



Sabka Maalik Ek

# SAI SANDESH

The Official Monthly Newsletter of  
**OM SAI MANDIR**

April 2006; Volume 3, Issue 4

45-11 Smart Street • Flushing, NY 11355 • Tel: (718) 461-0454

[www.omsaimandir.org](http://www.omsaimandir.org) • [info@omsaimandir.org](mailto:info@omsaimandir.org)

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Love All, Serve All

## RAM NAVMI SPECIAL ISSUE



Image Credit: <http://lt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vaizdas:Rama.jpg>

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## FEAR NOT—YOU ARE A CHILD OF GOD

BY THE SAI SANDESH TEAM

We call ourselves children of God and yet doubt our own divinity. Isn't that an irony? Self-condemnation is the biggest mistake one can make on the spiritual path. We often deride ourselves and others with adjectives, such as "sinners," "ignorant ones," "unworthy," etc. Swami has repeatedly told us that sin is a very big word for errors we may have committed out of ignorance and that there is plenty of hope for those wanting to change. For a person who sincerely repents and corrects erring actions, God will uplift and exalt him to the status of saint, almost instantly.

In order to prove this fact, God has repeatedly performed the miracle of transforming erring humans into saints. Valmiki, the great saint through whom was penned the epic Ramayana, started his early career as a highway robber. He continued along this path until Sage Narada showed him the right path. Valmiki decided to transform himself and resorted to the incessant chanting of Rama's name. Not accustomed to spiritual practices, he started chanting "Mara, Mara" instead of "Rama," "Rama." With the ceaseless chanting of Rama's name, Valmiki was blessed with a vision of Rama Himself. The person who at one point of time stole people's possessions had now managed to steal the Lord's butter-like heart, and the Lord on His part converted Valmiki into a great saint; such is the power of the Lord's name and grace. And what great service did Valmiki perform. He was instrumental in penning Ramayana, the divine epic that has served as a beacon light to humanity for thousands of years.

The Lord is very merciful and is forever keen to grant us His blessings. What is lacking is our desire to [truly] transform; the moment a sincere resolve is made, God's grace will work magic into anyone's life.

Take the instance of Mary Magdalene; before coming in contact with Lord Jesus she had lived the life of unholiness; yet as soon as she came in contact with the Lord, He forgave her sins and raised her to the status of an apostle-like figure. Such is the power of repentance, forgiveness, and grace.

One may ask how were these people, despite numerous sins, forgiven so easily? The answer is very simple: God is pure love; He is willing to forgive those who sincerely repent and decide to walk along with Him. To such He will give the same gifts as He would to saints. Even a human mother forgives her children who commit sins out of ignorance, how much more so would the divine mother. In reality, God does not discriminate between saints and sinners. We are all His children and He treats us all with love, always.

It is said that God created man in His own image; the Vedas too declare *Tat Tvam Asi* (Thou Art That). How can God's own image ever be bad? Yes, we may have made mistakes in the past, for which we must accept responsibility, but that should not stop us from correcting ourselves and changing, nor should it be cause for self-condemnation. God always welcomes change and accepts us with open arms, the way a loving parent would.

You may have heard of Pundalika's story—the saint whose name is associated with Vitthala of Pandharpur. Pundalika, though of good heart, had turned to bad ways and had resorted to ill-treating his aged parents, to the extent of making them perform menial work. It was not until Pundalika visited the ashram of a great saint and underwent purificatory punishment that he realized his mistake. The repentance, however, was sincere and Pundalika resorted to chanting of the Lord's name while sincerely serving his old parents. Pleased with this newfound transformation, the Lord Himself visited the house of this devotee. Despite seeing the Lord standing at his doorstep, Pundalika was unable to get up as he was deeply engrossed in serving his parents. In order to offer a seat to the Lord, he threw a brick and asked the Lord to sit on it. An ignorant person may consider this as blasphemy but God has no ego and He could see through the sincere devotion of Pundalika. Immensely pleased, the Lord granted salvation to Pundalika and blessed Pandharpur (Pundalika's village) with his permanent residence in the form of Vitthal. Even today, Pandharpur is considered to be one of the holiest places in India.

The name of the Lord even if resorted to unknowingly can effect a miraculous transformation, as in the case of Ajmilla. In ancient days, there lived a brahmin by the name of Ajmilla. At first, he was a pious man and regularly performed holy rites; his association with a courtesan, however, led to his downfall. Contrary to the customs in those days, he cohabited her for a long time and fathered her children, the youngest of whom was named Narayana. This boy was very dear to old Ajmilla.

