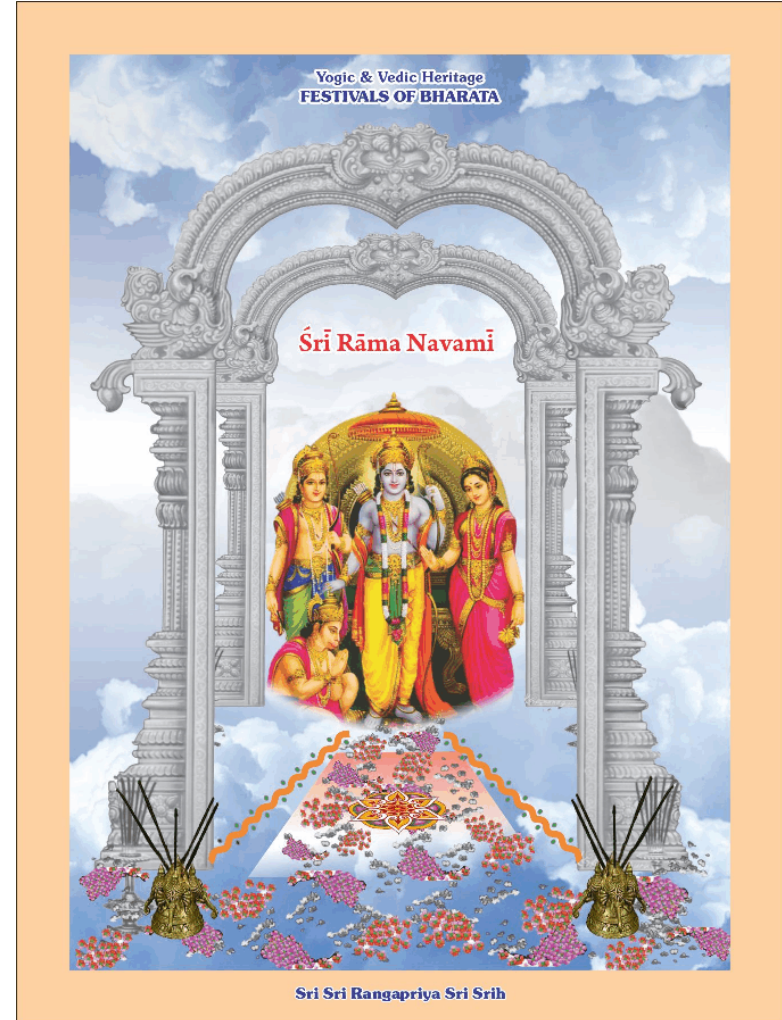




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Title : *Śrī Rāmanavamī Under Yogic & Vedic Heritage FESTIVALS OF BHĀRATA* - A collection of Festivals of India, Original in Kannada by Sri Sri Rangapriya Sri Srih, Translated into English by Prof. K.S. Sridharan, Dr. Hungi Eswara, and Viswanatha Sharma, and Published by Bharatha Samskruthi Prakashana, Bangalore-560 027.

E-Edition : January 2016 No. of pages: 104 Price: 40

We Dedicate this Sacred Treasure at the holy lotus feet of

Sriranga Mahaguru and SriMata

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Published by:

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Cover Design : Chandranatha Acharya

Inside Pictures : Basavaraj R Algur

Copies available at :

Bharatha Darshana,

No.163, Manjunatha Road,

2nd Block, Thyagaraja Nagar,

Bangalore 560 028; Ph: 080-26765381

Printed By :

Laser Line Graphics,

Bangalore 560027

Transliteration followed in this book

अ	आ	इ	ई	उ	ऊ	ऋ	ॠ	ऌ	ॡ	ए	ऐ	ओ	औ	अं	अः
a	ā	i	ī	u	ū	ṛ	ṝ	ḷ	ḹ	e	ai	o	au	am	ah
क	ख	ख	ग	ङ											
ka	kha	ga	gha	ṅa											
च	छ	ज	झ	ञ											
ca	cha	ja	jha	ña											
ट	ठ	ड	ढ	ण											
ṭa	ṭha	ḍa	ḍha	ṇa											
त	थ	द	ध	न											
ta	tha	da	dha	na											
प	फ	ब	भ	म											
pa	pha	ba	bha	ma											
य	र	ल	व	श	ष	स	ह								
ya	ra	la	va	śa	sha	sa	ha								

Example:

क	का	कि	की	कु	कू	कृ	कृ	क्लृ	के	कै	को	कौ	कं	कः
ka	kā	ki	kī	ku	kū	kṛ	kṛ	klṛ	ke	kai	ko	kau	kam	kah



Śrī Rāmanavamī

Śrī Rāmanavamī is the most important festival which comes in the month of *Caitra*, just after *Ugādi*. It is one of the great festivals which is being celebrated right from *Rāmasetu* to *Himālayas* by people belonging to all *varṇas* and *āśrmas* and who follow the *Āryasamskṛti*. On this day, the tradition is to get absorbed in *Rāma* by various observances such as doing of *Pārāyaṇa* of *Rāmāyaṇa* in Sanskrit and regional languages, listening to the story of *Rāma*, presenting the story in dance, music and musical instruments, worshipping of *Rāma* in homes, *maṭhas* and temples with many *pūjās* and *upacāras*, observing a fast which facilitates to meditate upon HIM and/or taking the *Prasāda* (*Naivedya*) after the *pūja*, to obtain his grace.

There is also a tradition of starting the worship of *Rāma* on the day of *Ugādi* itself, culminating in a

special worship offered on the day of *Rāmanavamī*. After an elaborate delineation of *Ugādi*, we will now start making an inquiry in an orderly form to acquaint the society with the festival of *ŚrīRāmanavamī* which too can be a legitimate subject matter of inquiry.

Is *Rāma* who is worshipped in this festival, a God Or a human being? or an ideal human being, who has won the hearts of people by his deeds that match the noble qualities in him, and thus respectfully remembered? It is natural that such a question arises at the outset, when the discernment (into the topic) is taken up.

Some worship *ŚrīRāma* as *Parādevatā*. He is the God of all gods. “तमीश्वराणां परमं महेश्वरं तं देवतानां परमं च दैवतम्” (श्वेताश्वतर 6-7) "I do not know any other god except Him. (“नान्यं दैवं नैव जाने न जाने”) O! *Rāma*! I do not want any other god in whose name the word *Rāma* does not occur. “अरामाभिधेत्यैरलं दैवतैर्नः” (श्रीङ्करभगवत्पाद, रामभुजङ्गप्रयातस्तोत्र) Some say that you are only a human being and not the ultimate god! If it is so, I would like to remain an atheist. Forgive me my lord". (*Sāketa Mahākāvya-I*) These are the utterances of *Vīrabhaktas* (heroic devotees) who worship him. Devotees also feel emotionally that *ŚrīRāma* is the incarnation of *Śuddhabrahmaparātpara Parañjyoti*. Some also

worship him as a supreme devotee of *Mahādeva* renowned as *Rāmeśvara*.

