

Significance of Raam Naumi

Shree Raam Raamayae Namah !

SALUTATIONS to Lord Raam, an Incarnation of Lord Vishnu, who is measureless, who is of the nature of pure Consciousness and bliss, who is the consort of Sita, Master of Sri Hanuman, and the Lord of the three worlds, who took His birth at His own will in order to establish righteousness, destroy the wicked and protect His devotees.

Raam-naumi or the birthday of Lord Rama falls on the 9th day of the bright fortnight (Sukal-paksh) of the month of Chaitra (March-April).

Raam was the Lord Shree Hari Vishnu Himself, incarnate on earth for the destruction of Ravana. He was well accomplished, beautiful and endowed with royal marks. His glory and prowess were unlimited. He was peerless on earth. He was free from malice. He was gentle. He was the protector of all His people. He always addressed them in gentle words. He never used any harsh words even when somebody provoked Him. He held sway over the whole world.

Let Sri Raam be your ideal. Ideals are remembered and adored for the purpose of adopting them in your own life. The Raam-naumi celebration or the Vasanta Navaratri every year is an opportune period for us to saturate ourselves with the spirit of Lord Raam. We love and adore our ideals because we express thereby our yearning to unite with them. In our worship of God it is implied that we should be virtuous, good and perfect even as God is. Hence the wise instruction: "One should become divine in order to be able to worship God". One cannot be a real worshipper of Lord Raam unless one makes an honest attempt to grow in the virtues that the Lord represents. On the other hand, worship of Lord Raam is itself the surest means to develop such virtues.

One who approaches Sri Raam with love and worshipfulness becomes great-hearted, pure in spirit, good-natured and dispassionate in thought, word and deed. A true devotee of Lord Raam is His representative, with His power and His knowledge.

Lord Raam was the prince of the Ikshvaku tribe. He was virtuous and of manly strength. He was the Lord of the mind and the senses. Brave and valiant, He was yet gentle and modest. He was a sage in counsel, kind and sweet in speech, and most courteous and handsome in appearance. He was the master of all the divine weapons, and a great warrior. Ever devoted to the good and prosperity of His kingdom and His subjects, He was a defender of the weak and the protector of the righteous. Endowed with numerous wondrous powers of the mind, He was well versed in all sciences—in military science as well as the science of the Self.

Deep and unfathomed like the ocean, firm and steadfast like the Himalayan mountains, valiant like Lord Vishnu, He was the joy of Kaushalya. Though fierce like fire on the battlefield, He was calm like the cool breeze of the Mandara Hills, patient like Mother Earth, bounteous like the god of wealth and righteous like the lord of justice himself. In the pains and the griefs of His people, His heart swiftly sympathised with the

Significance of Raam Naumi

sufferers. In the festive scenes which held them in joy, He like a father, shared their joys. By His honour and heroism, as well as by His gentleness and love for His subjects, He greatly endeared Himself to the hearts of His people. Such a great person was the Lord Raam!

Lord Raam was the best of men with a sterling character. He was the very image of love. He was an ideal son, an ideal brother, an ideal husband, an ideal friend and an ideal king. He can be taken to embody all the highest ideals of man. He led the ideal life of a householder to teach the tenets of righteousness to humanity. He ruled His people so well that it came to be known as Raam-Rajya, which meant the rule of righteousness, the rule which bestows happiness and prosperity on all.

The noblest lesson embodied in the Ramayan is the supreme importance of righteousness in the life of every human being. Righteousness is the spiritual spark of life. Cultivation of righteousness is the process of unfoldment of the latent divinity in man. The glorious incarnation of the Supreme Being in the form of Lord Raam has exemplified the path of righteousness. Let mankind follow His footsteps and practise the ideals cherished by Him, for it is only thus that there can be everlasting peace, prosperity and welfare in this world.

None but the righteous can be truly happy. None but he who has the correct sense of duty and the will for its implementation can be said to live worthily. One must be imbued with a definite conviction about the supremacy of moral principles, ethical values and spiritual ideals. These ought to guide one's day-to-day actions and serve as powerful means for the culture of the human personality. That is the purpose of life. That is the way to Self-realisation. That is the message and the mission of Lord Raam's life on earth.