Due to his actions, Ajmilla had lost the respect of the entire community. He soon fell ill and took to the deathbed. Just before dying, however, he called out his youngest son, Narayana. Immediately, the emissaries of Lord Narayana came to the rescue of Ajmilla's soul. Around the same time, the torchbearers of hell also appeared on the scene and began claiming rights to Ajmilla's soul. Their argument was based on the bad actions committed by Ajmilla throughout his life. The emissaries of Narayana, however, insisted on saving his soul as he had sincerely called out to Narayana, even if it was in the context of calling his own son. The emissaries of the Lord finally won the argument and Ajmilla's soul was saved.

Can fire cease to burn simply because it is touched out of ignorance? No! Fire makes no such distinction; its duty is to burn whatever comes in contact with it. In the same way, the Lord's name cannot but burn to ashes millions of sins committed by devotees. This is the easiest practice to which one can resort.

One could pray to God using any name or form one likes. Be it God, Bhagavan, Allah, Rama, Jesus, Buddha, Krishna, Sai—whatever be one's mode of worship, it must be sincere.

Swami often tells us that *Manava* is *Madhava* (man is God). God cannot but help save us, for He did create us in His own image. What is needed on our part is just the first step toward Him; He will then take a hundred steps toward us. Let us forget all our past experiences and resolve to make a fresh start toward God. Arise, awake, and stop not till the goal is reached; fear not—you are indeed a child, a precious child, of God.

## DAILY ACTIVITIES

### DAILY ARATIS:

Kakad Arati	8.00 A.M.
Madhyana Arati	12.00 P.M.
Dhoop Arati	6.00 P.M.
Sheja Arati	8.00 P.M.

### SPECIAL BHAJANS:

Every Thursday	7.00 P.M.–8.30 P.M.
Every Sunday	2.00 P.M.–3.00 P.M.

**STOTRAS (CHANTING SAHASRANAM, BABA'S 108 NAMES, ETC.):** Daily.

**ANNADAN (FOOD SERVICE):** Daily at temple  
**ANNADAN (FOOD SERVICE) FOR HOMELESS BROTHERS AND SISTERS:** Every Saturday at 1 p.m 29<sup>th</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> Ave. Call 718-461-0454.

## PUJA SPONSORSHIP

Archana.....	\$11
Abishekam.....	\$51
Satyanarayana Vrata.....	\$81
Vahana Puja.....	\$15
Annadan.....	\$251

**To sponsor pujas, call: (718) 461-0454.**

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### April

Thursday, Apr. 06: Sri Ram Navami  
 Thursday, Apr. 13: Baisakhi  
 Friday, Apr. 14:  
 1. Tamil New Year  
 2. Vishu (Malayali New Year)

### May

Saturday, Mar. 06: Easwaramma Day  
 Sunday, May 14: Mother's Day  
 Monday, May 22: Hanuman Jayanti

## THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

Educated persons, nowadays, are concerned solely about their own well-being and that of their families, and have no interest in the welfare of the world. Education should aim at making a person take pleasure in promoting the well-being of all people. As a person grows up, he develops associations with relations, friends, teachers and many others. It is through these numerous relationships that one's human qualities develop. Without these associations, the individual would remain at the animal level. One's human nature is developed by society and contacts with kinsmen, friends and others. You have to show your gratitude to all of them by striving for their well-being. - Baba

## BEACON LIGHTS

### THE DIVINE NECTAR OF RAMA'S LIFE

THE SAI SANDESH TEAM

*Pibare Rama Rasam  
Pibarey Rama Rasam Rasaney  
Dhoori Krita Pataka Samsargam  
Poorita Naanavidha Phala Vargam  
Pibarey Rama Rasam Rasaney*

*O Mind! Quench the spiritual thirst by drinking Divine nectar of chanting the name of Lord Shree Rama. It will destroy all sins. Reciting the sacred name of Lord Rama will confer immense happiness of drinking nectar of many delicious fruits.*



As the preceding *bhajan* describes, chanting the name of Rama is not only nectar-like, it is liberating. Avatars like Rama come to earth to uplift man from his fallen state, to show man the true way to live, and also to make man realize his innate potential: *manava* (man) is *madhava*

(God). Avatars during their sojourn on earth correct the prevailing state of affairs on earth, for earth indeed is the spiritual engine of the universe, and India of the world.