Some others consider him as the best among humans, the destroyer of the evil and a savior of the good, an invincible hero, a protector of *Ārya Dharma* and a great emperor. "Though a human being, a great soul who ascended to the state of *Nārāyaṇa* by his character'. 'The supreme human being whose personality blossomed as he emerged a victor crossing the trials, temptations and weaknesses and thus is respectfully established in the hearts of all human beings who look for an ideal person.'" "The evolution that is discernible of *ŚrīRāma*'s personality in his particular milieu, through trials, temptations and weaknesses is to be contrasted with the notion of his incarnation as a perfect being." (V.S.S. *Śāstry*-lectures on the *Rāmāyaṇa*). Some say he was an eminent personage who really existed. Some others say that he is just a great hero in the epics.

He is a "*Mahāpurusha*" by any count, call him a god or consider him a human being who ascended to the state of god. (The word *Mahāpurusha* means the greatest of men or the supreme man or *Paramātmā*. The opinions of some totally lay persons who make a 'mere superficial discernment, and state that *Rāma* was unrighteous and a dictator, have not been quoted here.) One may think "The respect accorded

to that divine person remains the same, whether one considers him a God in the form of a human being or a human being who rose to the state of God by his conduct. If that is the case, what is the necessity of deliberation to know whether he was God incarnate or a man who ascended to Godhood?" Though at the first instant both appear to be one and the same, an acute discernment tells us the clear difference between the two.

If he happens to be really a God, he shall be the auspicious refuge for those who meditate upon Him, and a benefactor that bestows on his devotees both material happiness and *Moksha*. Then it can be concluded that his divine auspicious form is *nityaśuddhabuddha muktasvarūpa*. It (i.e. His form) shall remain the same in all the three time frames i.e. before, during and after the incarnation. Its existence will always be there. If he were to be a mere human being, and later emerged as a great *yogi* by obtaining *Siddhi* through *tapas*, *yoga* and *samādhis*, and thus even if he were to be adorable, his form would not have the divine qualities cited above such as *Nityatva*, *Nirvikāratva*, capacity to be an auspicious refuge, and power to bless etc, in the same level. And if he were to be only a pious king of pure life who lived in the past or a mere character in compositions, people no doubt become religious by remembering the ideals (in him) and emulate him.

Though this is desirable, the *Mahimā* of this may not reach the level of the two *pakshas* stated above.

Here, the difference of *pakshas*, even from the point of view of the effect of (observing) this festival on us, is noteworthy. If it were to be a day of the birth of a great human leader, it shall undoubtedly be an auspicious day which would provide a religious or a spiritual inspiration to the people who follow him in the deep faith. On the other hand, if it happens to be the day of incarnation of the Lord of the worlds, it shall be a supreme nodal day, which casts its influence on all the living beings.

The arguments advanced by those who are of the view that *ŚrīRāma* is not an incarnation of God, can be summed up as follows:

a) There can be no such thing as an incarnation of God. It is against reason and against *Śāstras* to think God incarnates because—

I) *Avatāra* means a descent. It is wrong to think that God descends from his exalted position to places like the earth etc., and to think that that itself is an '*avatāra*'.

God is omnipresent. There is no place where God does not exist. “नित्यं विभुं सर्वगतं सुसूक्ष्मम्” (मुण्डक १-१-६) “महान्तं विभुमात्मानं मत्वा धीरो न शोचति” “व्यापकोऽलिङ्ग एव च” (कठ ४-२-४, ६, ५, ८) “सर्वव्यापिनमात्मानम्” (श्वेताश्व १-७६) “अन्तर्बहिश्च तत्सर्वं व्याप्य नारायणः स्थितः”

(नारायणोपनिषत्) “व्याप्य सर्वानिमान् लोकान् स्थितः सर्वत्र केशवः” (हरिवंश)

When such is the case, where does he descend from? If ever he descends, does his original place become vacant? And where does he descend at all? All these cannot happen. Even to say that the word ‘descending’ denotes entering a womb, it is also not possible. For example, the sky is all pervading. If one says, "It entered the womb" "It was held in the fist" etc., can it be possible? It can neither go in or come out. In the same way God is omnipresent and infinite. There is no question of God coming (in) or going (out) ever. "It is not possible to come and go to a place where he does not reside. If one says he entered the womb from somewhere, was he not there before? If one says he has come out, was he not there outside earlier?" (*Satyārtha Prakāśa* - 7)

Therefore God has no entrance or exit. Even the *Avatāravāda* that expounds his incarnations, can be likened to a mansion without foundation, which eventually collapses.

ii) Incarnation refers to God assuming a human or an animal form. To think so, it amounts to offending truth, because taking birth is a *vikāra*. One who is born like that must die, and it is also a *vikāra*. God is one who has no *vikāra*. सत्यं ज्ञानमनन्तं ब्रह्म (तै. उ. सत्यं निर्विकारम्) "अविकार्योऽयमुच्यते" (गीता ३ अध्याय)

“निष्कलो निरञ्जनो निर्विकल्पो निराख्यातः शुद्धो देव एको नारायणः”
 (नारायण उ.) “अविकाराय शुद्धाय नित्याय परमात्मने”
 (विष्णुसहस्रनाम, उपो) “अजो नित्यः शाश्वतोऽयं पुराणः” (गीता 7
 अध्याय,) “अज एकपात्” (कठ 2-18). “सपर्यगाच्छुक्रमकायमव्रणं”
 (वा.सं. 34-53) Therefore, to think for any reason (and
 state) that he takes a birth is an offence to God.

iii) For what purpose indeed should God take an incarnation? One may say that God incarnates to destroy invincible demons like *Hiraṇyakaśipu*, *Hiraṇyāksha*, *Rāvaṇa* etc. If so, many questions may arise, such as, is not God omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent? “परास्य शक्तिर्विविधैव श्रूयते स्वाभाविकी ज्ञानबलक्रिया च” “यः सर्वज्ञः सर्ववित् यस्य ज्ञानमयं तपः” *Rāvaṇa* and others beings like him are nothing but worms before the all powerful creator. Should he descend to the world assuming only a human form to kill such persons? Couldn't he have destroyed them without incarnation? God who dwells inside all, could have cut (slashed) the vital parts of their body from within, resulting in their death. Is it difficult for that great power, which performs awesome acts such as creation, sustenance and destruction, to kill these creatures without assuming a physical form? Should he descend to attend to small jobs like these, setting aside the many big occupations pertaining to the universe?

