



ISKCON Communications

The International Society for Krishna Consciousness
Founder-*Acharya* His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

MEDIA RELEASE

Thousands to Celebrate Janmastami, Lord Krishna's Appearance Day and Hare Krishna Movement's 50th Anniversary

For Immediate Release

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WHAT: Janmastami, the Appearance Day Celebration of Lord Krishna, with drama, music, chants, vegetarian feast, hena painting, and more.
Also commemorating 50th Anniversary of Hare Krishna in America

WHERE: ISKCON Temple, 10310 Oaklyn Drive, Potomac, Maryland

WHEN: Thursday, August 25, 6 PM to Midnight

WHO: Up to 10,000 expected to attend throughout the evening
Free event. Open to the public. Casual dress.

Washington, DC—The German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche once said, “I would only believe in a god who could dance.”

Well, Friedrich, the Hare Krishna people have news for you: God not only dances, He plays a flute. And, He also has a “birthday” to be celebrated on August 25, and a billion people around the world are going to the party.

“The sacred Sanskrit wisdom texts, the Vedas, explain that God is not an old man with a beard, but the ever youthful, all-attractive person, and most intimate friend of everyone,” says Amrita Hari, spokesperson. “That is why Janmastami, the Appearance Day of Lord Krishna, is one of the most celebrated events in all of India.”

Today, Janmastami is celebrated by people of diverse ethnic, religious and cultural backgrounds across the world. Lord Krishna, the speaker of the sacred text *Bhagavad-gita*, has been revered for centuries in South Asian temples, art and music. But, Krishna has only become well known globally in the past few decades.

A big reason for this new found popularity is the Hare Krishna movement, which celebrates its own 50th Anniversary this year. The International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), began in New York City's lower east side in 1966, when a 70 year-old swami set up a storefront temple.

ISKCON's founder, A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada taught that the path to happiness was not found in material pursuits, but in awakening love of God—the dancing Lord Krishna.

Surprisingly perhaps, he found an interested audience among the 1960's youth, and his society took root. Over the last 50 years, ISKCON has grown from a small group of seekers to an international community with more than 600 temples, 100 vegetarian restaurants, and 516 million of its books in print in 87 languages. The society's international food relief programs feed 1.2 million children *each day* in India alone.

“Swami Prabhupada did not teach anything new,” says Professor Graham M. Schweig, author of *Dance of Divine Love*, a translation of the millennium old *Bhagavat Purana*, which tells the story of Lord Krishna. “His expertise was in making the wisdom of the bhakti, or devotional yoga tradition relevant to the modern world. His achievements are remarkable,” said Schweig.

ISKCON is rooted in the Gaudiya Vaishnava sampradaya, or monotheistic tradition, within Hindu culture. Its tenets include that the soul is eternal and different from the body; that chanting God's names, or *mantra* meditation, can awaken knowledge of the self; and that healthy life comes through the practice of cleanliness, self-discipline, mercy, and truthfulness, and avoiding intoxication, illicit sex, meat-eating and gambling.

Janmastami will be celebrated at ISKCON temples around the world—and in Washington DC at the ISKCON Temple in Potomac Maryland—with a variety of drama performances, live music, sacred chants, adoration or darshan of sacred images in the temples, reading sacred texts, a vegetarian feast, hena painting, moon bouncers for kids, and of course—as Nietzsche would have wanted—dancing.

All are welcome. The event, including vegetarian feast, is free.

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Backgrounder

The festival of Krishna Janmastami—the birth anniversary of Lord Krishna—has been celebrated since ancient times. Vaishnavism, the worship of Lord Krishna, is one of the principle branches within the broad Hindu tradition. Vaishnavas are monotheists, and believe Lord Krishna to be the same God worshiped by Christians, Jews and Muslims.

The scriptures of India teach that Lord Krishna personally descends to Earth to reestablish religious principles and to save human society from forgetfulness of God. Janmastami celebrates the day that Krishna appeared on Earth, over 5,000 years ago. For devotees of Krishna, it is a joyous occasion, replete with the singing of devotional songs, dance, worship services, and partaking in a sanctified vegetarian feast.

The Hare Krishna movement, formally known as the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) was founded in 1966 by A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, who brought the ancient Vaishnava tradition to the West.

Since then, it has grown into a worldwide confederation of more than 600 temples, farms and eco-villages, and 100 vegetarian restaurants across six continents. Its practitioners come from a variety of backgrounds. While some members live in temples and ashrams (monasteries) as monks and nuns, most Hare Krishna devotees live and work in the general community, practicing Krishna consciousness in their homes and attending their temple on a regular basis.

Appreciation of Srila Prabhupada and ISKCON

“I am impressed with how much the teachings of one man and the spiritual tradition he brought impacted themselves into the lives of so many people.”

Harvard University Professor Emeritus Harvey Cox

“A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami is doing valuable work and his books are significant contributions to the salvation of mankind.”

Former Indian Prime Minister Sri Lal Bahadur Shastri

“The Hare Krishna movement... is historically very significant, for now, for the first time since the days of the Roman Empire, an Asian religion is being openly practiced by people of western origin in the streets of western cities.”

Dr. A. L. Basham, author of The Glory That Was India