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### Cultivate Sacred And Noble Thoughts

#### *Embodiments Of Love!*

Many ladies are eager to hear *Swami's* discourse in Telugu. They have expressed that ,“The students are highly educated and speak in fluent English about some technical and engineering topics. Swami is also encouraging them. But we are unable to understand them. We will be happy to hear *Swami's* discourse in simple Telugu.”

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, one should contemplate on  
The Name of Rama incessantly.

(Telugu poem)

#### *Embodiments Of Love!*

The country of Bharat is ancient and has a glorious history. There is no village in Bharat where there is no temple of Lord Rama. In whichever village you see, you will come across at least a few persons with the name ‘Rama’. Since ancient times, the Rama Nama has been shining brilliantly in the entire length and breadth of the country of Bharat without undergoing any change. The *astikas* (theists), *nastikas* (atheists) and *asthika nastikas* (theistic atheists) are all chanting the name ‘Rama’. For example, a person while getting up from his seat utters the name ‘Rama’. The Rama Nama is so popular in the daily life of people in Bharat. Not only here, even in China, *Rama Nama* has become popular. In fact, Rama Nama has spread to the entire world.

#### **The Rama Story**

King Dasaratha did not have children for a long time. He had three wives. He was very hopeful that he would beget a son through any one of his three wives and that he would uplift his clan. But, he was disappointed. He did great penance for getting a male child. Then as well as now, it is only through *tapas* that one can fulfil one’s wishes. He also performed the *Putra Kameshti Yaga*, along with his three wives. At the conclusion of the *yaga*, the *Yajna Purusha* appeared before him and handed over a vessel containing *payasam* (sweet pudding). He told King Dasaratha, “Dear son Dasaratha! Distribute this *payasam* to your three wives

in equal measure.” Dasaratha did accordingly. This incident is described differently in some texts. It is mentioned that King Dasaratha did not distribute the *payasam* equally between his three wives. This is not correct. He arranged to bring three golden cups and filled them with the *payasam* in equal measure, in the presence of Sage Vasishtha. He then handed over the cups one each to his three wives, Kausalya, Sumitra and Kaikeyi. Sage Vasishtha blessed them, “May your desire be fulfilled!” The queens were happy and took the cups filled with *payasam* to their respective prayer rooms. Sumitra, however had different thoughts about begetting a son. There was a valid reason for her disturbed mind. When the king of Kekaya kingdom gave his daughter Kaikeyi in marriage to King Dasaratha, he laid down a condition that the son born to his daughter only shall rule the Kingdom of Ayodhya. Dasaratha agreed to this condition and married Kaikeyi. Hence, he could not go back on his word any way. Queen Kaikeyi was therefore very happy that the son to be born to her would be the king of Ayodhya in future. As for Kausalya, she was very happy and sure that her son to be born would definitely be crowned by King Dasaratha, since she was the first among the three wives. Thus, both Kausalya and Kaikeyi were happy. Sumitra, however, was not entertaining any hopes. She took a head bath and went upstairs to dry her hair. As you know, in those days, fans or hair dryers were unknown. She kept her cup of *payasam* on the parapet wall of the terrace and was drying her hair. Meanwhile, a kite descended over the cup and carried it away. Sumitra was very much afraid and thought to herself, “It does not matter if the cup of *payasam* is lost. I am afraid that my husband and our Guru Vasishtha may scold me for my negligence.” She came down immediately. Kausalya and Kaikeyi were waiting there for her. Kaikeyi enquired, “Dear elder sister! Why are you so much disturbed?” Sumitra related the entire incident. In those days, the wives never fought with one another, as in the present times. They used to move about like sisters with mutual love and affection. Kaikeyi then told Sumitra, “Dear elder sister! You don’t worry. I will give you some quantity of *payasam* from my share.” So saying, she brought a cup and poured some quantity in that cup. The broad-minded Kausalya too shared some of her *payasam* with Sumitra. They then took the three cups of *payasam* to Sage Vasishtha for his blessings. He blessed the cups saying, “May you beget sons with noble qualities, long life, supreme valour and who are capable of ruling the kingdom in a manner that will please the subjects.”

