

Remember the Name of Rama Forever

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Thousands of years have passed since the advent of the Treta Yuga. Yet, even now, everyone, right from children to elderly people, remember the name of Rama. The glory of Rama's name is such that it has not diminished even a bit with the passage of time. This truth should be recognised by all. Rama is the name given to a form, but the name Rama is not limited to a form. Atma is Rama, and its true name is Atmarama. Therefore, wherever and whenever you remember the name Rama, Rama is there with you, in you, around you.

Embodiments of Love!

Rama is one, whether you identify it with the Atma or with the form installed in your heart. Every year comes the festival of Sri Rama Navami. But we have not so far understood its true significance. You identify Rama with a form. But Rama is not limited to any particular form. It is the name that is latent in your heart. Many changes and variations keep occurring in the world, but the name of Rama is immutable, is eternal, unsullied, and everlasting.

Rama was not an ordinary individual. He was verily God, who incarnated on earth for the welfare of mankind. People call God by many names like Rama, Krishna, Easwara, and Mahadeva. They are all the names of one God. You should recognise the glory of this name. Sage Vasishtha said, "*Ramo Vighrahan dharma* (Rama is the personification of *dharma* (righteousness))." *Dharma* itself incarnated in the form of Rama.

You should follow *dharma*. Which *dharma* should you follow? Do not follow the *dharma* associated with your mind. Follow the principle of *dharma* that comes from your heart.

Sita became the consort of Rama, who was the personification of *dharma*. Wherefrom did Sita take birth? Sita was born out of the womb of the earth. When King Janaka was ploughing a field in the process of the performance of a *yajna*, he found a box in it. When the box was opened, a small baby was found in it. Considering this as the boon of God, he took the baby home and brought it up with great care and affection. This baby was given the name Sita. Since she was the daughter of the King of Videha, she was also called Vaidehi. This name had great significance, since it means one who transcended the illusion caused by body attachment.

Once, Sita was playing a game of ball with her companions in her house. There was a big box in Janaka's house, which contained a huge bow. As her playmates were playing with the ball, the ball went under the box. It was not possible for anyone to move this box. Sita went there and put it aside with her left hand. Seeing that act of Sita, King Janaka decided that very day that Sita's power should be made known to the world. Thereafter he organised a *yajna* and made a declaration: "Whoever strings the bow of Lord Siva, I will give my daughter Sita in marriage to him."

Kings of many countries came there. All of them thought it was a great good fortune to

marry Sita and to become the son-in-law of King Janaka. They came one after the other and tried to lift the bow, but all of them failed in their attempt.

In that assembly, Rama and Lakshmana were also present, accompanied by Sage Viswamitra. As per the direction of the sage, Rama went forward. Rama walked with great humility to the delight of one and all. His speech, His actions, and His demeanour was full of sweetness. He went near the bow, lifted it with His left hand and bent it. It broke with a thundering sound. Everybody expressed their happiness with a loud applause.

People thought it would be very difficult to lift the bow; but what is difficult for Rama? His mere *sankalpa* (will) could do any stupendous task. Viswamitra went to Rama and said, "Rama! Today You have demonstrated Your divine power. Certainly it is not a human power. It is indeed divine."

Everyone praised Rama and started garlanding Him. Then King Janaka brought his daughter Sita. As she came, Rama did not even look in the direction from where she was coming. Why? He did not want to look at her without the command of His parents.

King Janaka conveyed the good news to King Dasaratha at Ayodhya. He requested all of them to come after deciding the *muhurtham* (auspicious time) of the marriage. He said, "Your son has achieved success in the competition organised by me. Therefore, all of you are requested to come prepared to celebrate the marriage of Sita with Rama."

Welcome to all for Rama's wedding;
Together we shall witness the joyous scene.
Many have gathered already, decked up in all
their finery.
With necklaces the ladies are adorned of jewels
pure and gleaming.
Rama shall tie the knot today to beauteous Sita.
Oh what a fine match they make.
(Telugu Song)

The women of the kingdom came to participate
in the wedding and joyfully sang the song:
Come let us go and see the marriage of Rama
and Sita,
The sight shall confer great merit.
Blessed are those who see this scene.
Oh come one and all, watch with joy the sacred
marriage.
(Telugu Song)

In this manner when the women came from one direction, men came from another direction singing joyfully, "Come, let us go and see the marriage." Dasaratha, along with his queens, his sons Bharata and Satrughna, and his ministers arrived in Mithila with great enthusiasm. It appeared as though the entire Ayodhya had come to Mithila. King Janaka extended a royal welcome to them with great honour.

