

## Undertake Rama Chintana

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### Embodiments of Love!

The *Ramayana Saptaha* (the seven day chanting of the divine name Rama) has been held with great joy and devotion for the last seven days. You all participated in this great event. The *purohits* (priests) who conducted the *Saptaha*, with great devotion and sincerity, and the speakers from different parts who participated in it made the event a grand success. Setty Garu, who arranged this function, made several conveniences for the priests and devotees and made every one happy.

Constant contemplation on *Ramayana* and singing of the glory of the divine name "Rama" confers bliss, peace, and prosperity on one and all. There are two ways of contemplating on the divine name and singing its glory: individual *sadhana* (spiritual exercise) and collective *sadhana*. Of the two, collective *sadhana* is better. It was Guru Nanak who initiated the practice of group singing of the glory of the divine name.

In fact, individual chanting of the divine name is not enough. If thousands of people join together and sing the glory of the divine name in one voice, the prayers of at least one or two individuals will certainly move Divinity. Hence, it is better to follow the collective method. Wherever you are, sing the glory of the divine name of Rama in a group. Contemplation on *Ramanama* (repetition of the name Rama) confers peace and happiness. It is a Universal *sadhana*.

The name Rama is not limited to a particular form. It dwells in every individual as *Atma Rama*. The *Atma*, which dwells in every individual, is given the name Rama. Hence, right from a child to a grown up individual, everyone has to undertake the exercise individual of constant contemplation of *Ramanama*. We often see even blind people contemplating on *Ramanama*, saying "Rama Rama".

Only the divine name can confer peace and happiness. Nothing else, even wealth and property, can bring happiness and peace. Constant contemplation on the divine name can remove all worries.

To be born is a worry.  
To live on this earth is a worry.  
The world is a source of worry.  
Death too is a worry.  
All actions and difficulties cause worry.  
Devotion to Srirama is the panacea for all worries.  
(Telugu poem)

Hence, undertake *Ramachintana* (contemplation on the divine name of Rama) whenever you find yourself surrounded by worries. The *Ramanama* has been in the hearts of people since aeons.

In the *Tretha Yuga*, King Dasaratha of Ayodhya longed for sons to continue the Ikshwaku dynasty. He performed a *yaga* by name “Puthra Kameshtiyaga”, praying that he be blessed with a son. King Dasaratha had three wives: Kausalya, Sumithra, and Kaikeyi. He had one daughter named Santha through Kausalya earlier, whom he gave in adoption to his friend. She married Sage Rishyasringa.

The Puthra Kameshti yagawas conducted under the guidance of that couple. At the conclusion of the *yaga*, Agni Deva, the fire god, emerged from the sacred *homakunda* with a vessel containing *payasam* (sacred pudding). He gave it to Dasaratha to be distributed equally among his three wives. Kausalya and Kaikeyi received their share of the sacred pudding happily and took it to their *puja* (worship) rooms. Both were very happy that their son to be born would be the heir apparent to the throne of Ayodhya. Their claims appeared to be genuine since Kausalya was the eldest queen and Kaikeyi's father, at the time of her marriage to King Dasaratha, had extracted a promise that the son to be born to her would be made the King of Ayodhya. Dasaratha cannot go back on his word, as per the tradition of Ikshwaku family.

However, Sumithra had no such desire. She carried her bowl of pudding to the terrace and placed it on the parapet wall, while drying her hair in the Sun. She was in a pensive mood, thinking that it of no use it was to eat the pudding because her son to be born would have no claim to the throne, like Kausalya's and Kaikeyi's. While she was thus contemplating on the future, an eagle swooped down and carried away the bowl containing the sacred pudding.

She was shocked and disturbed, fearing the reprimand she would have to face from her husband for being careless. She at once rushed downstairs and informed Kausalya and Kaikeyi about what had happened. They hugged Sumithra and consoled her, saying, “Sister why are you so much disturbed? We three are one, and we will share our portion of the pudding with you.”