To a devotee, Sri Raam is not simply a good and a great person, but God Himself. Raam was the son of King Dasarath of Ayodhya, but He is also the divine omnipresent, omnipotent and omniscient God. **The destruction of the ten-headed Ravan signifies the annihilation of the mind or the ten senses.** Worship of Lord Raam is worship of the all-pervading Godhead Himself. Read the prayers offered by Mandodari and Brahma in the Yuddh Kanda of the Ramayan. They refer to Raam as the one Creator of the universe, the God of all, the Ruler of the universe.

Devotion to God is not a simple emotion. It is the result of intense dispassion and purity of heart and attitude. You should strive your utmost to possess the good qualities that are extolled in the Ramayan and exemplified in the life of Lord Raam. Otherwise, emotion may rise up in you temporarily to a kind of ecstasy, but you will not experience divine consciousness thereby. Devotion is a fruit which ripens gradually through the processes of self-restraint and virtue. Without intense dispassion there can be no real Sadhana for Self-realisation. Only after detachment from the world of things, is it possible to attain the Supreme Godhead. Remember this.

Devotion has absolutely nothing to do with age, caste, creed, position or sex. Generally, the worldly-minded people say: "We will practise meditation and devotion

Significance of Raam Naumi

when we retire from service.” This is a serious mistake. How can you do serious Sadhana after squeezing out all your energy in working? How will you be able to practise the strict Yogic discipline in your old age? Is there any certainty in life? No, the spiritual seeds of discipline and devotion must be sown in you while you are young, while your heart is tender and untainted. Then only will it strike a deep root, blossom forth and bear fruit when you become old and retire. Only then can you bravely face the god of death and meet him with a smile!

I shall tell you the means of attaining the final release from the great cycle of births and deaths. Devotion to Lord Raam is a great purifier of the heart. From devotion arises knowledge. From knowledge comes the realisation of the pure Self. Knowing this perfectly, one goes to the Supreme Abode and merges in the Supreme Self.

Without first developing devotion to Raam who is the Self, who lives in the hearts of all beings, who is all bliss and who is peerless, how can man cross the ocean of worldly life which has sorrow, pain and misery for its waves?

Do thou therefore worship Lord Raam who is Vishnu and the consort of Sita who is Lakshmi. Abandon all foolishness and enmity. Take to the service of Lord Raam.

The Lord is extremely fond of those who have surrendered themselves to Him. He has given this promise in the Ramayan: “To anyone who once takes shelter under Me and solicits ‘I am Thine’, I bestow fearlessness from all beings. This is My vow”.

Even a great sinner who is full of evil qualities and who is fond of other people’s wealth, is freed from all kinds of faults that pertain to worldly life if only he remembers the Lord always. He attains purity and goes to the supreme abode of the Lord.

The Name of Lord Raam is the greatest purifier of the heart. It wipes away all one’s sins. Not only this, but it wipes away the sinful tendencies as well. The Name is sweeter than the sweetest of objects. It is the haven of peace. It is the very life of pure souls. It is the purifier of all purifying agencies. It quenches the consuming fire of worldly desires. It awakens the knowledge of God. It bathes the aspirant in the, ocean of divine bliss. Glory to Sri Raam and His Name!

O Devotee! recite His Name, sing His glory and serve His Lotus Feet. Enthroned in your heart Lord Raam of dark hue, whose image is reflected in the heart of Lord Shiva. Blessed is the pious soul who uninterruptedly drinks the nectar of Sri Raam’s Name which has been churned out of the ocean of the Vedas, which removes the impurities of the Kali Yuga or the iron age, which lives constantly on the lips of Lord Shiva, which is a sovereign remedy or unfailing specific to cure the disease of worldly existence and which is the life of Mother Sita.

