

3 April 2009. Sri Rama Navami

**Develop Love And Consider
All As Your Brothers And Sisters**

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Prasanthi Nilayam
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Sweeter than sugar, tastier than curd,
sweeter indeed than honey is the Name of Rama.
Constant repetition of this sweet name gives one
the taste of divine nectar itself.
Therefore, contemplate on the name of Rama incessantly!
(Telugu poem)

Bharat is the motherland of many noble souls who earned great name and fame in all
the continents of the world.
This is the land of valorous people who vanquished foreign rulers and attained inde-
pendence.
This is the land that excelled in music, literature, and other fine arts.
Having been born in this great land of Bharat, oh boys and girls, it is your sacred duty
to protect its rich cultural heritage.
(Telugu poem)

The *Bharatiyas* (Indians) today do not know their greatness, just as the elephant does not know its own strength. It obeys the command of the *mahout* and sits when he asks it to sit and stands when it is asked to do so. In the same manner, the *Bharatiyas* are imitating the western culture under the influence of western education.

The *Bharatiyas* are endowed with great potentialities, and their hearts are full of devotion. There is none among them who does not chant the divine name from their very birth. They name their children after the various names of God, thereby remembering God all the time. There is no village in Bharat where there is no temple of Rama. Villagers of all small hamlets, even, set up a shrine for Rama, Lakshmana, and Sita in a little hutment or some rustic abode for regular worship.

Right from the beginning, the *Bharatiyas* gave more importance to spirituality than to worldly and material pursuits. The main factor that is responsible for the peace and progress of Bharat is the devotion of the *Bharatiyas* for God. At present, many countries of the world are in the grip of great problems and difficulties. But Bharat is by far free from such difficulties. The people of Bharat may have some financial problems, but they are happily leading their lives totally surrendering to the will of God.

The *Bharatiyas* place their trust in the Self as the basis of their life rather than material possessions, property, and wealth. In fact, their entire life is based on this trust, and they have achieved progress in spite of many difficulties and deprivations. Having based their life on the trust in the Self, how can the *Bharatiyas* give any importance to worldly and materialistic pursuits? Even in their day-to-day conversation, they refer to their Self, saying, "Only my *Atmarama* knows this."

Do not limit Rama or Krishna to a particular name or form. These names were given to them after their birth. They were not born with these names.

The *Bharatiyas* have realised the truth that God is the resident of man's heart. That is why they are able to withstand all difficulties and sufferings and lead their lives happily. *Sukhadukhe samekruthwa labhalabhau jayajayau* (one should remain equal-minded in happiness and sorrow, gain and loss, victory and defeat), says the *Gita*. Pleasure and pain are part of human life. Whenever *Bharatiyas* have to encounter sorrows and difficulties, they consider them as the harbingers of happiness. They have attained exalted positions due to such noble feelings.

Their faith in God is unshakeable even in the face of mishaps such as bomb blasts, floods, and plane crashes. Those who base their life with faith in God will never encounter sorrows, suffering, and difficulties. Their difficulties will come and go like passing clouds.

One who is born in this world is sure to die one day or the other. Nothing is permanent in this world. Only one thing is permanent and that is the *Atma* or the Self. People aspire for liberation, heaven, and Vaikuntha, but even they are not permanent. The only thing that is permanent is the *Atma*, and that is the only truth. You may see so many forms in this world, but none of them is permanent except the *Atma*.

Let us now dwell upon the *Ramayana*. Dasaratha had three wives: Kausalya, Sumitra, and Kaikeyi. Kausalya first gave birth to a female child, who was named Santha. Dasaratha gave her to one of his friends, who adopted her as his daughter. She was married to Sage Rishyasringa, who conducted the *Putrakameshti Yajna* of Dasaratha. When oblations were offered in the sacrificial fire with the chanting of related *mantras* for the *Yajna*, an effulgent being came out of the fire and handed over a vessel containing *payasam* (sweet pudding) to Dasaratha with the instruction to distribute it equally among his queens.

Accordingly, Dasaratha distributed the *payasam* to Kausalya, Sumitra, and Kaikeyi. Kausalya and Kaikeyi took their share of the pudding to their respective *puja* rooms. Each of them was happy, thinking that her son would be the future king of Ayodhya.

But Sumitra had no such claims. She was a paragon of virtues. Her name, '*Su-mitra*', itself signifies that she was a good friend to one and all. She carried her bowl of pudding to the terrace and placed it on the parapet wall while drying her hair in the sun. Suddenly, an eagle swooped down and carried away the bowl. Sumitra rushed down and informed Kausalya and Kaikeyi about what had happened. Kausalya and Kaikeyi came to her rescue and shared their pudding with her. Kausalya gave half of her share to Sumitra. Kaikeyi also did the same.