### **He Who Pleases Is Rama**

First Kausalya gave birth to a male child. The child was extremely charming and resplendent. Sage Vasishtha therefore named him ‘Rama’. He was so beautiful, charming and attractive. He made everyone who came to see him, happy and blissful. Hence, it is said, *Ramayathi Ithi Ramah* (He who pleases is Rama). The second wife, Sumitra gave birth to two sons, while Kaikeyi too had a son born to her. Sage Vasishtha was wondering, “How come? Kausalya and Kaikeyi has one son born to each while Sumitra gave birth to two sons?” He contemplated over the matter and realised with his *yogic* vision, what exactly had happened. He realised that the two children born to Sumitra were born out of the two shares of *payasam* given to her by Kausalya and Kaikeyi. The four children were named Rama, Lakshmana, Bharata and

Satrughna. Lakshmana was an *amsa* (part) of Rama and Satrughna that of Bharata. Sumitra then thought to herself, “If Rama becomes the king, my son Lakshmana should be his servant. Similarly, if Bharata were to be the king, my other son Satrughna should serve him. I don’t want that my two sons should ever aspire for kingdom. It is enough if they serve Rama and Bharata, respectively.” She did not however reveal her thoughts to anyone.

Both Lakshmana and Satrughna were crying incessantly, right from the time of their birth. They neither took food nor slept. Sumitra could not understand the reason for their restlessness. She tried various methods like *mantra*, *tantra* and *yantra*. But, they did not yield any result. They did not stop crying.

Finally, she approached her *Guru* Sage Vasishtha and prayed to him, “Oh! divine *Guru*! I am not able to understand why my sons are crying incessantly. Kindly let me know the reason.” Sage Vasishtha closed his eyes for sometime and with his *yogic* vision tried to understand the reason for their incessant crying. He then explained, “Mother! Lakshmana is the *amsa* (part) of Rama and Satrughna that of Bharata. Hence, please make Lakshmana lie in the cradle of Rama next to him. Similarly, in the case of Satrughna, make him lie beside Bharata.” Sumitra, after obtaining the permission of Kausalya and Kaikeyi made the two boys lie in the cradle beside Rama and Bharata, respectively. The very next moment both Lakshmana and Satrughna stopped crying and started to play happily. Thereafter, they drank milk and slept peacefully. Since then Lakshmana followed Rama like a shadow and Satrughna followed Bharata.

After the marriage ceremony of Rama, Lakshmana, Bharata and Satrughna was over, Bharata left for his maternal uncle’s (King of Kekaya’s) house. Satrughna followed him. Here in Ayodhya, Rama was preparing to leave for His fourteen-year exile to the forest, as per the command of His father, King Dasaratha. Sita and Lakshmana followed Him, voluntarily. Thus, when Lakshmana was following Rama and Satrughna was moving in the company of Bharata, people thought that the two pairs were separate. But, the fact was that the mutual love among the four brothers was unparalleled.

During their exile in the forest, while Rama, Lakshmana and Sita were moving about, they came across an *asram* (hermitage). On enquiry, they came to know that it belonged to Sage Agastya. Agastya and his disciples extended a warm welcome to them. They conveyed their grateful thanks to them for visiting their *asram*. During the course of their conversation, sage Agastya advised, “Rama! You cannot be comfortable in this *Asram*. There is a forest called Dandakaranya, nearby. There, you will be comfortable. Mother Sita will also be happy there, without any inconvenience. You will get a variety of fruits in plenty there for eating. The sacred river Godavari is flowing in that forest. Hence, you build an *asram* and live there.” As per the advice of Sage Agastya, Sita, Rama and Lakshmana built a small *parnashala* (cottage) on the banks of the river at Panchavati in the Dandakaranya forest and started living there happily.

