

## **SRI RAMA NAVAMI**

Sri Rama of Ayodhya was born on this day i.e., Chaitra suddha navami. The birth took place at 12 noon in Karka lagna, birthstar being Punarvasu, where Guru and Chandra and 5 grahas were on the ascendant. To remember this occasion, Rama navami is celebrated all over India. Lord Rama is the seventh reincarnation of Lord Vishnu.

**Pooja procedure:** A portrait of Lord Sri Rama, in the coronation scene is worshipped in a traditional manner. In all temples of Sri Rama, right from Chaitra Suddha Pratipada till Navami, all nine days, celebrations are arranged and poojas performed according to local customs. It is called “Vasantha Navarathri”.

In North India, it is celebrated on a grand scale. On the tenth day, Samaradhana (feast) is arranged. In Ram temples, selected chapters of Ramayana are read, the most popular being “Rama charitra manas” of Tulsi das.

In Thanjavur, at the mutts established by Sri Samartha Ramdas, the festival commences with Dwaja arohana (flag hoisting) on the Amavasya day preceding Chaitra sukla pratipada. Daily poojas are performed for nine days. On the saphthami day, a function known as “Kausalya’s dole” (a feast for pregnant ladies) is arranged. On the navami day, the birthday of Lord Sri Rama is celebrated with Harikatha (Discourse of Hari’s stories) cradling of Sri Rama followed by a feast. The rituals conclude with ‘Sita Kalyan’.

### **Story of Sri Ramanavami**

Dasaratha was the king of Kosala, a famous kingdom resting on the foothills of the Himalayas. He was the direct descendent of King Ishwaku of the solar dynasty. The kingdom of Kosala lay on either side of the river Sarayu, a tributary of the Ganges. It was a vast and fertile country.

Ayodhya was the capital of Kosala. King Dasaratha was benevolent in every aspect. He had three wives, Kausalya, Sumitra and Kaikeyi. Kaikeyi was the youngest and the most beautiful. Though Dasaratha led a most happy and contented life, he had no male children. Absence of progeny marred the happiness of his life.

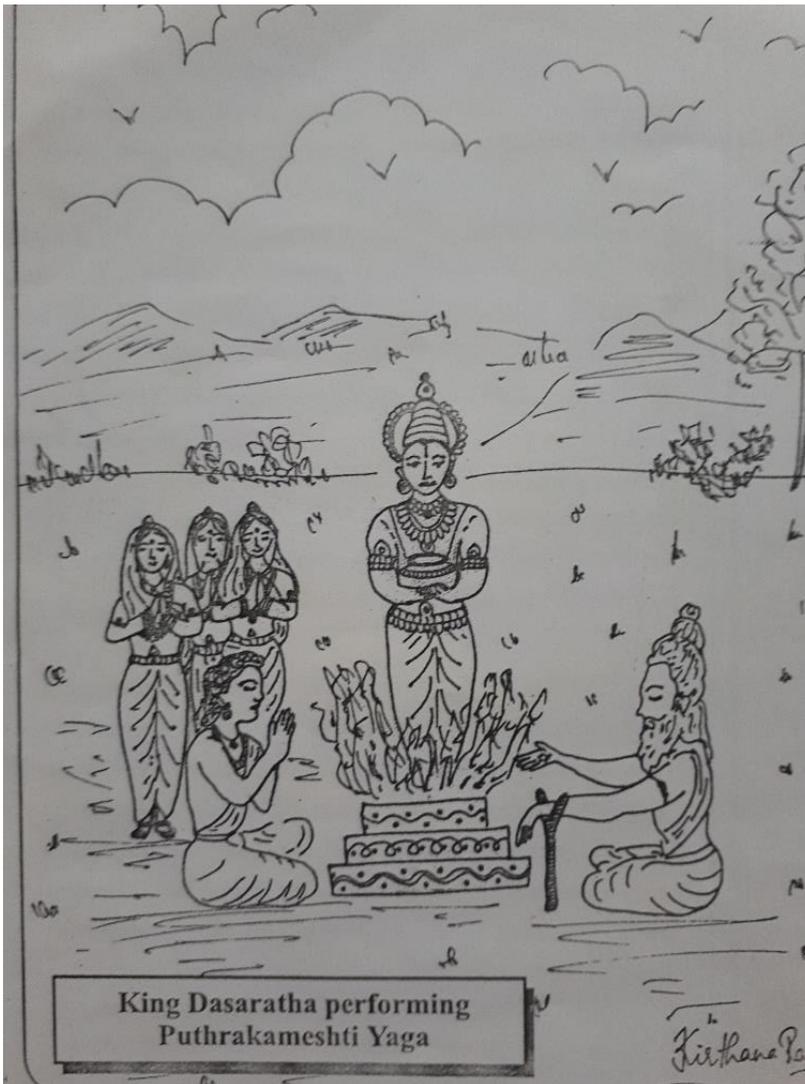
Dasaratha consulted the chief royal priest, Vasista, who suggested his performing Aswamedha Yaga (Horse sacrifice) followed by Putra kameshti Yaga. As expected Aswamedha Yaga was a great success and the suzerainty of Dasaratha was established.