Again, God is present even in the wicked demons. “एष त आत्मा अन्तर्याम्यमृतम्” He could have

bestowed wisdom from within to repulse their demonic nature.

If it is supposed that God should incarnate to uplift (protect) his devotees, is it not possible for him to do so, even without taking a birth, as cited above?

Therefore, no specific use is seen for his incarnations. (“The divinity would exercise its importance without employing human agency for its ends and incarnations will be unnecessary. ”p.xiv. T.R.V. Śāstry) Therefore, even the *avatāravāda* advanced for the Lord's incarnations becomes useless.

b) Further, *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* is the greatest authority on the story of *ŚrīRāma*. In that work itself it is stated that *Rāma* was a human being, however great he was. He is clearly described as *Naravyāghra* and *Naraśārdūla*. For example, in the very first canto itself, *Vālmīki* asks sage *Nārada*—“Is there any human being in the world who possesses all the auspicious qualities you have enumerated?” *Nārada* replies, “O Sage, you have referred to a number of auspicious qualities that are rare. But I know of a human being who possesses these qualities. He is renowned as *Rāma*, born in the *Ikshvāku* lineage. (मुने वक्ष्याम्यहं बुद्ध्वा तैर्युक्तः श्रूयतां नरः” वा.रा. बालकाण्डः सर्ग १) And, *Rāma* himself declares before gods.—“I am a human being, the son of *Daśaratha*” (आत्मानं मानुषं मन्ये रामं दशरथात्मजम् ॥ वा.रा.

युद्धकाण्डः 120-12) Is any other proof necessary to conclude that *Rāma* was a human being?

ii) As a human being, *ŚrīRāmacandra* shares joys and sorrows with persons dear to him. At the separation of the beloved ones, he pours out his boundless sorrow. All these are natural acts of human beings. If all these are to be considered as mere drama, then the whole description (of such acts) appears artificial. And *Rāmāyaṇa* becomes a *Kāvya* without essence. Also it loses the poetic potential to provide direction, message and guidance to people.

iii) If *ŚrīRāma* is considered a human being, it adds lustre to his character. We can recall an amiable criticism of a scholar who said— "There are people who critically discern at his conduct and point out the flaws and lapses in him. On the other hand, those who accept him as god, consider his conduct appropriate to the divine incarnation. And they try to justify his flaws and deficiencies as only good (qualities), and go to praise that the pain and pleasure of that divine soul is a pretence fitted into a human form. If we consider him as only a hero of the epic, we may come to regard how great a soul he is. When we come across one or two flaws in him, we bring to our mind his hundred virtues and withdraw from making a great issue of one mistake ." (*Ādikavi Vālmīki*)

iv) He is God, an incarnation of Lord *Mahāviṣṇu* himself. In many places in the *Rāmāyaṇa* it is declared—“विष्णोरर्थं महाभागम्” “जज्ञे विष्णुः सनातनः”, isn't it? To this, it can be replied that such statements either appear at the beginning or at the end. So they are only interpolations, added at a later time.

Therefore, at the time of writing the epic he was considered only as a great human being. After a long time he was thought of as Lord *Viṣṇu* and became an object of that worship.

Those who argue that he was a human being, interpret that no hoary tradition is there to support the belief that *ŚrīRāma* was god. In the authentic parts of *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*, *Rāma* is considered to be an ideal human being only. *Buddhist Jātaka* literary works and *Jaina Rāmāyaṇas* have described *ŚrīRāma* vividly as an ideal human being. The *Amarakośa* which is of recent origin, mentions the word *Kṛshṇa* and his other names as incarnations of *Kṛshṇa*, as synonyms of Lord *Viṣṇu*. But neither the name of *Rāma* nor the names of *Rāmāvatāra* are considered similarly. So the concept of *Rāmāvatāra* appeared only much later than the era in which *Kṛshṇa* was considered as an incarnation — This is the reasonable argument supported by reason, advanced by them.

Further, their criticism tells that both the dignity of the poet *Vālmīki* and the poetic value of *Rāmāyaṇa* have been affected ever since the worship of *Rāma* began, not as a hero of a poetic work, but as god. And because of that, *Rāmāyaṇa* got reduced predominantly to the state of a religious piece of literature. Consequently, a great composition which should have enjoyed wide publicity in all the civilized parts of the world got bound to just one country. "And that too, it became a composition wanted by only a small population in the country. A man who should have been an emperor became a village chieftain. A precious thing which should have been useful to a lot of people became the possession of a few" This is their argument which points, out a flaw also in the *Phalasruti*.

A *śloka* recited in our tradition, says that *Rāma* is an incarnation of *Nārāyaṇa*. When that Supreme Lord incarnated as the son of *Daśaratha*, the *Vedas* also incarnated directly in the form of *Rāmāyaṇa*, because of *Vālmīki*. The *śloka* is as follows:—

वेदवेद्ये परे पुंसि जाते दशरथात्मजे ।

वेदः प्राचेतसादासीत्साक्षाद्रामायणात्मना ॥

But the proponents of the theory which states that *Rāma* was a human being, interpret the *śloka* in a different way, construing the words differently.

They construe the words as “ दशरथात्मजे वेदवेद्ये परे पुंसि जाते ” and interpret it as follows - As the son of *Daśaratha* (in the minds of people in the course of time) got transformed into the state of the Supreme Lord who can be known by the *Vedas*, an impression got established that the *Vedas* incarnated in the form of *Rāmāyaṇa* through *Vālmīki* (Śrī *Kuppusvamy Śāstry* in the introduction of *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* in the Law journal edition)

Thus, we had a look at a number of arguments which (try to) substantiate that *Rāma*, the hero of *Rāmāyaṇa* is a mere human being. Now, after going through the arguments of the opponents of this view, a comparison is to be made.

After having looked at the arguments which state that *Rāma* was a human being, the argument that he is (none other than) Lord *Nārāyaṇa* himself can be discerned now. At the outset it has to be examined whether the word *Rāma* can qualify to be (termed) a synonym for the word *Nārāyaṇa*.

Vedas very clearly state that *Nārāyaṇa* is *Paratattva*, *Parañjyoti*, *Paramātma* and *Parabrahma*.

नारायण परं ब्रह्म तत्त्वं नारायणः परः ।

नारायण परो ज्योतिरात्मा नारायणः परः ॥ (महानारायणोपनिषत्)

The *Upanishads* declare unequivocally that the term *Rāma* also refers to *Parabrahma*. “इति रामपदेनासौ परम्ब्रह्माभिधीयते” (रामतापिन्युपनिषत्).

