

PRINCETON BHAKTI VEDANTA INSTITUTE

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Rama Navami

In celebration of Ram Navami (Appearance of Lord Ram [Ramachandra]), our weekly *sadhu sangha* at Princeton's Bhakti Vedanta Institute (BVI) began with a sweet *kirtan*, with Rasaraja das Prabhu on *mrdangam*, accompanied by Sripad Bhakti Madhava Puri Maharaja, Ph.D (Sripad Puri Maharaja) on *kartals* (hand cymbals).



Rasaraja das Prabhu, Sripad Puri Maharaja, Guests: Dorothy and Zhanna

Sripad Puri Maharaja began the discussion by asking our guests if they had ever heard of Sri Ram? "He appeared millions of years ago in Treta Yuga in Ayodhya (Uttar Pradesh), India. Some think He appeared only 5000 years ago, but there is scriptural support that it was much more than that. There are four yugas (Satya, Treta, Dwarpa and Kali yuga) which are like the eras/seasons of the universe. We are presently in Kali-yuga which is like the winter of the universe in which everything is in decay. Today's scientists claim that 13.8 billion years ago the universe was created from a big bang. They have difficulty accepting that during Rama's era there was an advanced human civilization in which Ram appeared as an incarnation of Krishna," Sripad Puri Maharaja said. "Sri Ram was a perfect king. He is known as 'Maryada Purushottama,' which means a person of superlative

character. Everything in His kingdom was being conducted according to the laws of dharma (religion)."

"From Lord Vishnu comes Lord Brahma who has many sons. One of them is Manu, who had Raavi and Raagava among many other sons. One of them was King Aja, the father of King Dasarath. King Dasarath was born in the dynasty of the Sun (Surya Dynasty). Dasarath had three wives (Kaushalya, Kaikeyi and Sumitra). Sri Ramachandra was born to Queen Kausalya, while Kaikeyi, gave birth to Bharat and he became a great leader of the whole world. The name Bharat is mentioned in the epic *Mahabharata*, of which the Bhagavad Gita is an important part. Then Sumitra had two sons, Lakshman and Shatrughana. So in total Dasarath had four sons. Lakshman was very dedicated to his older brother Ramachandra. Sri Ram has the bodily complexion of green and Lakshman is of golden color."



Sri Ramachandra



Sri Ram, Lakshman and Vanar Sena

"Why was He green in color?" guest Zhanna asked. "Krishna is unlimited. There is nothing that can restrict Him. His original form is the

color of dark blue, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu has the color of golden yellow. It is said that green represents harmony and prosperity. Dark blue or blackish represents what is not easily seen yet still exists, as is the nature of the negative, or of the Absolute. He can have many different shades of different colors," Sripad Puri Maharaja responded. "Under the governance of King Dasarath everyone was living very peacefully because he would treat all the citizens just like they were his children and thus the citizens also respected him like their father. He protected all living creatures, not only the human beings. He was a very noble person. Whenever he gave his word he would never break it or think of going against the word he gave," Sripad Puri Maharaja continued. "Dasarath knew that everyone loved Ramachandra because He was very beautiful, virtuous, valiant, powerful, brave and a great warrior. Everyone honored Him with great respect so Dasarath, who was getting old, naturally wanted Rama to be the next King after him. When Dasarath expressed this wish to Rama, being a very obedient son who was always mild, and sweet in His speech, He replied, 'Yes, father, if that is your desire.'"

"I understand that there are many years between Ram and Krishna," guest Dorothy asked. "Yes, millions of years," Sripad Puri Maharaja responded. "Was Ram human?" Dorothy followed-up with. "Yes, He has a human form. Yet He is a divine being and His form is also divine. He is an incarnation of Krishna, Even the modern scientists believe that human beings lived as much as 6-18 million years ago, although they think civilized man lived only about 300,000 years ago."