During Tretayuga, about 20,000 years ago, the Lord incarnated in the form of Rama. The life of this Avatar is indeed the brightest beacon light for mankind, for in this one incarnation, the Lord showed us the ideal way of living. Not only was His life suffused with the spiritual essence of the Vedas, He also showed us the way to live in the world—like a human being. He lays before us the example of an ideal father, a model son, a perfect brother, a compassionate master, a benevolent Lord, a loving husband, a loyal friend, a just ruler, a true devotee, and so much more.

**His name.** Rama, the name that has liberated millions, encompasses three syllables: Ra, Aa, and Ma. Ra signifies Agni (Fire God); Aa, Surya (Sun God); and Ma, Chandra (Moon God). Fire God burns all sins, Sun God dispels darkness, and Moon God cools one's temper and produces tranquility—in essence fostering the harmony of thought, word, and deed.

**His-Story.** History is indeed His-Story and the story of the Lord's life can uplift even the worst of sinners. Reading the story of Rama's life granted liberation to many souls and for the benefit of readers it is recounted here.

**Rama's Birth.** For the Lord who is forever present everywhere, birth and death are nothing more than an act. Yet for the sake of His children, God plays even this role to perfection. Dashratha, the King of Ayodhya, had three wives. Despite enjoying the Lordship of a large kingdom, they were not happy due to the lack of children. To fulfill his desire, Dashratha arranged for a special *yagna* (religious rite), after the completion of which divine emissaries appeared with a pot of pudding. Dashratha divided the *prasad* among his wives and four beautiful princes were born to them. The charming princes were named Rama, Lakshmana, Bharata, and Shatrughna. The king along with his queens and young princes spent the next few years in ecstasy.

**Viswamitra and Rama.** Once Vishwamitra, troubled by terrifying demonic forces, requested the King to send Rama and Lakshmana to protect the sages. Dashratha was taken aback and reluctantly fulfilled Vishwamitra's wish. The princes valiantly vanquished all the demonic forces that existed in the kingdom and relieved the sages of their suffering; Viswamitra was indeed an instrument, for Rama Himself had willed such an arrangement.

While the princes were spending time in the company of the holy ones, Viswamitra received an invitation to attend the *swayamvara* (ceremony where the bride chooses her suitor) of the king of Mithila's daughter, Janaki. The condition of the ceremony, however, was that the suitor must be able to lift the divine bow of Shiva. Valiant stalwarts tried their best but none could move the bow, let alone lift it. Rama, however, lifted the bow, strung it, broke it into pieces, and won the hand of Mother Sita. Dashratha was overjoyed to learn about the news of a daughter-in-law and ordered the entire kingdom to adorn a festive appearance.



**The exile.** The king was now growing old and decided to coronate Rama as the king of Ayodhya, but providence had charted a completely different plan for Rama. Kaikeyi, Dashratha's youngest wife, incited by her wicked maid, Manthara, opted to ask for the fulfillment of two boons that the king had promised her in the past. According to the conditions, the youngest queen requested Dashratha to send Rama to exile for fourteen years and coronate her son, Bharata, instead. Dashratha was a man of his word but was reluctant to commit such an act of injustice. Rama, however, did not wish to let His father down and decided to fulfill his word and accompanied by Sita and Lakshmana, Rama proceeded to the forest. The divine trio was passing their days in the forest, when Surpanakha, the sister of Ravana, accosted Rama for courtship. Rama did not accede to her requests and punished her instead. Infuriated, she fled to Lanka and prompted Ravana to seek revenge; the demon immediately proceeded and in Rama's absence abducted Mother Sita. Although these incidences appear unplanned, they were in reality a part of the divine play, the very purpose for which Rama had incarnated.

On discovering Mother Sita's absence, Rama and Lakshmana set out in her search. In their travails, they met the Monkey King Sugriva and his minister, the gem among devotees, Lord Hanuman. Rama instantly recognized Hanuman as His chosen messenger. Hanuman too recognized in Rama, his chosen deity. Both Sugriva and Hanuman pledged to serve Rama in His mission of recovering Sita and destroying the Ravana's demonic forces. To ascertain Mother Sita's welfare, Lord Rama dispatched Hanuman to Lanka. Hanuman leapt across the Indian Ocean and reached Lanka, where he wreaked havoc on the demons. A band of monkeys was collected to fight the mighty army of Ravana. Divine grace is such that a band of monkeys was sufficient to annihilate an entire demon army. To reach Lanka, it would be necessary to cross the Indian Ocean. As there was no bridge, the monkeys started throwing stones in the water after writing Rama's name on every stone. The power of the Lord's name made the stones float on water and a bridge was built. What followed was a war in which the monkeys destroyed Ravana's army. Ravana too met his end at the hands of Rama.