The word *Rāma* is derived from the root *Ram* which means "To play" Thus the world *Rāma* means one who plays. “रमते इति रामः” or One who causes the joy of play. “रमयति इति रामः” It also means the one who delights in the hearts of *the Yogis*, or the one in whose heart the *yogis* delight. (“रमते योगिहृन्मध्ये इति रामः”, “सार्थकार्णद्वयं रामो रमन्ते यत्र योगिनः” (रामरहस्योपनिषत्) It means “रमन्ते योगिनोऽनन्ते नित्यानन्दे चिदात्मनि” (रामार्चनी)

Yogis are *atmārāmas*, *atmakrīdas*, and those who have *ātmarati*. *ŚrīRāma* who is the source of their joy, cannot be anything else other than that *Ātmasvarūpa*. *Rāma* is *Abhirāma*. Sage *Vālmīki* says—

“अभिरामस्य रामस्य चरितं कर्तुमुद्यतः”

(*Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*, *Balakaṇḍa* canto 3) He is pleasing to the eyes “तदेव रम्यं परमनयनोत्सवकारणं सकलनिष्कलं आपोज्योतिस्स्थसलं नारायणस्थलं चेति योगशास्त्रेषु प्रसिद्धम्” (श्रीङ्कराचार्य, राजयोगभाष्य). Is he not the Lord whom the *Mahāyogis* have seen by their own eyes? The *Upanishads* praise him indeed as “*Satyātmaprāṇārāmam mana ānadam*”

Some more symbolical meanings such as "He lighted up the earth by his incarnation, is the cause of destruction of the *asuras*, a giver of *dharma*,

jnāna, *vairāgya* & *wealth*. “राजते मह्यमिति रामः” “राक्षसा मरणं यान्ति अनेन इति रामः” “राति ददाति धर्ममार्गं चरित्रेण ज्ञानमार्गं नामतः वैराग्यं ध्यानेन ऐश्वर्यं च स्वस्य पूजनात् इति रामः” - are also being stated.

Thus the word *Rāma* is in complete agreement with the meanings which express the features and auspicious qualities of the almighty. And so, there can be no doubt about the capacity of the word *Rāma* to stand for the almighty.

And now, it has to be discussed whether the great person *ŚrīRāma*, described as the hero by the *Maharshis* in the *ādikāvya*, *purāṇas* and *itihāsas* etc., was an incarnation of the Supreme Lord. At the outset, the *pramāṇas* which are taken to measure the divinity have also to be decided. Because, *Jnānis* say that God is *Aprameya* “अमेयोमितलोकस्त्वं” (रघुवम्श सर्ग 10) beyond measure and beyond proofs."

It is impossible to know him by the ocular proof which are used to measure gross matter. He is not knowable by the sense organs.

न सन्दृशे तिष्ठति रूपमस्य न चक्षुषा पश्यति कश्च नैनम् (महानारायण)
“यत्तदद्रेश्यमग्राह्यम् ” “न शक्यः चक्षुषा द्रष्टुं देहे सूक्ष्मतमो विभुः”

He is not visible to the external human eyes. So if one tries to see him with external eyes and says that he does not exist, it cannot be taken as an authority. Even if one says that he exists, the statement carries no value. If one has to behold god,

he must have divine eyes. That eye is called the *jnāna netra* and the eye of *tapas*.

“दृश्यते ज्ञानचक्षुर्भिः तपश्चक्षुर्भिरिव च”

Only the experience obtained by such inner eyes can become the supreme evidence which can determine the divinity.

Let us understand the conclusion with the help of the teachings of ŚrīRaṅgamahāguru, which is both an elixir of own experience and adorned by reasoning.

ŚrīRaṅgamahāguru had analyzed that the discernments are of two types viz., *Bhramādr̥shṭi* and *Pramādr̥shṭi*. Only those possessing the *Pramādr̥shṭi*, he would say, were indeed the ones who had the right grasp (of things). Such persons, who have the vision of truth accomplished with the help of such a grasp, can be termed *Āptas*. The word *āpta* does not stand for "Intimate persons and well wishers in everyday life," as comprehended by laymen in a limited sense. It means "*Śisṭas* and *jnānis*, who possess pure knowledge unaffected in the three time frames, (who have) cast off *rajas* and *tamas* completely, with the power of *tapas* and *jnāna*"

रजस्तमोभ्यां निर्मुक्ताः तपोज्ञानबलेन ये ।

येषां त्रिकालममलं ज्ञानमव्याहतं सदा ॥

आप्ताश्शिष्टा विबुद्धास्ते तेषां वाक्यमसंशयम् ”

The matter whether Rāma was God or an incarnation of God can be decided only from their point of view.

Śāstras regard the *śisṭas* (refined men) and *jnānis* in this way. Till the time such a *dr̥shṭi* is obtained, one has to depend on the words of great souls who have spiritual experiences. *Śāstras* term this evidence as "*Āptavākya*pramāṇa" Will such great souls whose abode is *śuddhasatva*, utter untruth at all? “सत्यं वदन्ति ते कस्मादसत्यं नीरजस्तमाः”. Only when one attains the spiritual enlightenment by reposing faith in their words with discrimination, follows the path taught by them and obtains *jnānasiddhi*, the big enigma gets solved .In this way the words of these *jnānis* too, become an important evidence to measure the ultimate truth.

When a person is engaged in the *Sādhana* in this way, pure logic and thinking also is needed to guard the mind from doubts. And, inference, which is in accordance with true experience and free from faults, can also be considered as a proof. Since reasoning very much depends upon the talent of the logician, there is no guarantee that truth can be found out for sure.

“तर्के नैवास्ति निश्चयः (श्रीशङ्कराचार्य सदाचारस्तोत्र)

“तर्काप्रतिष्ठानात्” (ब्र.सू. II-1)

“नैषा तर्केण मतिराप्तेया” (कठोप II-9) With all this, if that reasoning fosters that *āptavacana*, it is also

considered a proof “श्रुतिमतस्तर्कोऽनुसन्धीयतां” (उपदेशपञ्चक) “यस्तर्केणानुसन्धते स धर्म वेद नेतरः” (मनुस्मृति 12-106:) “युक्तिहीने विचारे तु धर्महानिः प्रजायते” (स्मृति चं)

On the whole, all these, viz experience based on spiritual knowledge, *āptavacanas* leading to that experience and supportive reasoning - are needed to conclude whether *Rāma* happens to be an incarnation of God.

(Vedantasāra says that for confirmation, one needs *Sruti*, *Yukti* and *Anubhava*.) Among these , the first one does not apply to literature. Therefore we shall consider the other two for this purpose.

