

Tridandi Swami Sri Srimad Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja

THE APPEARANCE DAY OF LORD SRI RAMA

Mathura, India: April 12, 2000 (Morning)

Today is a very auspicious day. It is the Appearance Day of Lord Sri Rama. Who is Sri Rama? He is Krsna Himself, and Sita is Radhika Herself. In order to establish the principles of maryada, regulative etiquette, Krsna appeared in the form of Sri Rama. His associates also appeared in Rama-lila. Gopisvara Mahadeva manifested as Hanuman and Baladeva appeared as Laksmana. Satrugna and Bharata are also manifestations of Krsna because they are His weapons. They are respectively Sanka (His conch) and Cakra (His wheel). Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu Himself read and glorified the pastimes of Sri Rama.

Valmiki has described the pastimes of Rama in great detail. He was a siddha mahatma, a realized soul. Popular Indian stories say that in his previous life he was a dacoit, and he used to kill people for his living. Once he met Narada Rsi and, by that meeting, his heart was transformed and he became a sadhu. According to scriptures, Valmiki was actually the son of a great rsi. He performed austerities for a long time and by that he became perfect. One of his disciples, a very famous rsi, was named Bharadraja. Once they both went to bathe in the river. After Valmiki took his bath, he saw a male and female kraunch-bird sitting in a tree. A hunter struck the male bird with his bow, killed him, and the bird fell out of the tree. Valmiki became angry and spontaneously cursed this hunter, "How cruel you are! How could you do this? May all your happiness go away, and may you never be happy again in your life."

When Valmiki returned to his asrama, he thought, "Why did I become so angry? I am supposed to be a rsi and have control over my senses. Life and death are very temporary, so why did I get disturbed by seeing this? And how did these particular words come out of my mouth?" His words were very special. They had four gerands – four lines with the same meter as the slokas in Ramanyana. He therefore wondered why these particular words and this particular meter came out from his mouth.

Lord Brahma then appeared and said, "You should write the pastimes of Lord Rama, using verses which are in this meter." Valmiki replied, "How can I do that?" At that time Narada Muni appeared and initiated Valmiki. He said, "You should meditate upon the pastimes of Lord Rama in samadhi and, by bhakti, all those pastimes will manifest in your heart. Valmiki followed these orders and, as the pastimes manifested in his heart, he began writing the Ramayana.

Valmiki was on the planet at the same time as Lord Rama, but Valmiki had already written about most of His pastimes before Rama enacted them. He did not write about Sita entering the earth, however. Why did he not write about this? Because he taught Rama's pastimes to Sita's two sons, Luv and Kush. If he would have told them in advance what happened to Sita, they would have been very disturbed. Just as Srila Vyasadeva never preached Srimad Bhagavatam, but he taught it to Sri Sukadeva Gosvami who later preached it all over the world, similarly, Valmiki Rsi taught Rama-lila to Luv and Kush.

Maharaja Dasaratha is the actual father of the Lord, birth after birth, and Kausalya is His mother. They are eternally the mother and father of Krsna in His different manifestations. Yasoda and Nanda are non-different from Dasaratha and Kausalya.

Maharaja Dasaratha was getting quite old and he was disturbed that he had not begotten a son. He therefore asked his spiritual master, Vasistha Rsi, to perform a parestha yajna – a sacrifice with the goal of getting a son. Half of the kheer (sweet rice) offered in the yajna was given to Kausalya, one quarter was given to Kaikeyi, and one quarter to Sumitra.

In due course of time all of the queens gave birth to sons – Kausalya to Rama, Kaikeyi to Bharata, and Sumitra to Laksmana and Satrugna. They were loved, they did childhood pranks, and they went to the asrama of Valmiki. Along with Visvamitra Rsi they went to an asrama where they killed two demons who came to disturb the rsis' sacrifices. He also delivered Ahalya who, by the curse of her husband, had been transformed into stone.

Suppose you have a fruit of amla in your hands. You can see it very clearly. Similarly Valmiki, by the blessings of Narada, saw all these pastimes as clearly as if they were happening in front of his eyes.

Along with Visvamitra and Laksmana, Rama went to Janakapuri for the svayambara of Sita devi. There He broke the bow of Lord Siva which had been given by Parasurama to Maharaja Janaka. At that time Parasurama appeared and manifested all the anger that was in his heart. When Rama strung the bow without any effort, Parasurama then understood that Lord Rama was the amsi, the actual source from whom he himself had manifested. Lord Rama told him, "Now that this bow is in my hands, I have to kill something – either you or that anger that is in your heart. Previously he had to be angry in order to kill all the demonic kings who had been ruling the earth. Now that work was over and therefore Rama said, "I should kill that anger within you." Parasurama prayed, "Yes, please take out that anger which is in my heart." After Lord Rama took it away he was transformed into a rsi (and after that he performed many austerities). Lord Rama and Sita Devi were then married and returned to Ayodhya.

There is a secret meaning behind the pastime of Queen Kaikeyi asking her two boons from Maharaja Dasaratha. Kaikeyi was not cruel. She loved Sri Rama more than she loved Bharata. When Rama was a young boy, He sat in the lap of Mother Kaikeyi and requested, "I want to ask you something. When I grow up and return home after My marriage, My father will think of giving this kingdom to Me. I want you to ask him to give the kingdom to Bharata, and to send Me to the forest for fourteen years." Hearing this, Kaikeyi fainted. When she regained consciousness she said, "I cannot do such a cruel thing." But then Lord Rama said, "For the benefit of the whole world, you will have to do this." So Kaikeyi agreed.

