara should be remembered while marking the left arm, and Ḥṛshikeśa should be remembered when marking the left shoulder. Padmanabha and Damodara should be remembered when marking the back.