



Home Articles Columns Events Calendar Business Directory About Us

Ramanavami

By Aparna Waghray
Contributor

**"Raama Raama Raameti Rame Raame Manorame.
Sahasranaama Tattulyam Raamanaama Varaanane."**

Ramanavami or the birthday of Lord Rama is a major Hindu festival celebrated all over India.

What is Ramanavami?

Ramanavami is a festival to celebrate the birthday of Lord Shri Ram, the seventh incarnation of Lord Vishnu. When the evil forces in the world had grown, to destroy and to establish dharma, Lord Vishnu incarnated as Lord Sri Rama. Lord Sri Rama was born to King Dasaratha and Kausalya in Ayodhya. Lord Vishnu is a symbol of strength, stability and sustenance and maybe that is the reason the lowest layer in the Grand Canyon is called the Vishnu schist being 1.75 billion yrs old.

When is Ramanavami celebrated?

Ramanavami festival is celebrated on the ninth day (Navami) in the bright fortnight of the Hindu lunar month of Chaitra, (Spring season). The day of Ramanavami is the final day of the nine-day celebrations of Chaitra Navratri or Vasanta Navratri.

Several temples of Lord Rama celebrate this festival for nine days beginning on Gudi Padwa, the first day of Chaitra; and continue for 9 days. During this period, devotees do parayans of Ramayana, i.e. stories of Ramayana read out in joyous public gatherings. People recite the Ramarakshastotra, sing bhajans-kirtans in His praise and chant His name. On the ninth day, in the afternoon a spiritual discourse on Lord Rama. At noon, a coconut draped in a hooded cloak is placed in a cradle and the cradle is rocked (symbolizing the birth of Sri Rama). Devotees shower a red, fragrant powder (gula) and flowers onto it.

Most people fast until midnight. They break their fast with a prasad of fruits and milk. The objective of the fast is not to ask for special favors of the deity but to seek perfection as a human being.

How is Lord Rama an Ideal?

- The Ideal son: Always obeyed His parents.
- The Ideal brother: Rama-Lakshman's love is cited as the ideal of brotherly love.
- The Ideal husband: Devoted to His one and only wife.
- The Ideal friend: He helped Sugreev, Vibhishan and many others during their difficult times.
- The Ideal King: Followed all codes of conduct for Kings as laid down in our scriptures.
- The Ideal Enemy: Vibhishan refused to perform the last rites of Ravan, his brother. Lord Rama said to him, if you do not do it, I will. He was my brother too!
- Maryadapurushottam: He represents the Supreme extent of Righteousness

So celebration of Ramanavami is in some way a special reminder of all the noble deeds or ideals which Lord Ram symbolizes. So in a true sense, it is not only a festival to enjoy but to learn a lot.

In the states of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, early morning rituals mark Ramanavami. It entails a havan, chanting of Vedic mantras and offerings of fruits and flowers. Rama temples are beautifully decorated and the image of the Lord Rama is adorned with rich clothes and jewels. Sacred places associated with Rama, like Ayodhya, Ujjain and Rameshwaram, draw tens of thousands of devotees. In Rameshwaram, thousands take a ritual bath in the sea before worshipping at the Ramanathaswamy temple. This festival is celebrated with great pomp and glory even in Pondicherry, Rishikesh. In the South, this festival is celebrated for nine days as the wedding of Lord Rama and his lovely consort Sita. People sing and chant the name of the Lord. Devotees have a highly colorful ceremony to mark the wedding celebrations.

As part of Ramanavami celebrations, Chinmaya Mission Phoenix will organize a Spiritual discourse on Sundara Kanda by Swami Shantananda will be held on April 15th, 16th and 17th at the Hindu Temple of Arizona in Scottsdale. Lecture time: Thurs.15th and Fri. 16th from 7.00 PM- 9.00 PM on Sat. 17th, from 4.00 PM – 8.00 PM.

Aparna Waghray is a Kindergarten teacher at Bala Vihar, Chinmaya Mission Phoenix chapter (www.chinmayaphoenix.org). Chinmaya Bala Vihar classes are conducted every Sunday at Sierra Vista Academy in Scottsdale.



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TO BE ELIGIBLE FOR THIS STUDY, YOU MUST BE A MALE IMMIGRANT FROM INDIA WHO IS CURRENTLY EIGHTEEN YEARS OR OLDER. THIS STUDY ENTAILS COMPLETING A FEW QUESTIONNAIRES AND REQUIRES APPROXIMATELY 30 MINUTES.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION OF PARTICIPATION IN THIS PROJECT!

Any questions or inquiries can be e-mailed to Nita Mahjia at nita.mahjia@student.tlu.edu.

Information about Researcher and Purpose of the Study:

I am a doctoral student in Counseling Psychology at Seton Hall University in New Jersey. As an Indian-American I am interested in learning how I can use my professional skills to help women in my community. Through my research I have learned that 40% of South Asian immigrant women report having had experienced intimate partner violence. For this reason I am conducting a research study entitled "Examining the Male Perspective of Intimate Partner Violence in the U.S. Indian Immigrant Community". This study aims to explore the beliefs Indian immigrant males to the U.S. hold about intimate partner violence, their acculturation experiences, their coping methods, and the stress they experience. This study will hopefully aid in gaining a better understanding of how violence against women in our cultural group can be prevented.

EVEN IF YOU ARE UNABLE TO PARTICIPATE, PLEASE TELL OTHERS YOU KNOW WHO DO MEET THE CRITERIA ABOUT THIS STUDY.

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