In due course, Kausalya gave birth to Rama, Kaikeyi to Bharata, and Sumitra to Lakshmana and Satrughna. Kausalya and Kaikeyi had one son each, whereas Sumitra had two sons. The sons of Kausalya and Kaikeyi were happily playing in their cradles while Sumitra's sons were crying all the time and were not taking milk. Sumitra was at a loss to know the reason for their crying. Ultimately, she went to Sage Vasishtha and told him about her predicament.

Sage Vasishtha closed his eyes in meditation. His yogic vision enabled him to know the truth. He said to Sumitra, "As 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 Bharata. Put Lakshmana by the side of Rama and Satrughna by the side of Bharata. Then they will rest peacefully."

Sumitra did as instructed by Vasishtha. Both Lakshmana and Satrughna stopped crying and started playing blissfully in their cradles. This was the basis of the intimate relationship between Rama and Lakshmana, Bharata and Satrughna. Both sons of Sumitra, namely, Lakshmana and

Satrugna, were always in the company of Rama and Bharata. In this manner, Dasaratha's four sons grew up in an environment of love and happiness. Sumitra was very happy because she thought her son Lakshmana would serve Rama and Satrugna would serve Bharata when they grew up.

Where was Rama born? Many people have many doubts about the place of His birth. He was born in Ayodhya. Was the city of Ayodhya built by some ordinary mortal? No, no. It was built by Viswakarma (divine architect) himself. He built it in such a way that no enemy could enter it.

When Rama won the hand of Sita by stringing the bow of Siva in the court of Janaka, His marriage with Sita was performed in Mithila amidst great rejoicings. The people of Mithila were beside themselves with joy and sang merry songs.

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 beautiful Sita, oh what a fine match they make.
Father Dasaratha has made ready bounteous feasts.
All learned sages are assembled with Vasishtha presiding.
Oh, what a multitude has assembled to rejoice, hearts with joy overflowing.
Wedding of the holy pair Rama and Sita, such a sight is indeed rare.
The sight shall confer great merit.
Rama looks the cool full moon, and Sita is a matching double.
The compassionate Rama, who loves all, will confer his grace on us all.
Come quickly to see the holy wedding of Rama and Sita.

(Telugu song)

It seemed as if the entire population of Ayodhya had come to Mithila to witness the marriage of Sita and Rama. Dasaratha, all his ministers, and all family members prominently participated in the marriage. 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, who looked very fierce. All of them were perturbed and began to think, "What is this great impediment 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 difficult situation on their way to Ayodhya. Dasaratha and others became fear-stricken.

Parasurama came forward and asked, "Who broke the Siva bow?"

"It is I who has done it," said Rama.

"If that is so, let us see if you can bend my bow." Saying so, Parasurama gave his bow in the hands of Rama. Rama strung and armed that bow with an arrow with His left hand. Seeing that, Parasurama offered his salutations to Rama and went his way.

Experiencing the joy of victory, all of them reached Ayodhya and participated with great joy and enthusiasm in the festivities held there. The people of Ayodhya held joyous celebrations.

Like his mother, Sumitra, Lakshmana's wife Urmila was also a woman of great virtues. When Lakshmana went to inform her that he was accompanying Rama to the forest for fourteen years, she said, "It is your greatest good fortune. Consider Sita and Rama as your mother and father and serve them. In Ayodhya you have Kausalya, Sumitra, and Kaikeyi, but in the forest you have only one mother, and that is Sita. Forget me and serve Sita and Rama with total dedication."

Lakshmana was happy to hear these words of Urmila and said to himself, “What a virtuous wife I have!”

After the departure of Rama, Lakshmana, and Sita to the forest and the death of Dasaratha, Bharata came back to Ayodhya. When he was offered the crown of Ayodhya, he refused to accept it, saying that it was the right of only the eldest son and hence he would go to the forest and pray to Rama to come back and rule Ayodhya.

When he went to the forest to appeal to Rama, Rama told him, “We have to follow the command of our father. Without that, our life itself is a zero.” Rama promised Bharata that he would surely return to Ayodhya after the period of 14 years of his exile. Bharata requested Rama to give His sandals, which he would place on the throne and worship them. On his return to Ayodhya, Bharata did not enter the palace. He lived in a small hut and led the life of a renunciant, just as Rama was living in the forest.

During the sojourn of Rama, Lakshmana, and Sita at Panchavati, Ravana came in the guise of a mendicant and abducted Sita. Rama was put to great difficulties, but He faced all difficulties smilingly.

Hanuman went in search of Sita to Lanka. He could cross the ocean with the power of the divine name of Rama. In fact, any stupendous task can be achieved by contemplating on the name of Rama. It was with the power of Rama’s name that the monkeys made the bridge over the ocean so that Rama and His army could reach Lanka.

