

9. Contemplate On The Name Rama

Embodiments of Love!

The seven day chanting of the divine name *Rama* (*Ramayana Saptaha*) has been conducted with great joy and devotion during the last seven days. You have all participated in this great event. The priests who conducted the event 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, had made several conveniences for the priests and devotees and made every one happy.

Group singing of Rama's name is more effective

Constant contemplation on Rama's name and singing of the glory of that divine name confers bliss, peace, and prosperity on one and all. There are two ways of contemplating on the divine name and singing its glory: individual practice and collective practice. Of the two, collective practice 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 Rama's name confers peace and happiness. It is a universal spiritual practice.

The name 'Rama' is not limited to a particular form. It dwells in every individual as '*Atma Rama*'. The *Atma* that dwells in every individual is given the name 'Rama'. Hence, right from a child to a grown up individual, everyone has to undertake the spiritual practice of constant contemplation of Rama's name (*Ramanama*). We often see even blind people contemplating on *Ramanama*, saying 'Rama Rama'. Only the divine name can confer peace and happiness. Nothing else, not 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 also is a worry.

All actions and difficulties cause worry.

Devotion to Sri Rama is the panacea for all worries.

(Telugu poem)

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

The story of Rama's birth

In the *Thretha Yuga* (era), King Dasaratha of Ayodhya longed for sons to continue the Ikshvaku dynasty. He performed a sacrifice called '*Putrakameshti-yaga*', praying that he be blessed with a son. King Dasaratha had three wives: Kausalya, Sumitra, and Kaikeyi. He had one daughter named Santha through Kausalya earlier, whom

he gave in adoption to his friend. She married Sage Rishyasringa. The sacrifice was conducted under the guidance of that couple.

At the conclusion of the sacrifice, Agni Deva, the fire god, emerged from the sacred fire (*homakunda*) with a vessel containing sacred pudding (*payasam*). 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 worship rooms. Both were very happy that their son to be born would be the heir apparent to the throne of Ayodhya. The claims of both appeared to be genuine — Kausalya’s by virtue of her being the eldest queen and Kaikeyi’s because of a promise her father had extracted at the time of her marriage to King Dasaratha 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 Ikshvaku family.

However, Sumitra 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 was of no use to partake of the pudding because her son to be born would have no claim to the throne, like Kausalya’s or Kaikeyi’s. While she was 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 Sumitra 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 Sumitra. Unlike present times, there used to be perfect rapport between the co-wives in those days.

Thus, all three queens got their bowls containing the sacred pudding ready and took them to Sage Vasishtha and obtained his blessings. Thereafter, they offered their respects (*pranams*) to King Dasaratha and happily partook of 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. However, Sumitra gave birth to two sons, who were 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. This is how the story unfolded:

Sumitra’s two sons, Lakshmana and Satrughna, were crying all the time, day and night, without even taking food. Sumitra could not bear the suffering of the infants. She went to sage Vasishtha and explained her predicament. Sage Vasishtha closed his eyes and meditated for some time. His yogic vision enabled him to realise the truth. He explained to Sumitra: “Since you partook of the sacred pudding given by Kausalya, you gave birth to Lakshmana who is a 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 Sumitra acted accordingly, the babies became peaceful. As years passed, the four brothers grew up happily together.

Back to the story of the eagle taking away the bowl containing the sacred pudding kept by Sumitra on the parapet wall while drying her hair in the sun. The eagle dropped the bowl on the ground in a mountainous region where Anjanadevi was meditating. She picked up the bowl and happily ate the sacred pudding. 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 about 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 a bundle of jewels wrapped in a cloth that had been thrown by Sita from Ravana's aerial chariot (*pushpaka vimana*), which had carried her to Lanka. Sugriva placed the bundle before Rama in order to identify and confirm that they belonged 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 prostrated at her feet daily to pay my obeisance to her".

Undue desires bring untold miseries

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

As Rama went in pursuit of 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 in search of 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 in search of Rama. However, before he left the hermitage, he drew a line around it and asked Sita not to step out of that line under any circumstances till he and Rama returned.

