

FESTIVALS IN AUGUST 2005

Raksha Bandhan (Hindu Festival – 19th August)

This is an ancient Hindu tradition. *Bhavishya Purana* refers to a battle between gods and demons, and Indra (the king of the gods) was feeling depressed. At that time Indra's wife Sachi took a thread, charged it with sacred verses or Mantras for protection and tied it on Indra's hand. Through the strength of this thread Indra conquered his enemies. Since then till today this festival is celebrated.

Through the passage of time festivals are undergoing modifications. *Raksha Bandhan* (*Raksha* = protection *Bandhan* = tie) is also known as *Rakhi*. *Rakhi* has become a sacred festival for sisters and brothers. Sisters tie them to brothers. Priests tie them to people of his congregation. During the middle ages, if a woman tied a *Rakhi* on the hand of any man, then it became imperative for him, as his religious duty of the highest order, to protect that woman. That man would put his life at stake to protect the honour of that woman.

In those days, many *Rajputs* sacrificed their lives to protect their spiritual sisters. Humayun received a *Rakhi* from the queen Karmavati of Chittor and for that, Humayun carried out his sacred brotherly duty and protected her by opposing his own soldiers.

According to ancient traditions, it is customary to have protection threads that are charged with sacred verses (*Mantras*) and sanctified with rice, durva grass etc.; to have these tied by people who know the Vedas or by near and dear ones. This protection thread saves from sins on the one hand and removes diseases on the other hand. By tying this thread, protection is afforded for a full one year and all kinds of fears are removed.

Nowadays *Rakhis* are decorated with soft silky threads of various colours, and also with ornaments, pictures, gold and silver threads etc. These *Rakhis* enhance the artistry of the people. Within these *Rakhis* reside sacred feelings and well wishes. It is also a great sacred verse of unity. Acting as a symbol of life's advancement and a leading messenger of togetherness.

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Krishna Janmashtami (Hindu Festival 27th August)

‘Janmashtami’ in the literal sense means the *Birth Celebration*. Therefore *Krishna Janmashtami* marks the celebration of the birth of Lord Krishna. This Festival is also known as ‘*Krishna Jayanti*’.

Krishna was born 3228 years before the Christian era on 20 July at 3 a.m in Mathura. Since this is 2005 A.D., he would have been born 5233 years ago. In the auspicious month of *Sravana*, in the *bahula-paksha* (brighter fortnight), on *Ashtami* day (8th day of the phase of the moon) under the star *Rohini*, the holy child was born. His parents were Vasudeva and Devaki.

The birth of Krishna was a great miracle in itself. There lived an evil, wicked and ambitious king by name of Kamsa in Mathura. He plundered the kingdom left and right and lawlessness prevailed in his state. On one of the days a heavenly prophecy from the sky came and echoed, "Kamsa! Your end is near! The eighth son of Devaki, your sister, will be the one responsible for your death." Kamsa was enraged beyond control and imprisoned Devaki, his sister and Vasudeva her husband. Then he killed every child of the couple as they were born. At midnight when the eighth child was born, the skies roared and Lord Vishnu advised Vasudeva to take the child across the river Yamuna to the other side to the village of Gokul and exchange with the daughter of Yashoda in Gokul, who was born on the same day. Vasudeva accordingly put the child in a basket, and as he went out the doors of the prison parted for him as if in a magic. The river parted into two to allow for Vasudeva to cross. Vasudeva then crossed into Gokul and exchanged his son with the daughter of Yashoda who was born the same day and came back. The baby uttered cries which awakened Kamsa, and then happily he went to the prison chamber and snatched the girl baby and as he lifted her in the air, the baby, who was an incarnation of the Devi herself, laughed in glee "Kamsa, your real enemy is still alive. The son of Devaki is alive and well and will come back to kill you", and then disappeared. Kamsa was outraged beyond wits and started a killing spree of all boys at that age in his kingdom. But Krishna had escaped. Later, Kamsa's death occurred at the hands of Krishna.

Because of his great godly power, Lord Krishna is widely worshipped in the Hindu faith. He is considered to be the eighth *avatar* (incarnation) of Lord Vishnu. Lord Krishna is known for delivering *Bhagwad Gita*, the holy book worshipped by Hindus on battlefield of *Kurukshetra* to Arjuna.

He is also known for his bravery in destroying evil powers throughout His life. He is usually depicted as playing the flute (*murali*), indicating spread of the melody of love to people.

He is also shown with his childhood devotee Radha. The Lord is usually remembered and worshipped as Radha-Krishna. The pair symbolizes the eternal love between people and god.

Lord Krishna is also shown with his pet cow, his childhood favourite.

Bhagawan Baba in His divine discourses has provided detailed glimpses of the life stories of Lord Krishna.