Rama had to fight with Ravana, the king of demons. In the course of battle, Lakshmana was hit by a missile and became unconscious. Rama was very much distressed, and he lamented, “I may get a wife like Sita, but I cannot get a brother like Lakshmana.” Then Hanuman brought Sushena, the medical expert of Lanka, who said, “There is a herb called Sanjivini on a mountain in the Himalayan region. If you bring that herb, Lakshmana can be revived.”

Hanuman was sent to bring the Sanjivini herb to revive Lakshmana. Hanuman did not know how to recognise that particular herb. Therefore, he lifted the whole mountain on which the herb existed and placed it before Rama. With the help of the herb, Lakshmana was revived.

Rama hugged him and said, “Lakshmana, My life is meaningless without you. You have always been with Me and protected Me in many ways. There is nothing more dear to Me than you in this world. In fact, you are verily My life.”

Rama ultimately killed Ravana and rescued Sita from his prison.

Meanwhile the period of fourteen years of exile of Rama was over. As the end of fourteen years drew near and Bharata could not see any signs of Rama’s return to Ayodhya, he got ready to give up his life by immolating himself on a pyre. As Rama had anticipated the situation, he sent Hanuman in advance to inform Bharata that He was on His way back to Ayodhya. Bharata was overjoyed on hearing this good news. All the people of Ayodhya as also Bharata and the entire family were eagerly awaiting the arrival of Rama in Ayodhya.

When Rama, Lakshmana, and Sita alighted from the *Pushpaka Vimana*, Bharata and all the people of Ayodhya offered them a hearty welcome. Soon after the arrival of Rama in Ayodhya, arrangements for His coronation were made. The people of Ayodhya were full of enthusiasm at the prospect of Rama becoming their king.

The students just now sang this song,

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*Kausalyatmaja Rama Charan, Vaidehi Priya Rama Charan,
Hanumatsevita Rama Charan, Bharatarchita Sri Rama Charan,
Ahalyoddharaka Rama Charan, Lakshmana Sevita Rama Charan,
Prasanthi Niketana Rama Charan*

Always worship the Lotus Feet of Rama, son of Kausalya, which are dear to Sita, worshipped by Bharata, and, in the abode of Prasanthi, served by Lakshmana and Hanuman and that redeemed Ahalya. (*loud applause*)

Lakshmana was overjoyed on hearing Rama's kind words. Rama had great love for Lakshmana, more than anybody else. Similarly, Lakshmana loved Rama most dearly. He never disobeyed Rama's command. In fact, all the brothers — Rama, Lakshmana, Bharata, and Satrugna — had great love for each other. They ruled over Ayodhya with great unity. It was not Rama alone who administered the entire kingdom; all his brothers helped Him in conducting the affairs of the kingdom.

The *Ramayana* teaches us many lessons in morality and ethics. In fact, all the characters of this great epic set great ideals for humanity to follow. Sweeter than sugar, tastier than curd, sweeter indeed than honey is the Name of Rama. Is there anything greater than *Ramanama*? We should understand this truth and contemplate on His name day in and day out.

Great epics like the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* teach us many moral and ethical values. Truth is the highest among these values. *Sathyannasti paro dharma* (There is no *dharma* greater than adherence to truth). *Dharma* is born out of *sathya*, from *dharma* emerges peace, and from peace emerges love. Where there is love, there can be no hatred. One who has love will adhere to nonviolence.

Sathya, dharma, santhi, prema, and ahimsa are the five cardinal human values. One who practises these human values is a human being in the true sense of the term. One who lacks even one of these cannot be called a perfect human being. Therefore, develop all these five values.

Unfortunately, when we look at the present scenario, we do not see truth anywhere, and we don't even hear the word '*dharma*'. Therefore, man today is beset with unrest. People want peace but get only pieces! Due to the lack of peace, love has become non-existent in man.

Therefore, we should develop peace. Then only will love develop in us. When love takes root in us, we will have no enemies. Then all will become our friends. Hence, man should develop love and consider all as his brothers and sisters. This is the main essence of the *Ramayana*.

It is only to demonstrate this principle of love that I have done this housing project in Orissa. We should love and help each other. The calamity that has befallen them can happen to anyone. When you make them happy, you will also be happy. Therefore, we should all be united.

Let us all move together, let us all grow together,
Let us all stay united and grow in intelligence together,
Let us live together with friendship and harmony.

(Telugu song)

Only when we grow in intelligence together can there be unity. We should move and work with unity. No one should hate anybody. If any thought of hatred comes to you for a moment, brush it aside and develop the feeling of unity from the very next moment. It is only love that unites all.

(Bhagavan concluded His Discourse with the *bhajan*, "*Prema mudita manase kaho Rama Rama Ram ...*".)