**The destruction of Ravana.** Ravana was a gatekeeper of Vishnu in his previous life. While to human eyes, Rama killed Ravana; in the divine realm, Rama had freed Ravana from a great curse. The Lord's ways are mysterious and always full of benediction.

**Symbolic significance.** The epic Ramayana is not an ordinary one. Every word and character in this great poem has a very deep significance. Lord Rama, for example, symbolizes a person on the *Nivriti Marga* (inward path); while the character of the demon, Ravana, symbolizes a person on the *Pravriti Marga* (the outward path). Mother Sita symbolizes *Brahma Jnyan* (knowledge of the absolute). Lord Rama's securing Sita demonstrates how a person on the inward path secures the knowledge of the Lord, while a person on the outward path, Ravana for instance, faces death. Ayodhya, the capital of Rama's kingdom, symbolizes the human heart. Ayodhya was a place free of strife and controversy; in a similar manner, we too must attempt to make our heart free of all faults so the Lord can make our heart as His capital.

It may be asked: Did Rama go to the forest under any compulsion or out of His own resolve, or with a sense of dissatisfaction, or merely to comply with His father's pledge? No. Rama set out for the forest with the same sense of serenity and joy with which he looked forward to his coronation. Rama demonstrated the spirit of equanimity. In human life, pleasure and pain, happiness and sorrow alternate all the time. It is not good to welcome pleasure and turn away pain. We must welcome sorrow in the same joyous spirit in which we greet happiness. Happiness has no value unless there is also sorrow. That is why it is said: "Pleasure is not secured by pleasant measure." Pain is needed to secure pleasure. Rama demonstrated this concept. Compare His behavior with our lives. The least fortune sends us sky high and the smallest trouble makes us depressed.

Contrary to our imagination, it is not difficult to emulate the Lord's life. If we can emulate mortals, why can't we emulate the life of one who incarnated to teach us the way of an ideal life?

1. Discourse, 5 Apr 1998, Ram Navami, Brindavan
2. Summer Course, Brindavan, May 21, 2002
3. Discourse, March 11, 1994.

## REMEMBER HIM

OKA CHINNA KATHA

The Pandavas during the time of their exile once walked into the forest of Romarishi. Romarishi was a sage whose body was covered with hair and his beard was so long that it spread like a carpet into the entire area of the forest. There was a sacred tree in that forest yielding a very special type of fruit which, once tasted by a person, would relieve him of hunger and thirst for years and years. But the fruit was not to be plucked, it was to be eaten only when it fell down on its own. One day Dharmaraja and Draupadi chanced to come near the tree. Draupadi was very much tempted to taste that luscious big fruit hanging from the tree. She said, "Can we not take that fruit? We can all share it." Dharmaraja shot an arrow and the fruit fell on the ground. He went to take the fruit with his hand. It was so heavy that he could not move it. Dharmaraja tried to lift it with all his strength using both his hands but he could not lift it. Draupadi also tried but in vain. In the meantime, Arjuna arrived at that place. He tried to lift the fruit but could not succeed. All the three tried to lift the fruit but it would not move. The two younger brothers came and tried to lift the fruit but they too could not succeed. Finally came the mighty hero, Bhima. He asked the others to keep away and said, "I will lift it. But even Bhima failed."

Meanwhile the hair of Romarishi which had spread all over the area, began to stir because when these six people were trampling about to lift the fruit, the strands of hair were being trodden and pulled. He realized that some one must be trying to steal the fruit and became furious. His long hair started coming together and coiling round the Pandavas to tie them up. Draupadi realized the danger and immediately prayed to Lord Krishna. Krishna appeared before them. Draupadi fell at his feet and prayed to Him for help. Krishna said, "Sister, I am helpless. Romarishi is a great sage. I reside in his heart. How can I do anything against the wishes of my devotees?" Draupadi once again pleaded, "You alone can save us; you can do anything if you wish to." Krishna said, "I will help you, but all of you should be totally silent whatever may be the situation and do exactly as I tell you." Draupadi and the Pandavas promised to obey His orders.