God has incarnations. Do we have the proof of *Āpatavākya* to prove that *ŚrīRāma* is also one of such incarnations? Let us discuss this now.

"God incarnates in different ways, without taking birth (ie without the stains associated with birth and life)"

“अजायमानो बहुधा विजायते” (यजुर्वेद पुरुषसूक्त)

"One who praises his birth, is indeed the blessed one" declare the *Śrutis*.

“यो जातमस्य महतो महि ब्रवात्” (*Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa*) In the *Gītā*, which in itself is the embodiment of the *Upanishads*, *Brahmavidya*, and *yogaśāstra*, Lord *Kṛṣṇa* the greatest *āpta* declares with a vow — "Whenever *dharma* declines and *Adharma* rises up, I shall incarnate myself (to

protect *dharma* and destroy *adharma*.) "Even though I am birthless, imperishable, and the Lord of all the creatures i.e. all the living beings, I shall keep the *Prakṛti* under my control and shall appear (concealed) in the veil of my *Maya*"

(गीता. अ-४ श्लोक ७-६ “यदा यदा हि धर्मस्य ग्लानिर्भवति भारत । अभ्युत्थानमधर्मस्य तदात्मानं सृजाम्यहम्” “अजोऽपि सन्नव्ययात्मा भूतानामीश्वरोऽपि सन् प्रकृतिं स्वमधिष्ठाय सम्भवाम्यात्ममायया ॥)

God is not subject to *karma*. *Āpatavākyas* state clearly that such births and incarnations happen at the will of God, in certain specific times.

There are many such *āptavākyas* which support the view that *ŚrīRāma* also is one of such incarnations of god.

Āptavākyas pronounce that *ŚrīRāma* is the almighty god and an incarnation. The *Upanishads*, *Śrīmad Rāmāyaṇa*-the *ādikāvya* which is a form of the *Veda*, the *Mahābhārata* which is renowned as the fifth *veda* and also a great *Itihāsa*, the precious *purāṇas*, the words of *Alvars* who were preeminent *jnānis*, and the nectar like words and the songs of *Ācharyas* declare this truth clearly. We quote a few of them here:

- ॐ महाविष्णुं सच्चिदानन्दलक्षणं रामचन्द्रं द्रष्ट्वा सर्वाङ्गसुन्दरं मुनयो वनवासिनो विस्मिता बभूवुः तद्गं होचुः (कृष्णोपनिषत्-खण्ड १)

2. राम त्वं परमात्मासि सच्चिदानन्दविग्रहः ।
इदानीं त्वां रघुश्रेष्ठ प्रणमामि मुहुर्मुहुः ॥ (मुक्तिकोपनिषत्)
3. राम एव परं ब्रह्म राम एव परं तपः ।
राम एव परं तत्त्वं श्रीरामो ब्रह्मतास्कम् ॥ (रामरहस्य -I)
4. पुत्रत्वं तु गते विष्णौ राज्ञोऽस्य सुमहात्मनः ।
(रामायण, बालकाण्ड 17-11)
5. कौसल्याऽजनयद्रामं सर्वलक्षणसम्युतम् ।
विष्णोरर्थं महाभागं पुत्रमिक्ष्वाकुनन्दनम् ॥ (बाल 18-11)
6. अक्षयं मधुहन्तारं जानामि त्वां सुरोत्तम ॥ (रा. बाल 17-18)
7. प्रीयते सततं रामः स हि विष्णुस्सनातनः ॥ (रा. युद्ध 131-115)
8. सीता लक्ष्मीर्भवान्विष्णुः देवः कृष्णः प्रजापतिः ॥ (रा. युद्ध 20-29)
9. त्रयाणामपि लोकानां कार्यार्थं मम सम्भवः ॥ (रा. उत्तर 104-18)
10. कृत्वात्मानं महाबाहुः चतुर्धा विष्णुरव्ययः ।
लोके राम इति ख्यातः तेजसा भास्करोपमः । (म.भा. सभाषर्व 38)
11. अथ दाशरथिर्वीरो रामो नाम महाबलः ।
विष्णुर्मानुषरूपेण चचार वसुधातले (म.भा. वन 148-31)
12. अस्मत्प्रसादसुमुखः कलया कलेश
इक्ष्वाकुवंश अवतीर्य गुरोर्निदेशे ॥ (भागवत ॥ 7-23)
13. *Anrunernda nisāsararai kavarnota venkanai
kākuttan (Amalanādi pirān II)*
14. *Munnupuhā kausalai tan maṇimayiruvāyttavane
- (Periya tirumoli)*
15. नमो देवदेवाय रामाय तुभ्यम्
नमो जानकीजीवितेशाय तुभ्यम् (श्रीङ्कराचार्य, रामभुजङ्ग स्तोत्र)

16. सत्यकाम, सत्यसङ्कल्प, आपत्सख, काकुत्स्थ, श्रीमन्नारायण,
(श्रीरामानुजाचार्य, श्रीरङ्गगद्य)
17. आनन्दरूपत्वात्पूर्णत्वात् लोकरमणत्वच्चरामः.....
....स एवैको भार्गव दाशरथि कृष्णाद्याः (श्रीमध्वाचार्य, गीताभाष्य X)

In addition to this, it is well known that exalted personages like *Śrītulsīdāsa* the best in the clan of saints, *Śrī Thyāgarāja Svāmi* who became blessed by the experience of the ultimate through music and who was the king among *yogis*, and the supreme in *Rāmabhakti*, *ŚrīRāmadāsa* of *Bhadrācala* etc., have praised the glory of the divine incarnation of *ŚrīRāma* through compositions and songs, which are nothing but the elixir of their personal experience. When the above statements which are quoted as *āptavākyas* are subject to discernment, some doubts arise. Unless they (the doubts) are cleared, we may hesitate to repose trust in their credibility. These doubts are as follows:-

1. The statements quoted from the *Upanishads* are not very ancient like the *R̥g-Veda samhita*. Even the *upanishads* (quoted above) do not figure in the ten *Upanishads* like *Īśāvāsyā*, which are regarded as authority by the *Ācāryas* in their commentaries of the *prasthānatraya*. They are books of a later date. Can they be termed as *āptavākyas* when they are not revered by the ancient traditions?

2. The above *ślokas* quoted from the *Rāmāyaṇa* were not found in the original body of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. They appear either at the beginning or at the end of *Rāmāyaṇa*. They are all interpolations added later. This conclusion becomes inevitable, even if we judge from the aspect of the style (of that part of the epic) "The part of the story taken to prove that *ŚrīRāma* is an incarnation seems to have a crack at such nodes."-goes a remark. Can the status of *āptavākyas* be accorded to such artificially added and interpolated *ślokas*?