The name of the second daughter of King Janaka was Urmila. His younger brother had two daughters, namely Mandavi and Srutakeerthi. It was decided to give Urmila to Lakshmana, Mandavi to Bharata, and Srutakeerthi to Satrughna in marriage. Everyone was happy that all four pairs were going to be married at the same time.

When everyone was seated in their respective places, the marriage ceremony started. Sita, Urmila, Mandavi, and Srutakeerthi stood in front of Rama, Lakshmana, Bharata, and Satrughna respectively. First Sita put the garland around Rama's neck. Then, the other three brides garlanded their respective bridegrooms. All the people joyfully hailed the occasion.

It is not possible to describe the *leelas* (sports, plays) and glories of Rama.

After the marriage function, all left for Ayodhya. On the way they heard a deafening sound. When they looked around to find where the sound had come from, they were confronted with Parasurama in his fierce form. All of them were perturbed to think, "What is this great hurdle after the glorious celebration of the marriages?" Good and bad

always follow each other. After experiencing great joy in Mithila, they were confronted with a great difficulty on their way to Ayodhya. Dasaratha and others became fear-stricken. Parasurama came forward and asked, "Who broke the bow?"

"I did it," said Rama.

"If that is so, let us see if you can break my bow." Saying so, he gave his bow into the hands of Rama. Rama broke even that bow with his left hand. Seeing that, Parasurama offered his salutations to Lord Rama and went away. Experiencing the joy of victory, all of them returned to Ayodhya and participated in the festivities held in Ayodhya with great joy and enthusiasm. The people celebrated functions with great joy to propagate the power of Rama and the devotion of Sita to the world.

Manthara became jealous to see all those festivities. You can find people like Manthara everywhere. Manthara became very angry when King Dasaratha decided to crown Rama instead of the son of Kaikeyi; she started poisoning the mind of Kaikeyi by fabricating many false stories against Rama.

Hearing this evil talk of Manthara, the mind of Kaikeyi changed. Though a queen, she was influenced by the words of her servant and became responsible for the exile of Rama. Afterward, she repented, realising it was the conspiracy of Manthara. In reality, Kaikeyi loved Rama very much. It was Kaikeyi who taught many things to Rama. Rama also loved Kaikeyi more than his mother Kausalya.

Manthara pleaded with Kaikeyi, "Mother! I am your servant. From your very birth, I nursed you and brought you up. Kindly fulfil a desire of mine. King Dasartha has decided to crown Rama. But as per the promise given to you earlier, he should crown Bharata. Rama should be sent to exile for fourteen years."

Both Sita and Rama were ready for the coronation wearing yellow coloured silk clothes.

All were waiting in the royal court to extend welcome to them. Meanwhile, Rama went to mother Kausalya and said, "Oh mother! I am going to forest. Kindly permit Me."

Kausalya asked, "Why my dear one! Why do you want to go the forest now, since this is the time of Your coronation?"

Rama said, "Mother! It is the command of My father that I should stay in exile in the forest for fourteen years; I have to uphold the promise made by My father." He saluted His mother and went to meet Sumitra.

Sumitra was the second wife of Dasaratha. Prior to his marriage with Sumitra, Dasaratha sought the consent of Kausalya. Kausalya replied, "Our Kingdom needs an heir, doesn't it? Hence, you may marry a woman of your choice. I will also participate in the marriage." Dasaratha was very happy and pleasantly surprised. Such women are also there in the world who go by the wishes of their husbands!

Sumitra was one of great virtues. True to her name, *Su-mitra* (good friend), she was the friend of all. She went to Kausalya and spoke words of great encouragement. "Dear elder sister! Why should you worry? What do you think of Rama? He is Lord Narayana Himself. What does it matter to Him whether He is in Ayodhya, or in a forest? Wherever He is, He is always with us. For Rama, Ayodhya and *Aranya* (forest) are one and the same."

Kausalya was somewhat comforted to hear the words of Sumitra. Her mind also became peaceful.

Sumitra added, "Dear elder sister, two sons were born to me, while both you and Kaikeyi gave birth to one son each. Do you know why? The reason is that both my sons will have the opportunity to serve their elders brothers; Lakshmana will serve Rama; and Satrugna, Bharata. Therefore, pay attention to my resolve. Lakshmana will go to forest with Rama and will protect Rama as the eye-

lids protect the eyes. Therefore, do not have any fear.”

Before proceeding to the forest, Lakshmana went to meet his wife Urmila. So far she had not come to know that Rama, Lakshmana, and Sita were going to the forest. Sitting in her room, she was absorbed in painting the scene of the coronation of Rama and Sita. Lakshmana went there and called, “Urmila,” to draw her attention.

“Yes, Swami,” she said, getting up suddenly from her seat. As she got up, by mistake the paint got spilled on the painted picture. Distressed at this happening, she exclaimed, “Oh! A beautifully painted picture is spoiled.”

