

KIDS CORNER

Janmashtami



About Janmashtami

King Kansa was the most absolute and tyrannical monarch of the period; the bare mention of whose name was sufficient to send fear through the hearts of all good and peace-loving people. His sister's name was Devaki upon whom his brother Kansa showered brotherly love. And that is the reason why, on the day of Devaki's marriage to Vasudev, when the time came for Devaki to travel to her husband's house, that king Kansa wanted to drive the carriage himself as a token of his brotherly love.

The newly married couple were simple and beautiful, yet noble and majestic to look at. They were really very happy. The royal carriage richly decorated with precious gems and ornaments, was being followed by a large retinue of people wearing colourful gala dresses. Everything was pleasant all round.

Suddenly the face of nature changed. The birds stopped singing; the sun was obscured by a cloud; the soft breeze became a howling wind creating dust storms. Ill omens were pointing to imminent danger. An unaccountable fear suddenly gripped the minds of all in the procession. At such a time, an unseen voice, an oracle, was heard from above which said:

"Oh you foolish one, whom are you driving so merrily? Would you not know that the eighth issue of her womb shall be the cause of your death?"

On hearing this, the terrible Kansa sprang up from his seat, drew his sword, and was about to kill his sister on the spot, had not Vasudev intervened. Falling upon his feet, on behalf of his newly married wife, reminding Kansa that not Devaki but her eighth child would be the cause of his death. So he requested Kansa most humbly, to spare her life, she being fully innocent, and promised, since he had fear from her children, that each and everyone of them would be given over to him. Kansa felt the force of the reason and agreed to the proposal of Vasudev.

Besides his newly married bride Devaki, Vasudev had another good wife, named Rohini and with these two loving and dutiful wives he managed to live in peace and comfort.

In the course of time, the first male child was born to Devaki. Vasudev, true to his word, sent the news to King Kansa, who sent his servants to fetch the child whom he instantly killed with his own hands. Six children were thus killed by the cruel king, who foolishly wanted to avert the course of fate.

In the case of the seventh child, somehow or other the womb appeared to be fruitless, although it was really transferred, through divine agency, from Devaki to Rohini, who in due course of time, brought forth a child that, on account of its transference from one womb to another came to be known by the name of Sankarshana.

Now when the time for the birth of her eighth child was approaching, Kansa ordered Vasudeva and Devaki to be cast into his prison, bound with the same chain.

Both the wife and husband did not know what to do. Every minute of their lives they called upon their only hope, their only deliverance, God. The solace of the unhappy, ardent prayers proceeding from the very bottom of their souls, incessantly flowed out of their hearts; and the almighty Lord of the universe, in His own mysterious ways, was infilling their souls with infinite power of endurance which kept the fragile vessels of their delicate frames steady and safe in that gloomy and stormy sea of life.

For us, there is a lesson to be derived from this. We can draw great comfort from the Gita where the Lord tells us: Ch.8, verse 58-
"Fixing your mind on Me, you shall by my grace, overcome all obstacles..."

Devaki was about to usher into the world its saviour, and she along with her husband, bewailed her lot and beating her forehead said: "O darling, be not born of me to be smashed to death by the cruel king Kansa". And with this, both Devaki and Vasudeva fell into a swoon. In the gloom of that unconsciousness, suddenly a light flashed, and a beautiful youth of sixteen, holding mace and discus, conch shell and lotus in his four hands, rose above the horizon of their mental firmament, healing all their mental wounds, cheering and exhilarating them with his sweet smile. "Father and mother, weep no more. I have come at last to your rescue and to the rescue of all the good people. Open your eyes and see me as your child. Carry me father to the house of your friend Nanda in Gokula. His wife Yashoda has given birth to a daughter just now. Exchange me for that daughter. Bring her back to this prison leaving me on the lap of Yashoda who will be sleeping at the time. Nothing shall bar your path".

With these words, the soul-solacing charming youth vanished.

When Devaki and Vasudeva opened their eyes, they saw the most charming and beautiful baby ever a parent was blessed with. That was at midnight of Ashtami-Rohini day, the divine baby was born in Prison. The earth and the heavens were filled with joy. Flowers blossomed, rains fell from the sky, peacocks danced, the gods rained flowers, and divine music was heard. Devaki and Vasudeva forgot their miserable condition for a while, looking at the smiling baby playing with its tiny limbs. The mother kissed the sweet face and forgot her danger. Then after a while, they realised the real state of affairs and both the husband and wife shuddered. Then the sweet instructions of the fascinating youth in the vision flashed into their minds. Vasudeva clasped the child at once in his bosom to start for Gokula, but found that his legs were in chains. He did not know what to do. In his haste he gave a jerk, and his legs were released! He sprang upon his feet and ran towards the door of his dungeon. The massive iron-barred doors were locked with three fold locks; but the guards were all asleep, and therefore fearlessly he gave a push forward and the gates were unlocked and flew open of their own accord. The crossing over the river Yamuna was just as miraculous. Vasudeva reached Gokula and to his astonishment found the door of Nanda's house open. He exchanged the babies and hurried back to the prison of Kansa. Early in the morning, all the people at Gokula came to know that a beautiful male child, a prince had been born the previous night at midnight to Nanda's wife, and their simple hearts were filled with unbounded joy.