"Is Ram the same person as in the Egyptian mythology calls Ra?" Zhanna asked. "It would seem that they have no connection, but interestingly we found that the name 'Egypt' is said to come from the Sanskrit *Ajapati* or 'son of *Aja*' who was Rama's grandfather. Ramesis, the lineage of Egyptian kings, is said to come from the Sanskrit *Ram Ishas*, meaning Lord Ram. Also Amun or Amun-Ra was considered the Sun god, meaning that lineage was connected to the Sun dynasty as was Lord Rama. The hawk or eagle on the head of Ra is linked to Garuda as the carrier of Lord Vishnu Who represents the transcendental divine nature of Rama," Sripad Puri Maharaja replied.



Rasaraja Prabhu, Sripad Puri Maharaja,, Dorothy and Zhanna

Continuing, Sripad Puri Maharaja said, "Bharat was on a military campaign when Dasarath announced that Ram would become the succeeding king of Ayodhya. Kaikeyi, the mother of Bharat, had a maidservant Manthara who sparked some intrigue when she said to

Kaikeyi, 'Why is Dasarath making Ram the king when he sent Bharat away? Is he jealous of Bharat?' Kaikeyi became convinced that they might be cast out of the kingdom if Ram became king. So she went to Dasarath and reminded him that when he lay wounded in battle, she came to his aid and saved his life. At that time Dasarath was so indebted to Kaikeyi that he promised her two boons (rewards). At that time on the battlefield Kaikeyi said she didn't want to ask anything but would wait until some later time." Sripad Puri Maharaja continued, "So she went to Dasarath and said 'do you remember you had promised me two boons?' He said 'yes, I cannot take my words back. I did promise you two boons.' She said she wanted that he make Bharat the next king and that Ram should be exiled to the forest for fourteen years.' When Dasarath heard this, he practically died on the spot because he and all the citizens had so much love and respect for Ram. He knew that banishing Ram to the forest would be a very difficult life for a prince. Anyway, what to do? He had given his word so her wish must be carried out even though it was killing him to do it.' Everyone was very unhappy. When Ram heard this news, being equally valiant He immediately said, 'My father has ordered this so I must do it, no problem.'"

Rama was married to Sita Devi (incarnation of Lakshmi), who was the daughter of the great king, Janaka. When she received the news Sita said to Ram, "If you are exiled to the forest, I am also going with you.' Ram said, 'You cannot go with me. You are a princess. You are used to sleeping on silk and soft beds how are you going to live in a forest? It will be too difficult for you to live there.' Sita Devi said, 'If you leave me here I will die due to separation. I must come with you,'" Sripad Puri Maharaja continued. "Then Lakshman said, 'I will also come with you. You are everything to me. I cannot continue to live without you either so I must come with you to the forest.' All the citizens wanted to go with Ram but He said, 'No, no, I have to go for exile, so if you all come, what is the question of exile?' Anyhow, he went to the forest with Lakshman and Sita Devi and stayed there for fourteen years."



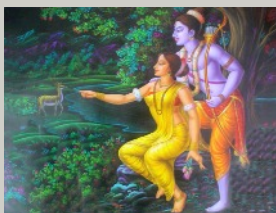
Sita Swayamvar (Sita Devi's marriage)

"One day while They were there one demon, Ravana, heard that Sita and Ram were in the forest unprotected by their army. He knew that Sita was the most beautiful, precious and chaste lady in the universe. She is also no ordinary lady being the Goddess of Fortune, Lakshmi Devi, an expansion of

Srimati Radharani. So Ravana wanted Her,” Sripad Puri Maharaja continued. “Ravana had one sister name Surpanaka who was a very lusty demoness. She came to meet Ramachandra while They were in the forest. She wanted to have a relation with Ram.’ Ram said, ‘Do you think this type of relationship is something so cheap? I am married to this wonderful lady with very special qualities and you are coming to Me simply with lust?’ Surpanaka then harasses Sita and tries to kill her in order to get Ram. Lakshman catches her by the hair then cuts off her nose. Surpanaka returns to Lanka, tells Ravana that Rama and Lakshman mistreated her. He then resolves to take revenge by kidnapping Sita to punish Ram.”