3. The same argument is in the case of the *Mahābhārata* also. The whole of this epic is not the work of a single author. Interpolated *ślokas* have been added to the epic at different times. In that epic (*Mahābhārata*) the portions which describe *ŚrīRāma* and *Śrī Kṛṣṇa*, are the added ones in the third stage of it's composition, after the beginning of the Christian era. How can we indeed respect them as ancient *āptavākyas*?

4. The *Ālvārs* also are of recent times. *Śrī Śaṅkara* and other *ācharyas* are also of recent times. *Śrī Tulasīdās* and *Tyāgarāja* came much later. Can we consider their words as *āptavākyas* on par with the *Vedas* etc which are very ancient?-These are those questions.

If we take a look at the true characteristics of the term *āptavākya* in the right perspective, all the doubts vanish. *Āptavākya* means a statement which is conformable to truth. They are the words which emerge as a result of *tapas*, *jnāna* and *samādhi* for the benefit of all the living beings. The question of ancient or modern does not arise there at all. It is a sort of blind belief to say that all that is old is true. Such beliefs prevailed more in the olden days. The Poet laureate of *Bhārata*, the great *Kālidāsa*, boldly declared “पुराणमित्येव न साधु सर्वम्” (*Mālavikāgnimitra* - introduction) Contrastingly, in the present times, another kind of a blind belief, i.e. "All that is modern is truth." is seen well rooted in many people.

This is another blind belief. “नवीनमित्येव न साधु सर्वम्” (only because something is modern or new, it need not be entirely true) is the message that has to be spread by us now. As a matter of fact, the seeker of truth should rout both types of blind beliefs. "Anything that emerges (in a particular point of time) will be new to that time. Later it becomes old. Therefore, this newness or oldness will not be a cause for any defect. Neither will be a cause for merit" - The following words of *Śrī Vedānta Deśika* can guide one towards proper judgement.

तदात्वे नूतनं सर्वं आयत्यां च पुरातनम् ।

न दोषायैतदुभयं न गुणाय च कल्पते ॥ (यादवाभ्युदय, सर्ग ८)

"No one welcomes an ailment just because it is age-old and continues from generations. Either no one desires for some disease because it happens to be the latest. In the same way a superstition, whether new or old is to be given up; But a counsel regarding health matters or attaining amṛtatva is always sacred whether it is old or new ". — These were the words of our Mahāguru, which we recall here respectfully.

So, as the above sayings (*āptavākyas*) are endowed with the features of true experience, we honour it even if they happen to be old. We respect them even if they are new. Because, truth is ever ancient and ever new. After having respectfully accepted these *āptavākyas*, one should put them to test on the touchstone of *sādhana*, and only then they are to be adored completely. This is the path acceptable to the discerning persons.

Now from the point of view of history and literature it is difficult to conclude that the above quotes from the *Upanishads* are of recent origin. The observations made by looking at the language and style, can only be an opinion and not a conclusion. The strength of enlightenment is required to pronounce a verdict from the point of

view of philosophical evolution, Bookish knowledge, linguistic cleverness or intellectual acrobatics will not work in such matters. *Kṛshṇopanishad* and *Rāmarahasyopanishad* deal with the experiences of *yoga*, which are beyond the cognizance of senses. Can we say for sure that these yogic experiences did not exist during the time of the composition of *Aithareyopanishad*? And so it is not right to assertively state that the *Upanishads* which mention these experiences are of recent origin. Further we cannot say with audacity that we have the complete collection of the texts of the *Vedas*. "We have no right to suppose that we have even one hundredth part of the religious and popular poetry that existed during the Vedic age." (Six systems of Indian Philosophy page 41) says a modern critic of the *Vedas*.

When such is the case, how is it possible to judge whether the matters pertaining to the *Vedas* are modern or ancient?

Let us now examine the argument that the *ślokas* in the *Rāmāyaṇa* & *Mahābhārata* which depict ŚrīRāma as God, have been added very recently, and are only interpolations, and the authors of (these two) epics did not consider ŚrīRāma as God at all.

First, let us take up *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*. Some critics who say that the *ślokas* which state that

ŚrīRāma is an incarnation are later additions, advance the following reasons: There appears a wide gap between the original and these new additions in such portions. They appear like grafted limbs in a human body. And even without those portions, there would be no harm to the story.

Some critics who have studied the epic well, do not entertain the impression that these parts appear to be unnatural parts and are the grafted ones. They have found these as natural parts in the body of the epic. One of the modern scholars who has studied the human side of *ŚrīRāma*'s character in depth, writes clearly, "*Vālmīki*'s opinion was without doubt, that *ŚrīRāma* was God himself. The notion that the aspect of divinity was imposed on *ŚrīRāma*'s character later, is only a conjecture. The story told by *Vālmīki* thoroughly stands on the foundation of faith that *ŚrīRāma* is divine. This is indeed noteworthy. ("Those who think that, to the kernel of the story representing *ŚrīRāma* as a man, subsequent ages added elements of divinity are only guessing, while the story itself, as it is told by *Vālmīki*, has this foundation on this faith and there is no mistake about it. *Vālmīki* says in so many words that *Rāma* was God." (Lectures on the *Rāmāyaṇa* by (V.S.S. Shastry p. 5)

How is it that the same topic can appear differently to the readers of *Rāmāyaṇa*? May be, it is

because of differences in their *samskāras* and their views. If one looks at *ŚrīRāma*'s story with a firm impression that God can never take birth as a human being as it is unnatural, the parts of the story which refer to *ŚrīRāma* as divine, appear to have chinks. This is the result of their prejudice. When one looks at the story through the traditional pair of glasses of faith, that *ŚrīRāma* is God himself, those parts of the story appear to be naturally coherent. This also is a result of prejudice. Some people state that when *Rāmāyaṇa* was read for the first time without getting exposed to traditional education or criticism, it was felt that *Vālmīki*'s *Rāma* was God himself. Later, after reading some critical works, the parts which state his divinity, appear to be parts having fissures, and this is our opinion now. This is a kind of '*pascima graha*'. Now without getting occupied by any kind of such prejudices, let us have a dip again and again, in the river of *Rāma*'s story which originated from the hills of *Vālmīki*. Let us recite the epic with faith and with the same poetic sensibilities of *Vālmīki*. Then only we should with an upright mind, spell out the impression obtained. Even when we observe from the viewpoint of the structure of the plot, the context of the story and style etc., we feel that many *ślokas* which state the divinity of *Rāma* are just the natural parts of *Rāmāyaṇa*.