## Destiny Is Invisible

All species of animals used to move about in the surroundings of that ashram. One day Sita happened to see a golden deer in the vicinity of their *parashala*. She was enamoured by it. How can Sita who left all her gold ornaments in Ayodhya and followed Rama to the forest, have a desire for a golden deer? She thought for a moment and concluded that it might be her illusion. But, destiny is invincible. In spite of her knowing that there is no possibility of a golden deer living, she requested Rama to catch the deer and bring it to her so that she could play with it. She prayed, “Rama! How beautiful that deer is! If You can catch that deer and bring it to our *parashala*, I can play with it and spend my time happily. When You are moving in the forest, I am alone in the *parashala*. Why don’t You fulfil this small request of mine and make me happy?” Rama said, “All right, your happiness is My pleasure.” So saying He left to catch that golden deer. Lakshmana then counselled Rama, “Dear elder brother, this is a strange animal. It is not really a golden deer. I think some demon must have donned the form of this golden deer to trick and delude us. You need not go after it to catch it. I will go.” However, Sita insisted that only Rama should go and catch the golden deer. That was how her mind worked during that crucial period. As per Sita’s prompting, Rama went after the deer, chasing it. After going for some distance, Rama released an arrow on the deer. Once Rama’s arrow struck the deer, the demon donning the form of the golden deer assumed his real form. He shouted, “Ha! Sita! Ha! Lakshmana” and died instantly. Sita, who was at a distance from that spot heard that voice and mistook it as that of Rama’s. She advised Lakshmana, “Oh! Lakshmana! Please go immediately to help Rama. I feel Rama is in some trouble and is seeking our help. I think He is calling us.” Lakshmana then explained to Sita, “Mother! This must be some trick played by the demons. No danger can ever befall Rama. Don’t lose heart. Please maintain your poise.” Sita was angry that Lakshmana did not move, in spite of her repeated requests. She cast several aspersions on him. She went to the extent of slandering Lakshmana, saying, “Do you wish to take me as your wife, if Rama dies?” Unable to bear her words, Lakshmana moved out at that very moment and went in search of Rama. However, before leaving the *parashala*, he drew a line around it and advised Sita, “Mother! I am not worried about the accusations hurled at me. But, you please don’t come out of this line under any circumstances. The demons, animals or for that matter any kind of insects cannot enter the *asram*, crossing this line. You remain in the *asram* only.” You might have noticed a product called “*Lakshmana Rekha*” being sold in the market even today. If a line is drawn with that stick, no ants or insects can cross over. Similarly, the demon Ravana who came to the *asram* with the intention of abducting Sita during the absence of Rama, could not cross the Lakshmana Rekha and enter the ashram. He therefore stood in front of the ashram beyond the line drawn by Lakshmana and begged for alms crying, *Bhavati bhiksham dehi* (mother, give alms). Sita took pity on him, thinking, “Alas! Poor fellow! He must be hungry. It is not fair on my part to turn him away.” She therefore came out crossing the Lakshmana Rekha to offer food to Ravana. The moment she crossed the *Lakshmana Rekha*, Ravana abducted her and took her away to Lanka. After Rama and Lakshmana returned to the *asram*, they noticed that Sita was abducted. They were anguished. In Lanka, Sita too felt

very sorry that she had to encounter this pitiable situation because she did not pay heed to Lakshmana's words. Sitting in *Ashoka vana* in Lanka, she was pondering,

Will I ever move out of this prison?  
 Will I ever be able to see Rama?  
 Oh! My dear brother-in-law Lakshmana!  
 I hurled several abuses at you,  
 Oh! Noble one!

She was repenting, "Lakshmana! I am undergoing this punishment for having hurt your feelings." Sita spent ten months thus in Lanka. But, she never looked at the face of Ravana. Ravana donned several kinds of vestures, played several tricks and made several promises to Sita during those ten months. But, Sita was unrelenting. She abhorred his very presence castigating him, "Fie on you! You don't even match the nail of the foot of Rama." When Ravana started abusing Rama, she lost her temper and declared, "Rama is a man of supreme valour. He is courageous and profound in character. You are a mean fellow and trivial in nature. You don't deserve to utter even the name of Rama." Unable to make her submit to his overtures, Ravana left that place giving her time of ten days to bow to his wishes.

### **The Glory Of Chastity**

Sita, however, was spending her time with courage and confidence constantly contemplating on Rama. She assured herself that her own conscience was her witness and none could do anything to her. Among the ladies belonging to the demonic community appointed to guard Sita in the *Ashoka vana*, there were two by name Ajata and Trijata. They were the daughters of Vibhishana, the younger brother of Ravana. One day while consoling Sita who was weeping, Trijata told her "Mother! Last night, I had a dream. I saw one monkey entering Lanka and setting the city ablaze. I also saw very clearly that Rama invaded Lanka, killed Ravana and took you to Ayodhya." Ajata too counselled Sita saying, "Oh! Mother! It is true. I too had a similar dream. You need not be sorry any more." Both of them gave a lot of love and kindled faith in Sita. In fact, their father Vibhishana was a devotee of Rama. Hence, his daughters too developed devotion towards Rama.