“Ravana wanted to get Sita by some trickery so he asked one of his demon friends, Marichi, to disguise himself as a golden deer. Sita saw that deer and attracted to it. Ramachandra heard this and He went to get the deer for His wife, leaving Lakshman to guard their hermitage and Sita. When Ram captured the deer, it began to cry loudly ‘Help me. Please help me’ in the voice of Ram. Lakshman was hesitant because He did not believe that was Ram’s voice. Sita persuaded Him to go to Ram’s aide but before He left, He drew a protective line in the sand around Their hermitage. That line is known as Lakshman *Rekha* (Lakshman’s protective line). Lakshman immediately went to Ram’s aide,” Sripad Puri Maharaja continued. “In the meantime, Ravana disguised himself as a sadhu (saintly person) begging for alms and came to the gate of Sita’s hermitage. Because of the Lakshman *rekha*, Ravana could not get close to Sita, so he insisted that she step out of the protective line to give him alms. Not to offend a sadhu, she stepped over the Lakshman *rekha* to give charity. Ravana could thus abduct Her and take Her to his palace in Lanka (Ceylon), now known as Sri Lanka.”

In the meantime, when Ram and Lakshman went back to the hermitage, They could not find Sita. They began searching the forest for Her. On the way They found the kingly bird, Jatayu, who was fatally wounded by Ravana when he tried to stop him from taking Sita. Ram inquired why he was so badly wounded and who caused him such pain. He narrated that Ravana abducted Sita and was taking Sita to Lanka. Jatayu died and Ram, who was loyal to all who lived in his father’s kingdom, honored him like his own father and performed his last funeral rites.”

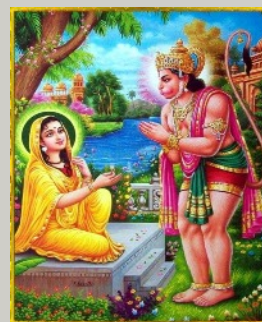


Sita request for the golden deer Ravana disguised as a sadhu

“The king of the monkeys, Sugriva, became convinced to help Ram and Lakshman to look for Sita Devi. Sugriva had faced a similar situation when his brother, Bali, took his wife and he called on Ram to help him.

Ram killed Bali and was able to get his wife back to him and restored Sugriva as the king,” Sripad Puri Maharaja continued. “Under the leadership of his chief minister, Hanuman, Sugriva got his monkey army to go and help Ram find where Sita was. Hanuman is the son of Vayu (God of wind), so he had many powers where he can get as big as a mountain or as small as an ant. He could fly in the air just like the wind, so Hanuman said ‘I will find out where Sita is.’ He went everywhere to look for her and finally he found her sitting in the *Ashoka Vatika* (*Ashoka Garden*) in Lanka surrounded by many demons telling Her that she must marry Ravana and not to try to resist.’ Sita said to the demons ‘I will never leave My Ram.’ That is Her perfect chastity and they could not budge Her. Anyhow, Hanuman came there and told Her, ‘I am the messenger of Ram who wanted her to be assured that soon He would arrive with the *Vanar sena* (monkey soldiers) to kill Ravana and the other demons (*rakshasas*) and save Her.’ Sita said to Hanuman ‘I was planning to leave My body if Ram did not come within a few days because I cannot live like this without Ram.’ She took an ornament from her body and gave it to Hanuman to show Ram that she was waiting for Him.”