So saying, they brought their bowls and poured some quantity of pudding from each of their bowls into another bowl and offered it to Sumithra. Unlike present times, there used to be perfect rapport between women in those days. Thus, all three queens got their bowls containing the sacred pudding ready and took them to Sage Vasishta and obtained his blessings. Thereafter, they offered their *pranams* to King Dasaratha and happily partook the sacred pudding. All three queens became pregnant.

In due course, Kausalya, the eldest queen, delivered a beautiful baby boy, who was named Rama. The Universal *Atma* embodied itself in the womb of Kausalya. He was named Rama, meaning he who makes one and all happy. Kaikeyi also gave birth to a son, who was named Bharatha. Sumithra, however, gave birth to two sons, named Lakshmana and Satrughna. Lakshmana was born out of the share of pudding given by Kausalya and Satrughna from that given by Kaikeyi. Hence, Lakshmana always followed Rama, while Satrughna followed Bharatha.

Sumithra's two sons, Lakshmana and Satrughna, were crying all the time, day and night without even taking food. Sumithra could not bear the suffering of the infants. She went to sage Vasishta and explained her predicament to him.

Sage Vasishta closed his eyes and meditated for some time. His yogic vision enabled him to realise the truth. He explained to Sumithra, “Since you partook of the sacred pudding given by Kausalya, you gave birth to Lakshmana, who is an *amsa* (part) of Rama. Similarly, Satrughna is born out of the share of pudding given to you by Kaikeyi. So, he is a part of Bharatha. Put Lakshmana by Rama's side and Satrughna by Bharatha's side. Then, they will rest peacefully.”

As soon as Sumithra acted accordingly, the babies became peaceful. As years passed, the four brothers grew up happily together.

Back to the story of the eagle lifting up the bowl containing the sacred *payasam* kept by Sumithra on the parapet wall while drying her hair in the Sun. The eagle carried away the bowl and dropped it on the ground at a place where Anjanadevi was meditating in a mountainous region. She picked up the bowl and happily partook of the sacred pudding contained therein. As a result, she gave birth to the great hero of the *Ramayana*, namely, Hanuman.

While Rama and Lakshmana were moving in the Rishyamuka mountain range during their search for Sita, Hanuman approached them on the orders of Sugriva, the *Vanara* (Monkey) king. After asking the purpose of their search, Hanuman took them to Sugriva and introduced them to him. He persuaded Rama to seek Sugriva's friendship and help in their search for Sita. The vow of everlasting friendship was solemnised in the presence of a ritual fire.

Sugriva then brought one bundle of jewels wrapped in a cloth, which was thrown by Sita from Ravana's *Pushpaka Vimana*, which carried her to Lanka. Sugriva placed the bundle before Rama in order that the jewels might be identified as belonging to Sita. Rama called Lakshmana to his side and directed him to identify the jewels. Lakshmana, on seeing the jewels, expressed his inability saying, "Oh Rama, I seek your pardon; I do not know of any jewels that were worn by mother Sita. However, I can identify her anklets, since I was prostrating to her feet daily to pay my obeisance to her."

During Rama and Sita's stay in a hermitage built by Lakshmana in the Panchavati region, one day, at the behest of Ravana, the demon Maricha assumed the form of a golden deer and began moving about in the vicinity of the ashram. Sita was fascinated by the charming golden deer and persuaded Rama to catch it and bring it to the ashram so that she could play with it. Rama decided to oblige her request as per the divine plan. However, he instructed Lakshmana to stay behind and guard the ashram and Sita from the wily demons during his absence.

As Rama pursued the golden deer, it went deep into the forest. Finally, Rama lifted his bow and released a fatal arrow on the deer. Maricha, in the guise of the golden deer, at last fell dead in his real form. However, before he breathed his last, he cried in agony, in a feigned voice of Rama, "Ha! Sita! Ha! Lakshmana!"