Thus, ten months passed by. Suddenly, one day there was a big commotion in Lanka. On enquiry, it was known that the battle between Rama and Ravana had started. In a few days' time, the news that Ravana was killed in the battle also spread. Sita felt very happy that she would soon be free from confinement and would join the divine presence of Rama. However, she had a doubt in her mind whether she had to go herself to Rama or Rama would come to her and take her along with Him. In the meantime, Rama sent a word that Sita be brought to His presence. All the *vanaras* gathered there. They are by nature fickle-minded. No further elaboration is required about their behaviour. They were dancing and jumping to have a glimpse of Mother Sita. On having her *darshan*, their hearts were filled with joy. At last, Sita was taken to the divine presence of Rama. But, Rama did not look at her. He bent His head and was sitting quietly. He commanded the people around him to prepare a fire so

that Sita could enter into it and prove her chastity. Rama knew that Sita was a very chaste and noble woman but He wanted the fact to be made known to the world too. Someone may later question, “How did Rama accept Sita back into His fold, when she had spent ten months in Lanka in the captivity of Ravana?” Is it not a fact that He has to answer such questions? That is why He ordered Sita to undergo the fire test. Having realised this truth, Sita went round the fire three times and chanting Rama’s name jumped into the fire. The very next moment, the God of fire appeared and handed over Sita to Rama with the request, “Oh! Rama! Sita is a woman of supreme chastity. She is the noblest. It is not fair on Your part to doubt her chastity. Kindly accept her.” The chastity of Sita was thus made known to all. This incident established the glory of truth and chastity.

Vibhishana, the younger brother of Ravana took Sita, Rama and Lakshmana along with their entourage to Ayodhya in the *Pushpaka Vimana*. The coronation of Rama as the king of Ayodhya was celebrated on a grand scale. The people of Ayodhya lived in peace and happiness during the reign of King Rama. The Ramayana story is most sacred. The *pathivratha dharma* (chastity) itself protected the ladies in those times.

*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 the nations of the world because of such women of chastity.*

(Telugu poem)

The noblest quality of chastity is unique to the culture of Bharat. You don’t find it anywhere else in the world. In those days, whenever the men came across women, they used to move on bending their heads in reverence to them. But, today both women and men stand in the middle of the road, gossiping. At the fag end of the *Dwapara Yuga*, Dharamaraja witnessed such a scene one day. He felt very unhappy and immediately called for a meeting of his brothers. He expressed his anguish to them: “Oh! Bhima! Arjuna! Nakula! Sahadeva! The *kali yuga* (age of *kali*) has begun. Yesterday, while I was taking a stroll in the city, I saw a woman talking to a man in public. I am sorry I cannot bear witness to such immoral behaviour.” Another day, his younger brother Arjuna narrated incident, “Today, I saw a farmer returning from his field carrying his plough on his head. I asked him why he was carrying it, as he could have left it in the field itself while returning to his house. He replied, “Alas! *Swami!* I cannot leave it there. If I leave the plough in the field itself, the thieves may take it away. Hence, every day I am taking it home and bringing it next day to the field.” On another day the Pandava brothers noticed some woman locking the door of her house before going out. On enquiry, the woman replied, “If I don’t lock the house, someone will enter the house and carry away our articles.” All these were signs heralding the advent of *kali* age.

## Uphold Dharma

During the time of Rama Rajya, there was no practice of locking the houses or carrying the agricultural implements back home or ladies and gents chit-chatting in public places. It is only due to the effect of the *kali* age, such incidents have started happening. That is why the Pandavas decided on their *Mahaprasthan*a (final journey in the northward direction). “The *kali* age has begun. Let us therefore depart,” that was their resolve. Accordingly, they returned to their heavenly abode. The Pandavas led a sacred life. It is only on account of such noble and sacred souls, the country of Bharat has earned the name of a sacred country. Today, however, such purity and sanctity has declined. Of course, it is still there, but it is not manifest. It is only *Dharma* that protects one and all! Both, men and women have to protect *Dharma* (righteousness). In order to do so, the mind has to be kept pure and steady. You should not allow evil thoughts enter your mind.

Ahalya, the wife of Sage Goutham was a great and noble lady, yet, she had to suffer on account of the curse of her husband. He cursed her on one occasion, “May you become a stone and lie in the dust!” It is only due to the grace of Lord Rama at a later date that she could come out of the curse. The moment Rama’s feet touched the stone, the stone transformed itself into Ahalya. God can turn even a stone into a human being and sanctify it. He can purify the impure. However much you suffer from evil thoughts, the moment you think of God, all your impurities will be removed. Mind is the root cause for everything. Hence, ladies and gentlemen, everyone should cultivate sacred and noble thoughts. You must purify your heart. Only then can humanness survive. Otherwise, it degenerates into demonic nature.

*Dasara*, 1-10-2006 Prasanthi Nilayam