“While Hanuman was leaving he met some resistance from one of Ravana’s son, Indrajit, and his army. A fierce battle ensued. In spite of using all his strength Indrajit could not overpower Hanuman, so he used the weapon (*amogh Brahmapash*) given by Lord Brahma. Because of the respect he has for Lord Brahma and the weapon, Hanuman did not attempt to resist and so he was arrested and brought in front of Ravana. He told, ‘I am the messenger of Rama and Rama is going to come and kill you,’” Sripad Puri Maharaja continued laughingly. “Ravana became enraged and ordered him to be killed at once but Ravana’s brother, Vibushana, was loyal to Ram understanding that He was a great personality, intervened and said that according to the law messengers couldn’t be killed. Since Ravana couldn’t kill him, he took a torch and set Hanuman’s tail on fire. No one could harm Hanuman because he is very strong (even his tail) so after they put his tail on fire, he jumped throughout the kingdom and wherever his tail landed, it would set that place on fire. Soon the whole kingdom was engulfed in flames. Hanuman finally left and told Rama everything that had happened. He showed Ram Sita’s ornament and Ram was very happy to know that She was safe and waiting for Him.”



Hanuman meeting Sita Devi Hanuman burning down Lanka

“Then Ram and Lakshman, along with Hanuman and the monkey army went to Lanka to fight Ravana and his army and bring Sita back. There were some fourteen thousands *rakshasas* (demons) living there,” Sripad Puri Maharaja continued. “On their way to Lanka they had to cross mountains and valleys before reaching the shores of the sea. To reach island of Lanka they would need to cross the sea. With the help of Neel (engineer) a bridge was built with a chain of stones each bearing the words ‘Jai Sri Ram,’ After they reached Lanka they defeated Ravana and his army, Vibushana joined Ram’s side to fight and kill all the demons and Ravana and rescued Sita. When they left, Ram put Vibushana as the king of Lanka,” Sripad Puri Maharaja continued.

“After Ram left for the forest his father, Dasarath could no longer maintain his life. So when Bharat returned home and learned what has transpired he told His mother that she was a murderer because Dasarath died due to her cruel requests. Like the others Bharat loved Ram dearly and so he went to the forest to find him and tell Him about their father and what happened. Bharat said, ‘You are the rightful king, not me. I will not take any position but only act as your representative until you come back. I know you want to honor your father’s order but I will take your sandals on my head when I am going back so your sandals can occupy the throne.’”



Rama Setu (Rama’s Bridge) Limestone shoals inscribed with ‘Jai Sri Ram’

“After fourteen years Ram and His entourage returned to Ayodha and He took the throne. Because Ram was a very strict moralist the people also were like that. The citizens doubted that if Sita was stolen by another man, how could She be considered chaste? How can She have a position of honor in our kingdom as the queen when she does not have that qualification anymore, and it will lower the standard for everyone.

Ram proposed that She can prove her purity by walking through a fire. If she is burned, then that means She has some impurity. If she goes through the fire without burning, then we have to accept that She is pure and chaste. Sita came through the fire with no burns, but even then the people still complained that it set a bad precedent.” Sripad Puri Maharaja continued. “Thus Sita had to leave the kingdom and stayed with Rsi Valmiki (spiritual teacher) at his ashram (hermitage). There she had two sons, Luv and Kush. Sita was a very sacred, sanctified person of divine nature. It was told that Ravana never took Sita. He took the illusionary energy of Sita, Maya’s Sita. This was the tragic life of Sita and Ram. She gave Ram Their two sons and unable to live with such pain and


disappointment in Her life, feeling enough is enough, took final refuge in the arms of Mother Earth.”



Sripad Puri Maharaja Dorothy and Zhanna Rama Navami Prasadam

With this our wonderful sadhu sangha came to an end after prasadam was served and honored by all.

All Glories to Sri Guru and Sri Sri Gauranga
Sri Bhakti Nirmal Acharya Maharaja ki jai
Sripad Bhakti Madhava Puri Maharaj ki jai

Your humble servant, Kushum Devi Dasi (New York)		Donations via PayPal may be sent to seva@bviscs.org
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[1]<http://scsmathinternational.com/library/GaudiyaGitanjali/SriSriDamodarastakam.php>

[2] Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu
http://scsmath.com/docs/chaitanya_mahaprabhu.html

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