If one wants to judge the true spirit of *Vālmīki* he has to have the (inner) vision of a *yogi*. It is because *Rāmāyaṇa* is an *ārshagrantha* only. Only from the vision of a sage, its purport can be stated. And with that vision alone, the reigning truth can be perceived, which is free from attributes such as space, time and personal likes (and dislikes) We have come across the *Āptas*, who are endowed with such a vision and they declare "We have experienced in reality, both the divine and the human form of *ŚrīRāma*. All men with such a vision can similarly experience *Him*." Why should we argue that *Vālmīki* did not have such a vision?

One may say that the story of *Rāmāyaṇa* can continue even if the parts which state *Rāma* as God are dropped. In response, it can be said that only the human part of the story can continue. And (it may be noted that) even if some aspects in the human part are dropped then also the story will continue. For example let us assume a story written by a poet with a theme like this—In the past there was a king. Once he disguised himself and travelled to another country for some purpose. After participating in a number activities he returned to his homeland in his true real form." "In this story, even if we drop the parts which delineate his kingship, his travelling to a different country in disguise and getting back, the rest of the story in

itself may develop into a fine story. And just because of this, it wont be proper to assert that, only the disguised form of the king is his real form, the story related to that part only is genuine, and the remaining parts are interpolated.

Even to state that in the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*, the *ślokas* which depict *Rāma* as God, appear in the beginning and the ending parts of the epic and therefore they are interpolations, is not correct. Because even in other parts of the epic, one can find *ślokas* which suggest the divinity of *Rāma*. Example 1) The part where *ŚrīRāma* bestows higher worlds to *Jatāyu* and tells him "I have granted you permission to go to the higher worlds." "मया त्वं समनुज्ञातो गच्छ लोकान् अनुत्तमान्" 2) *Rāma*'s granting of a boon to a place called *marukāntāra*. "वरं तस्मै ददौ विद्वान् मरवेऽमरविक्रमः" "रामस्य वरदानाच्च शिवपन्था बभूव ह" (*Yuddha kāṇḍa*; canto 22, *śloka* 41-43) (*Rāmāyaṇa* Edited by the Law Journal of India). (We can find many such examples).

Again a question may arise -

"The *ślokas* that depict the divinity of *Rāma* appear in abundance mostly either at the beginning or at the end part of the epic. The *ślokas* that explain the human aspect of *Rāma* are seen in a greater number in the remaining parts of the epic. What is the reason for this?" The answer to this

question too is found in the story of the king given above as an example.

Further the *Rāmāyaṇa* says - Gods supplicated to *Mahāviṣṇu*— "*Brahma* has granted a boon that *Rāvaṇa* cannot be killed by Gods. We have to honour that. Therefore you have to take incarnation as a human being and slay him." The Lord granted the boon "so be it", and by His own will, He was born as the son of King *Daśaratha*.

तत्र त्वं मानुषो भूत्वा प्रवृद्धं लोककण्टकम् ।

अवध्यं दैवतैर्विष्णो समरे जहि रावणम् ॥

वधाय देवशत्रूणां नृणां लोके मनःकुरु ।

मानुषं रूपमास्थाय रावणं जहि संयुगे ॥

सन्तुष्टः प्रददौ तस्मै राक्षसाय वरं प्रभुः ।

नानाविधेभ्यो भूतेभ्यो भयं नान्यत्र मानुषात् ॥

..... एवं दत्त्वा वरं देवो, देवानां विष्णुरात्मवान् ।

मानुषे चिन्तयामास जन्मभूमिमथात्मनः ॥

(बालकाण्ड, सर्ग 15-16, श्लोक 20-29, 3-61)

Therefore, it is appropriate that all his acts match the human behaviour, in the middle part of the epic. Or else it may appear like a weakness in the God of gods. A story is generally cited in this context as an example. The performance of the play '*Dhruvanārāyaṇa*' was going on. The director of the company was playing the role of Lord *Nārāyaṇa*. A small boy in that company was playing the role of *Dhruva*. The *Nārāyaṇa* of that drama told *Dhruva*

'My son, ask me any boon (and I will grant it to you.)" Pat came the request from *Dhruva*, "Please grant me the salary of three months." (That young fellow was worried about the salary that was not paid to him for three months.) Had *ŚrīRāma* indulged in revealing his divinity again and again in the middle of the epic, he too would have become a similar "*bacca*". He would not have remained '*Ātmavān*' He would have become a weightless person swayed by the force of senses and forgetting his vow and would cause *Rasābhāsa*. Thus *ŚrīRāma* stating vocally that he is a human being, his suffering from the separation of dear ones like other human beings, finding happiness in the company of friends and relatives etc., only demonstrate his behaviour in tune with his vow. It also helps to enjoy *Rāmāyaṇa* as a *Lokacarita* sentimentally.

Same scholars argue — "In the *Rāmāyaṇa* (with the exception of *Uttarakāṇḍa*) the abode of the Lord is not referred to as *Vaikunṭha*. Instead, only the words such as '*svarloka*', *Brahmaloka*, are seen. '*स्वर्लोकमागच्छ सुरेन्द्रगुप्तम्*', '*रामो राज्यमुपासित्वा ब्रह्मलोकं प्रयास्यति*'. (*Rāmāyaṇa*, *Bālakāṇḍa* canto 15-1) Therefore, *ŚrīRāma* is not an incarnation of *Mahāviṣṇu*. He belongs to the age when the whole purpose of life was the attainment of *svargaloka* or *brahmaloka*". This is not right. Because, *Upanishads* themselves use the words "*svah*" and

"*brahmaloka*" to mean "*Parabrahmasthanā*". For example: 'आप्नोति स्वराज्यम्', 'ब्रह्मणस्सायुज्यं सलोकतां यान्ति', 'तस्माद्ब्रह्मणो महिमानमाप्नोति' (*Taittirīya Upanishad Brāhmaṇa*)