There is another important point in this connection. When King Dasaratha married Kausalya, he did not beget any sons from her. He further married 360 queens, but still there was no son. One day, when he was out in the forest hunting animals, he traveled all the way to the border of Afghanistan. He was very tired and therefore went to visit his friend Maharaja Kaikeya, the king of that entire area. Maharaja Kaikeya ordered his daughter to take care of the king. The next day, very pleased by her service, Maharaja Dasaratha asked him if he could marry his daughter, Kaikeyi. The king said, "Yes, you can marry her, but with one condition. If she begets a son, that son will become the king of your entire kingdom." Maharaja Dasaratha replied, "There is nothing that will please me

more. I have no son, so if she begets a son I will be very happy to give my entire kingdom to him." This was another reason why Bharata became the king instead of Rama.

There is still another reason. One day Bharata's maternal uncle came and requested Bharata and Satrugna to accompany him for a few days. In the meantime, Rama-navami came – the anniversary of the appearance day of Sri Rama. On this day the celebration of His appearance took place, and His marriage also took place. On the day before, Maharaja Dasaratha had told Vasistha that he would like to give his kingdom to Rama and make him Yuvaraja. Rama would conduct all the duties of Maharaja Dasaratha in his absence and after he would leave the world, Rama would become the king. Everyone was very happy to hear this. Vasistha said, "Tomorrow, Rama-navami, all the planetary positions will be very auspicious. You should give him the sacred initiation tomorrow." There was no time to talk with Bharata and Satrugna. Also, Maharaja Dasaratha thought, "I have already promised that I will give my kingdom to Bharata. So how, in front of him, can I give it to Sri Rama?"

When Kaikeyi heard the news about Rama's coronation she was very pleased, and she gave her garland to her maidservant, Mantara. By the influence of the demigods and because Rama had to perform His pastimes, Mantara's mind became evil. She told Kaikeyi, "How can you be so foolish? If Rama becomes the king, Bharata will become a servant, and you will become a maidservant. For the rest of your life you will have to serve Kausalya and Sri Rama." Initially Kaikeyi resisted and was not influenced by Mantara's words. But then she remembered Sri Rama's request to her in His youth – that she should ask Maharaja Dasaratha to send Him to the forest. Remembering this, she made her heart very hard. Then she went to Maharaja Dasaratha and asked him for her two boons. Maharaja Dasaratha fainted. When Lord Rama heard what happened He was very pleased that Mother Kaikeyi had done what He had requested. He came to Maharaja Dasaratha and Queen Kaikeyi and she ordered Him to go to the forest, saying that this was also the desire of Maharaja Dasaratha.

When Rama was exiled and was living in Chitrakuta, Bharata, accompanied by many citizens, went there to request him to return to Ayodhya. On his way to see Rama, they also passed by Bharadvaja Rsi's asrama. Bharadvaja requested Bharata, "Please, be our guests for a day here. You should rest and take prasada." But Bharata replied, "I have come with lakhs of people. Almost the entire population of Ayodhya has come with me. How can they all fit in your asrama?" Bharadvaja said, "Please give me a chance to serve you." By his mystic power Bharadvaja manifested an entire city, which was greater and more opulent than Ayodhya. For each of the queens there was a rajabhavan. There were so many kinds of foods and preparations – just as there is during the annakuta ceremony of Govardhana. Mountains of prasada were created and everyone was served.

Kaikeyi also went to Rama and said, "I was the one who asked for the boon that you be banished to the forest. Since I was the one who asked you to go, now I take it back. Now I am asking you to come back." Lord Rama replied, "No, the command was not only from you. You and father both asked it together. Father is here no more, and you are only half, fifty percent. I don't know if it is his desire or not. So I cannot go back."

There was an assembly meeting held wherein Maharaja Janaka spoke with Bharata. Janaka Maharaja described the meaning of prema. He said that real love is to understand what pleases the beloved. Janaka said, "If it is Lord Rama's desire to stay here, then it is better to follow what He wants, and not try to force your desire on Him."

Rama, Laksmana, and Sita devi then traveled to Chitrakuta. There Rama performed jalanjali, offering water the ancestors. Actually Maharaja Dasaratha had never actually died, so ultimately there was no point of His doing this. However, since He was performing narvata-lila, human like pastimes, he offered the water.

Sita and Rama went to the asrama of Anasuya, who gave Sita a special 'anga vastra', garment, so that even if she didn't eat, her body would never dwindle. That is why, when she was at Ravana's place, although she never ate any food given by Ravana for an entire year, her body never dwindled. Anasuya was the wife of Atri Muni, who had performed great austerities. By these austerities Brahma, Visnu and Mahesh had all appeared to her. She made them become her little children, and all their wives came and requested her to please let them go.

Agastya Rsi gave Rama the bow with which He killed Ravana. Then Surpanakha came and Laksmana cut off her nose. Then Rama killed Kara and Dusha. Kara means donkey. He next killed a demon named Trisura. Ravana then came to revenge Surpanakha's dishonor. He stole Sita, Rama killed Maricha, they met Sabari, and then at Kiskinda they met Hanuman. Hanuman first appeared to Them in the form of a brahmana, to test if they were really Rama and Laksmana. Later, at Rsimukha Parvat Hill, Sugriva met Lord Rama and they made a treaty of friendship there. After Sugriva explained what Bali had done to him, Lord Rama killed Bali.

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