The cry fell on the ears of Sita and Lakshmana. Sita, on hearing the cry, implored Lakshmana to go look for Rama immediately. Lakshmana counseled Sita that no danger could ever befall Rama and that this was all the plan of the wily demons. Sita was not convinced. She even used harsh words that hurt Lakshmana, while compelling him to go to Rama's rescue. Of course, this too was as per the divine plan that would unfold itself in the future.

Left with no other option, Lakshmana agreed to go look for Rama. However, before he left the ashram, he drew a line around the hermitage and asked Sita not to step out of that line under any circumstances until Rama and himself returned to the ashram.

As soon as Lakshmana left the hermitage in search of Rama, Ravana approached the ashram in the guise of a *rishi* (sage). He stood before the ashram and asked for food, saying, "*Bhavathi bhiksham dehi* (Oh Mother, give me food)!"

Sita heard this and decided to provide him food. She brought the food from inside the ashram and tried to give the same to Ravana standing behind the line drawn by Lakshmana. But Ravana insisted that Sita come closer, cross the line drawn by Lakshmana, and offer the food to him. He pretended as though he could not bear the pangs of hunger anymore.

Finally Sita obliged and came out of the line drawn by Lakshmana to give alms to Ravana. Just at that moment, Ravana assumed his real form and abducted her in his chariot. Ravana took Sita to Lanka and kept her in confinement under a tree in the Asokavana (a grove of asoka trees).

Sita lamented her indiscreet act of becoming crazy about a golden deer and the consequences that followed. She lamented, “Oh! Why did that sinful animal (golden deer) come to the vicinity of our hermitage? Why did I develop a fascination for that golden deer? Why did I request Rama to catch that deer and bring it to me? Of what use is all this repentance at this stage?” She found herself in captivity in Lanka.

Ravana kept three ladies to guard Sita during her incarceration in the Asokavana. One was Sarama, the wife of Vibhishana, younger brother of Ravana. The other two ladies were Ajata and Trijata, who were none other than daughters of Sarama. They were very considerate toward Sita, keeping up her sagging morale all the while by their comforting words. Sita wondered whether such good people also existed in Lanka. In fact, it was due to their consoling words and protection that Sita could bear her ordeal courageously.

Though Sita was imprisoned in Lanka, Ravana did not dare to touch her. He knew that he would be reduced to ashes if he touched her without her consent. He was all the while pleading with her to accept him. When Ravana stooped to the level of denigrating Rama and threatened her, she, without even looking at his face, plucked a blade of grass and threw it before him saying, “You are a mean fellow. You are not worth even this blade of grass. How dare you denigrate Rama in front of me, you vile and vicious wretch!”

Sita had another name, Vaidehi, meaning one who has no body attachment. King Janaka was her foster father. He lovingly brought her up and gave her in marriage to Rama. There are several inner and subtle meanings in the story of *Ramayana*. In fact, Sita was not the sister of Rama, as has been portrayed in some texts. If she were to be the sister of Rama, how could King Janaka offer her as bride to Rama? Unfortunately, people do not realise these inner meanings.

Hanuman was a great hero in the story of *Ramayana*. He led an army of *vanaras* (monkeys) in his holy mission of searching for the whereabouts of Sita, who was kept in captivity in Lanka by Ravana. He was a very intelligent and faithful servant of Rama. He was a person of noble qualities and great physical strength. In his noble qualities and might, he was unparalleled. In fact, a whole chapter, namely Sundara Kanda, was devoted to describe his qualities of head and heart, in the *Ramayana*.

While he was embarking on his holy mission of finding out Sita in city of Lanka, Hanuman was given certain identification clues about Sita. He was told that Sita was a woman of noble qualities and divine beauty and that she would not mix with the *Rakshasa* (Demon) ladies. He searched for Sita in every nook and corner of Lanka, including the inner chambers of the palace where Ravana's queens and the ladies attending them stayed. During his search, he came across ladies scantily dressed and fallen on their beds, intoxicated by drink and dance. But he was totally unmoved by these obscene forms, keeping always in his mind the characteristics and excellence of Sita that Rama had described to him earlier. His supreme stability of mind in such an environment befitted his true *brahmachari* (celibate) status. One cannot find parallels to Lord Rama and His noble servant Hanuman in this world. They are both unique.