Meanwhile, the devas perturbed by the tyranny of the ten headed Ravana, approached Lord Vishnu through Brahma and begged Him to be born as man to save them and the world. Lord Vishnu promised them that he would be born as

the son of Dasaratha. At the same time, it was also agreed that the Devas, Gandharvas and others would be born as monkeys to assist Vishnu as Dasaratha's son.

The Ashwamedha yaga began with sage Rishyashringa as its head. When ghee was poured in the sacrificial pit, there emerged from the flames a Deva of great effulgence with a golden pot in his hand full of divine kheer (drink made out of milk, rice and sugar).

He directed Dasaratha to give it to his wives, who when they partake this will beget sons, in fulfillment of the Putrakameshti Yaga. The king received the vessel containing the kheer. The King gave half the quantity to Kausalya and the other half to Kaikeyi, and when Sumitra came, Kausalya and Kaikeyi gave one half from their shares. In course of time, the queens delivered four children. Kausalya gave birth to Rama on the ninth day of the bright half (Sukla paksha) of the month of Chaitra, the day celebrated as Sri Rama Navami. Lord Vishnu, born as Rama, revealed his true form to Kausalya alone and later adopted the form of an



infant and cried like a newborn baby. Sumitra delivered twins, Lakshmana and Shatrugna and Kaikeyi brought forth Bharat.

Sage Agastya, the great Siva bhaktha and Maharishi Sutikshna, once happened to meet each other. Sage Agastya began the conversation first. He said, "Sutikshna muni, I will unfold a secret to you. Sacchidananda swaroopi Lord Sri Ramachandra incarnated himself in the month of Chaitra on the ninth day (Navami) of the bright fortnight (Suklapaksha) under the constellation of Punarvasu nakshatra in the auspicious zodiac sign of cancer (Karkata lagna), when the five planets (The Sun, Moon, Saturn, Jupiter and Venus) were in ascendance and the

Sun was in Mesha rasi. This day is the birthday of Sri Rama, Kausalya's child. This is an auspicious day celebrated as Sri Rama Navami.

On this day, each one of us should observe fast, worship Lord Rama with sodasopachara, listen to puranas from learned pundits keep awake the whole night and the next day arrange for feeding of Brahmins, honour them with dakshina and clothes. By so doing, I can vouchsafe that all our past misdeeds will be pardoned and we will attain Vishnu pada. This vrata gives asylum to one and all, good and bad, if observed with great devotion".

Sutikshna intervened, "O, revered sage, you have so long dwelt upon the importance of this Vrata and worship of Sri Rama, in idol form. Kindly highlight me about the moola manthra of Sri Rama, by mere repetition of which one can also attain Vishnupada, as everyone may not be able to do all the rituals, you described".

Agastya replied, "Among the Rama mantras, the sadakshari (six lettered) mantra "SRI RAMA RAMA RAMA" described in Skanda moksha kanda, Rudra geetha is the most significant mantra. Lord Siva mentions that if this mantra is whispered in the right ear of a dying or dead person, it is sufficient to take him to Vishnupada".

Finally, Agastya ends up by saying that if Sri Ramanavami vrata, is observed for twelve years, you can become a Jeevan muktha (a liberated soul). So saying, Agastya returns to his hermitage.