As soon as Lakshmana left the hermitage in search of Rama, Ravana approached in the guise of a sage. He stood before the hermitage and asked for food saying "Oh Mother, give me food." Sita heard him and decided to provide him food. She brought the food from inside the hermitage and tried to give it to Ravana standing behind the line drawn by Lakshmana. But Ravana insisted that Sita should come closer, across the line drawn by Lakshmana, and offer him the food. He pretended as though he could not bear the pangs of hunger any more. Finally, Sita obliged and crossed 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 golden deer come near our hermitage? Why did I develop a fascination for that golden deer? Why did I ask Rama to catch it 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, the younger brother of Ravana. The other two ladies, Ajata and Trijata, who were daughters of Sarama. They were very considerate toward Sita, keeping up her sagging morale all the while by their comforting words. Sita wondered that 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.

The nobility of Hanuman

Hanuman was a great hero in the story of *Ramayana*. He led an army of monkeys (*vanaras*) in his holy mission of searching for 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, one whole chapter of the *Ramayana*, namely, *Sundara Kaanda*, was devoted to describing his qualities of head and heart.

While he was embarking on his holy mission of finding Sita in the city of Lanka, he 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 demon (*rakshasa*) 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 on 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 celibate (*brahmachari*) status. One cannot find parallels to Lord Rama and His noble servant Hanuman in this world. They are both unique.

The boys just sang a beautiful *bhajan*, “*Rama Lakshmana Janaki, Jai bolo Hanuman ki*”. During their singing, 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.” It is only in Rama and Hanuman that such noble character is to be found. Hence, constantly contemplate on Rama and Hanuman and their noble qualities. The different names like Rama, Krishna, Hanuman, Siva, 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 colour; but milk is the same.
(Telugu poem)

You are Brahman

Similarly, God is one, though 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 'I am Brahman (*Aham Brahmasami*).’ There can be no other names. All are embodiments of the divine Self. The *Atma* has no qualities (*gunas*). It is formless and attributeless.

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 “You are That (*Thath twam asi*)”,
One without a second,
Eternal,
Pure,
Unchanging,
Witness of all functions of the intellect,
Beyond all mental conditions and the three attributes of purity, passion, and inertia
(*sathwa, rajas, and thamas*).

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

(Sanskrit verse)

Strictly speaking, God has no name or form, in spite of the fact it is said “God is in human form (*Daivam manusharupena*).” He has no birth and no qualities. He is formless and attributeless. When someone asks “who are you?”, 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. He is the embodiment of *Atma* (*Atma-swarupa*). The one God is immanent in all human beings and all living beings, although names and forms may appear to be different. You must develop firm faith in the oneness of Divinity. Whomever you come across, offer your respects (*pranams*) to them. 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 subconscious mind.” 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 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 feeling of one divine *Atma* permeating the entire universe (*Ekatmabhava*). 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 everyone.” This is the essence of all philosophy. Be happy.

Srimad Ramayana Sudha Pravachano Saptaham, Prasanthi Nilayam. 2008-06-08

We owe a debt of gratitude to the Divine, which has not only endowed us with this precious human body but also sustains it. We shall be able to enjoy these gifts of the Divine only if we discharge this debt to the Divine. Do this by rendering service to other bodies saturated with the same Divine, by doing righteous deeds, and by consecrating all actions in the service of society.

Sri Sathya Sai Baba

Now, there are many social workers ... who visit hospitals and do service to the patients there. Most of the work they do is mechanical, like fanning the patients, writing letters for them, and singing *bhajans*, without paying heed to the actual requirements of the patients. Many do this work because it is the current mode of social service. But it must be work done with the full cooperation of the mind, gladly, intelligently, reverentially. The patient should not feel disgusted at the fussiness of the social worker but should look forward to the arrival of the person, of someone who is very near and dear. If you do not like that type of work, you need not engage in it. Do not burden your mind by the unpleasantness of the task. Work done mechanically is like the flame of an oil-less wick; the oil is mental enthusiasm; pour it, and the lamp will burn clear and long.

Sri Sathya Sai Baba