Lakshmana said, “Urmila! Here, you are worrying that the picture is spoiled. There, Kaikeyi has spoiled the coronation of Sri Rama, which could bring about immense good to others.” Lakshmana informed her that he was going to forest with Rama.

Frightened at the news of Rama going to the forest, she asked Lakshmana, “What do you mean by saying that Rama is going to the forest? A few moments from now He is going to be crowned. Is it not so?”

Lakshmana apprised her of all that had happened. Since she was endowed with a great spirit of sacrifice, she was not at all perturbed by the thought of separation from her husband. Overjoyed at the thought of her husband getting the opportunity to serve Rama and Sita, she said to Lakshmana, “Sanctify your time by serving Rama and Sita. Very few have such a great fortune. Go happily.” Saying this, she bade farewell to Lakshmana.

Cautioning her daughter about the dangers of the forest, Janaka asked Sita, “Sita! You are going to the forest with Rama. Many fierce animals roam about in the forest and frightening sounds are also heard there. Can you bear all this without getting frightened?”

Sita replied, “Where is the scope for any fear of animals when Rama, a lion in the human form, is there with me? Rama is Lord Narayana Himself. Therefore, I have nothing to fear.”

In this manner, Sita, Rama, and Lakshmana put at rest the fears of everyone and proceeded to the forest. In the forest, Lakshmana protected Rama and Sita with great care and engaged himself in their service.

After killing Ravana, when Rama returned to Ayodhya along with Sita, the people of Ayodhya welcomed them enthusiastically hailing their return with great festivity, “Rama has come. Mother Sita has come. Ayodhya is shining in the effulgence of their glory. This is a great day for Ayodhya.” There were many great celebrations on their return to Ayodhya, and the people were overjoyed to see Rama and Sita, whom they revered as Lord Narayana and Lakshmi.

Sita counseled Rama, “Transform this kingdom into a kingdom of joy where everybody can lead their life happily.”

Even today, people in every village, every house, and every hut of Bharat (India) worship Rama. It is a common practice among the people of Bharat to name their children Rama and Sita. There is no change in the name of Rama and Sita, even after the passage of thousands of years. The glory of these names is eternal and immutable. There have been wars in many countries, but not in Bharat. People may fight with each other due to their personal differences, but no war was fought in this country. Not only that, there will never be any war in Bharat. It is Rama Rajya. It is the land of peace. It is the land of love.

This land of Bharat has given birth to many noble women, like,
Savitri, who brought her dead husband back to life;
Chandramati, who extinguished wild fire with the power of truth;

Sita, who proved her chastity by coming out of blazing fire unscathed; and

Damayanti, who reduced an evil-minded hunter to ashes with the power of her chastity.

This land of piety and nobility attained plenty and prosperity and

Became the teacher of all nations of the world because of such women of chastity.

(Telugu Poem)

Such great women took birth in the land of Bharat. Therefore, every day in Bharat is a festival and an occasion for celebration. You know that when a man's wife dies, he immediately makes efforts to marry again. But the women of Bharat are not like that. Bharat is befittingly called the teacher of the world. In this sacred land, Lord Narayana incarnated and redeemed the life of the people by showing them His divine play and divine glory.

Every individual is the image of the *Atma*. The same truth was propounded by Krishna: *Mamaivamsho Jivaloke Jivabhuta Sanathana* (the eternal *Atma* in all beings is a part of My Being). All of you are the embodiments of the *Atma*. You may be having different names, but the *Atmarama* in all of you is the same.

Therefore, do not think Rama is somewhere else. Your heart itself is the temple of Rama. Therefore, constantly contemplate on Rama who is immanent in your heart. Rama is there with you, in you, around you not only in your waking state, but also in the dream and deep sleep state. He is eternally with you.

Rama is not limited to a particular form. He assumes innumerable forms. Though the forms are many, Divinity in them is one. Therefore, whomsoever you see, offer your salutations to them, considering them as the form of Rama.

Now, Swami is being extolled as Sai Rama and Sai Krishna because He embodies the same principles of *dharma* (righteousness), *prema* (love), and *santhi* (peace) that Lord Rama and Lord Krishna personified.

Rama is immanent in everyone; Easwara is present in all; Rama is within you. In fact, you yourself are Rama. Establish this truth in your heart firmly and spend your time profitably. Then your life will be filled with everlasting bliss. Constantly recite the name of Rama.

Aeons have passed, yet the name of Rama has not been forgotten. Rama is not separate from you. You are not separate from Rama. You may call a person by their name, but it is Rama who is present in them. You may call them Sai Rama, Sita Rama, or Ayodhya Rama or any other name, but do remember Rama forever.