Raam-Naam burns ignorance, passion and sin. With or without knowledge, correctly or incorrectly, when the word “Raam” is pronounced it showers a rain of good upon

Significance of Raam Naumi

the devotee. Sri Raam is Brahman who takes one across the ocean of worldly existence. Raam is one in across whom the Yogis sport, that is, the Self within.

Lord Shiva tells His consort Parvati: "This Raam-Naam is equal to the Lord's thousand Names, or repetition of the Mantra a thousand times".

I call this the anti-gossip tonic. When you find that you are wasting your time in gossip, repeat His Name several times. You can make up for the time lost, and the mind will be slowly weaned away from the habit of gossiping.

Sri Raam is also a wish-fulfilling tree. He will bestow upon you whatever you want! Just read what Lord Shiva further says:

"The seat of all good things, the destroyer of all impurities of this age of darkness, purer than purity itself, the food for the journey of aspirants on the path to salvation, their only resting place, the very life-breath of virtuous men, is the Divine Name of Sri Raam. So say the sages".

On the auspicious Ramnaumi day take a firm resolve that you will repeat Raam-Naam with every breath and that you will endeavour to lead a righteous life.

Ramnaumi is one of the most important festivals of the Vaishnava sect of the Hindus. However, even those who adore Lord Shiva celebrate the occasion. Some observe a strict fast on the day. Temples are decorated and the image of Lord Raam is richly adorned. The holy Ramayan is read in the temples. At Ayodhya, the birthplace of Sri Raam, a big fair is held on this day.

In South India the Sri Ramnaumi Utsavam is celebrated for nine days with great fervour and devotion. Those talented in the art of story-telling narrate the thrilling episodes of the Ramayana. The Kirtanists chant the holy Name of Raam and celebrate the wedding of Raam with Sita on this great day. It is an extremely colourful ceremony, highly inspiring and instructive, too.

At the Sivananda Ashram, Rishikesh, Ramnaumi is celebrated for nine days as follows:

Spiritual seekers do as much Japp as possible. The sacred Mantras **Om Sri Raamaya Namah** or Om Sri Raam Jai Raam Jai Jai Raam are chanted.

Devotees read the whole of the Ramayan, either the Sanskrit version of Sage Valmiki or the Hindi version of Saint Tulsidas, during these nine days.

Those who cannot recite the entire epic may read this single verse which contains in a nutshell the story of the Ramayan: "Formerly, Sri Raam went to the forests, where Rishis did penance, and killed the illusive deer. Sita was carried away and Jatayu was killed. Raam met Sugriva, killed Vali and crossed the ocean. The city of Lanka was burnt by Hanuman. The demons, Ravan and Kumbhakarn, were then killed. Thus is recited the holy Ramayan".

Devotees greet one another with "Sri Raam" or "Jai Raam-ji-ki".

Significance of Raam Naumi

Those who have adopted Lord Raam as their favourite Deity observe a fast, taking only milk and fruit for all the nine days. Some fast only on the Ramnaumi day itself. On the final or Ramnaumi day, there is a grand worship of Lord Raam in the gorgeously decorated temple. All the Vedic rituals including Laksharchana are performed.

A havan is also performed.

From four in the morning to late at night, there is Raam and Raam alone everywhere!

Leaflets, booklets and books relating to Lord Raam are distributed.

Special meetings are held in the evening at which discourses on the life and teachings of the Lord are delivered.

Earnest seekers take resolves to accelerate their spiritual progress.

O beloved seekers! time is fleeting. Know the value of time. Time is most precious. Utilise every second profitably. Do not procrastinate. Abandon all idle gossiping. Forget the past. Live every moment of your life for the realisation of the divine ideal and goal. Unfold your latent faculties. Grow, evolve and become a superhuman or a dynamic Yogi. Struggle hard and reach the goal of life.

May you all attain the final beatitude of life through intense devotion towards Lord Raam! May you live immersed in the ecstasy of divine love! May Sri Raam who is as effulgent as a million suns and who is adored by the gods and devotees, protect you all! May the blessings of Lord Raam be upon you all!