Krishna went toward Romarishi's ashram and instructed them to follow Him after sometime. In the meantime, Romarishi was so much enraged that he had actually started to walk toward the tree to curse the poachers. Just then Krishna entered the ashram. Romarishi fell at the Lotus Feet of the Lord. He was overjoyed to see Him. He said, "How fortunate am I to have you as my guest. Oh Lord! What can I do for you?" Krishna engaged him in discussing certain spiritual matters till the Pandavas arrived. As soon as the Pandavas along with Draupadi reached the ashram, Krishna hurried toward them and fell at their feet. The Pandavas were feeling embarrassed but remembering the Lord's command, kept quiet. Seeing Krishna fall at the feet of the Pandavas, Romarishi also fell at the feet of those visitors. Then Krishna asked them to come into the ashram. He introduced them to Romarishi. He praised the virtuous Dharmaraja, valiant Arjuna and Bhima and the intelligent Nakul and Sahadeva, and above all, the devout Draupadi. Romarishi by that time totally forgot about the fruit and the poachers. Krishna informed Romarishi that the Pandavas were the people who were tempted to taste the fruit being unaware of the unique nature of the fruit. Romarishi desired to please those who could please the Lord Himself. He said, "Let them take the fruit. I would like them to have it." By eating the fruit the Pandavas were able to live without hunger for a long time. It is difficult to understand the ways of the Divine. All that we can do is to always remember Him with love and pray with faith for His matchless grace.

## DEVOTEES' EXPERIENCES

During my early days with Baba, I refused to believe that Sathya Sai Baba was an incarnation of Shirdi Sai. One night, however, I saw a vision in which Shirdi Sai appeared as Sathya Sai and Sathya Sai turned back into Shirdi Sai. After that whenever I used to pray to Shirdi Baba, Sathya Sai Baba would appear and answer the prayer. Since then my faith in Sathya Sai Baba has been confirmed. During one of my visits to Puttaparthi, I mentally called out to Him as "Shirdi Maa." Immediately, Swami who had passed me, retraced His steps to come back and bless me. He had once again confirmed my faith.

## Children's Corner

Sai Ram

### *Story on Lord Rama continued...*

After Lord Rama destroyed King Ravana's chariot in the battlefield, Ravana went to his brother, Kumbhakarna for help. Kumbhakarna usually slept for long periods of time, sometimes for six months at a time. King Ravana ordered to wake him up; drums and several other instruments were played loudly to wake him up. When Kumbhakarna woke up, he was



informed about the invasion and that his brother, King Ravana, needed his help. After eating loads of food, Kumbhakarna entered the battlefield. He was so huge that all the monkeys in Lord Rama's army were frightened and were trying to run away. Hanuman then called all the monkeys and asked them to fight back. He challenged Kumbhakarna and in the fight Hanuman was injured. Kumbhakarna then headed toward Lord Rama. It was difficult to fight Kumbhakarna; finally, Lord Rama used a powerful weapon that Wind God had given him. As soon as it hit Kumbhakarna, he fell dead on the ground.

Hearing the death of his brother, King Ravana fainted. He then called Indrajeet to help him. Hiding behind the clouds, Indrajeet started firing arrows at Lord Rama and His army. Lord Rama and Lakshmana were helpless as they could not see Indrajeet and arrows came in all directions. Finally, one of the arrows hit Lakshmana. Everyone thought that Lakshmana died but the physician of the monkey army said he was in deep coma and

ordered Hanuman to go near the hills of Himalaya to bring a special herb, Sanjibani. Hanuman immediately flew toward Himalaya but could not find the herb and so decided to carry the entire mountain instead. When the physician applied the herb on Lakshmana, he immediately woke up. Lord Rama was relieved and the battle resumed.

Indrajeet with his magical powers played a trick. He created an image of Sita and then pulled her by her hair and beheaded her in front of everyone. Upon seeing this Lord Rama instantly fainted. Vibhishana then told Lord Rama that Indrajeet had played a trick and that King Ravana would never kill Sita.

Vibhishana also told Lord Rama that Indrajeet was performing a ceremony to acquire more power that will enable him to defeat Lord Rama and His army. He instructed Lakshmana to go to the place where the ceremony was being held and obstruct the ceremony and destroy Indrajeet before he becomes invisible again. As per Vibhishana's instructions, Lakshmana went and attacked Indrajeet and eventually killed him. When King Ravana heard about Indrajeet's death, he became very angry and rushed to the battlefield and came face to face with Lord Rama. At this time, Lord Rama used His Brahmastra that pierced through King Ravana's heart. King Ravana fell down from the chariot and died immediately.

*To be continued....*

**Courtesy:**

<http://www.indolink.com/Kidz/Stories/ramayana1.html>

**AN APPEAL**

Devotees are requested to generously contribute toward the development of the temple. Devotees can make their checks payable to: **Om Sai Mandir**

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