The boys just now sang a beautiful *bhajan*, “*Rama Lakshmana Janaki, Jai bolo Hanuman ki*”. During their singing of this *bhajan*, Hanuman's name was mentioned after a little pause, indicating the importance of Hanuman. Only when people like Hanuman are worshipped and

their qualities emulated can one cultivate good thoughts, good habits, good qualities, and good behaviour.

It is said, “The end of education is character.” Only in Rama and Hanuman is such noble character to be found. Hence, constantly contemplate on Rama and Hanuman and their noble qualities.

The different names like Rama, Krishna, Hanuman, Shiva, Vishnu, etc. represent the one Divinity that is all-pervading. God is one; the names and forms differ.

Gold is one; ornaments differ.  
Religions are many; Divinity is one,  
The cows are many in colours; but milk is the same.  
(Telugu poem)

Similarly, God is one, although He is referred to by different names and forms. Different people, when asked to give their names, reply, “I am Ramaiah,” “I am Lakshmaiah,” “I am Govindappa,” etc. But, the real answer should be, “*Aham Brahmasami* (I am Brahma).” There can be no other names. All are embodiments of the divine Self. The atma has no gunas (qualities). It is formless and attributeless.

*Nityanandam, Parama Sukhadam, Kevalam Jnanamurtim, Dwandwateetam, Gagana Sadrisham, Tattwamasyadi Lakshyam, Ekam, Nityam, Vimalam, Achalam, Sarvadhee Sakshibhutam, Bhavateetam, Trigunarahitam ...*

The *Atma* is the embodiment of eternal bliss, wisdom absolute, beyond the pair of opposites, expansive and pervasive like the sky, the goal indicated by the aphorism *Tattwamasi*, one without a second, eternal, pure, unchanging, witness of all functions of the intellect, beyond all mental conditions and the three attributes of *sathwa*, *rajas*, and *tamas*.

Sanskrit verse

Strictly speaking, God has no name or form, in spite of the fact it is said, “*Daivam Manusharupena* (God is in human form).” He has no birth and no qualities. He is formless and attributeless.

When someone enquires, “Who are you?” you should reply, “I am God.”

Names like Ramaiah, Lakshmaiah, etc., are only those given by your parents after your birth. In fact, you have no specific name. All are embodiments of the divine Self. Whether you act the role of Ramaiah or Krishnaiah, you are essentially the same divine Self. Only the roles differ.

God is immanent in every human being; nay, every living being is the *Atmaswarupa* (embodiment of Atma). “*Ekatma sarvabhuthantharatma*.” The one God is immanent in all human beings and all living beings. The names and forms may appear to be different. You must develop firm faith in the oneness of Divinity.

Whomever you come across, offer your *pranams* to that person. Pay your obeisance even to a beggar. He may be a “beggar” as a physical entity, but he is “bigger” as the embodiment of the divine Self.

Do not develop hatred toward any individual. Do not consider anyone as your enemy. In fact, they are all reflections of your own divine self. Everyone repeats “I”, “I”.

Everyone claims, “this is my body, my mind, my intellect, and my *chittha*.” Then, “Who am I?” That “I” is Divinity, in essence. The same “I” is referred to by several names. The symbol of Christianity, the cross, signifies cutting off of the individual ego (*ahamkara*). We

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say, “I came here; I am going; I am coming,” etc. What is this “I”? It represents the one divine Self. You have to develop that *Ekatmabhava* (the feeling of one divine *Atma* permeating the entire Universe). That is real devotion. Do not differentiate between “I” and “you”. Those who desire to attain self realisation must shed this difference. They must get rid of the feeling of “I” and “mine”. We are all one. “All are one, be alike to every one.” This is the essence of all philosophy. Be happy.