Some critics argue -

"In the *Uttarakāṇḍa* of *Rāmāyaṇa*, it is stated very clearly that ŚrīRāma is *Vaikunṭhapati*. But this part of the epic is not the composition of sage *Vālmīki*. There is no tradition of doing *pārāyaṇa* of this part of *Rāmāyaṇa*. From the view point of the style of composition also, it is inferior compared to the other cantos. It resembles the *Purāṇas*", Our answer to this is, "The *Uttarakāṇḍa* too, like other cantos, has interpolations. The parts where incongruities between the earlier and later parts of the story, unnaturalness, ideological contrariety etc exist, may be termed as places of crack and interpolations. But there is no evidence to term the entire *Uttarakāṇḍa* as an interpolation." "When such is the case, why is it that in tradition, the *Pārāyaṇa* of the *Uttarakāṇḍa* is not done widely?" The house holders generally perform the *Pārāyaṇa* for getting progeny, increase of life span and good health. "कुटुम्बवृद्धिं, धनधान्यवृद्धिं, स्त्रियश्च मुख्याः सुखमुत्तमं च", "आयुष्यमारोग्यकरं यशस्यं सभ्रातृकं बुद्धिकरं शुभं च" (*Pattābhisheka Kāṇḍa*) And so, Rāma's coronation itself is the natural *maṅgala* (auspicious end) in the *Rāmāyaṇa*. There also the *Phalaśruthi* (that is

stated) is quite in keeping with that. Therefore it is natural that a large number of people do the *Pārāyaṇa* only upto that part. It is not improper for people who mainly desire the higher worlds to take up the *Pārāyaṇa* of *Uttarakāṇḍa*, which describes the ascent of *Rāma* with his retinue to *Vaikuntha*, and the attainment of *Vaishnavapada*. At this juncture, we respectfully remember the thoughtful words of ŚrīRanga Mahāguru who said - "The natural antyamangala for this *ārshakāvya* is accomplished in respectfully reinstating the *Ādipurusha* who incarnated, in his original place. The number seven is essential to the number of *Kāṇḍas* in *Rāmāyaṇa*, philosophically speaking. And we consider that all the seven *Kāṇḍas* including *Uttarakāṇḍa*, is the composition of *Vālmīki*."

Even in his (i.e. ŚrīRāma's) time all the people did not know that ŚrīRāma was God and an incarnation of God. Even in later times, unrefined and uncultured people do not entertain such a faith. This applies to all incarnations. In *Mahābhārata*, we come across *Śiśupāla* who refused to accept ŚrīKṛṣṇa as an incarnation. (अवजानन्ति मां मूढाः मानुषीं तनुमाश्रितम्) Śrī Kṛṣṇa himself says in the *gīta* "Fools disregard me as I have taken the human form" Even in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Brahmarshi Viśvāmitra* says - "I know well that *Rāma* is a great soul and a truthful

valiant person. Brilliant *Vasishṭa* knows this. All those who are in penance know this." We have to make note of this. Later also, people who realise he is divine, believe it. Some believe even without such a vision; and some don't believe at all. But there is no philosophical evidence to state that *Vālmīki* who was a *tapasvi* and a great realized soul, did not himself believe it. It has no internal or external evidence either.

ŚrīRāma's story appears in the *Mahābhārata* also and several places associated with him are referred to as pilgrimage centres. We have noted the places (instances) where it has been clearly stated that He is an incarnation of God. As these places (spots) match the (references) in both the structure of the theme and style, we honour them as genuine only and not interpolations.

Why is that in the *Amarakośa*, a relatively recent work, the name of ŚrīRāma has not been considered a synonym of *Vishṇu*? (were there no people at all at that time who considered ŚrīRāma as an incarnation of *Mahavishṇu*?) It is not so. Even the *Matsya*, *Kūrma* and other *avatāras* also are not considered as synonyms of *Vishṇu*. Therefore we need not isolate the incarnation of ŚrīRāma only, in this context. It was a time when devotion to *Lord Kṛshṇa* was at its peak and probably that was the reason why only Śrī *Kṛshṇa's* names were

considered synonyms of *Vishṇu*. "*Kṛshṇa* is the ultimate principle "ईश्वरः परमः कृष्णः". The *Matsya*, *Kūrma* and other incarnations are all his incarnations. ("दशाकृतिकृते कृष्णाय तुभ्यं नमः") - such were the impressions (in those days). (It is also possible that the author of *Amarakośa* was a *Bouddha* and his intention was not to consider *Rāma* as an incarnation of *Vishṇu*, but to adore him as a form of *Bodhisatva*. In *Daśaratajātaka* which is a *Bouddha* treatise, ŚrīRāma has been termed as '*Rāma Pandita*' and a *Bodhisatva*.) But no repudiation of *Rāmāvatāratva* (The fact that *Rāma* as an incarnation) is seen here.

Some say "*Vālmīki* might have honoured ŚrīRāma as God himself and the posterity also might have continued that. But the fame of *Rāmāyaṇa* suffered a wane because of considering *Rāma* as God. Those who argue on these lines should look at the following aspects.

How far should the fame of the epic spread ? What is the value should one attach to it? Answers to these questions depend upon the level of the mind of its readers and the *purushārthas* they desire for. Even if by the expounding of the divinity of ŚrīRāma the fame and value of *Rāmāyaṇa* suffer a wane, there is no need to raise a balderdash over that. Because, truth is above fame and gains. And with a thoughtful look, we feel that readers who

emotionally take *Rāma* as both a human and an incarnation and worship him, are benefitted more. Because, by this kind of *Anusandhāna* readers have been able to plunge in a bliss which is not limited just to the conception of the ideal humanness but in the *Parabrahmānanda* of *Rāma*, by worshipping him as *paramātman*. That *Ānanda* is said to be a billion times the human pleasure, incomparable, and very difficult to obtain. “यल्लाभानापरो लाभः यत्सुखान्नापरं सुखम्” The value of *Rāmāyaṇa* increased manifold by securing that (bliss). And we feel that it's fame has spread both in the mundane world and in the spheres of divinity and spirituality.

Let us now examine the arguments that God takes no incarnations and the belief that he takes incarnations is against *Śāstras* and against reasoning. Here the term *śāstra* means the command of God, It is the command which elevates the beings who follow it “शासनात् त्राणनाच्चैव शास्त्रमित्यभिधीयते” The *śrutis* and *smṛtis* which command thus, are also *Śāstras* only.

We have quoted earlier a number of statements from scriptures which expound that God takes *avatāras* at appropriate times, out of his own *Satyasaṅkalpa*. “यो जातमस्य महतो महि ब्रवात्”. (Those are blessed indeed who extol the *avatāras* of *Mahāviṣṇu*, the *Mahātma*) “अजायमानो बहुधा विजायते” (Without being born, he is born in many

modes) “सम्भवाम्यात्ममायया” (I manifest by my veiling power) “तदात्मानं सृजाम्यहम्” (then I create myself). These are some of God's own sayings which we may remember here. When such is the case, how is it right to argue that the theory of incarnations of God is against the *Śāstras*, - we can ask.

And in the same way, there are scriptural statements in abundance, which proclaim clearly that God is all pervading, present within everything, birthless and never changing. Is not the opinion given above quite against them? Does it not tantamount to an offence against God to attribute *vikāras* like birth to him who is birthless and pure? Where from does the omnipresent God makes a descent or an ascent, and to where? Was his seat in *Vaikunṭha* vacant during his descent from there and till his return? Who was the incharge in his place in his absence ? Many may wonder.

Such questions and subquestions arise because of the lack of comprehension of the correct sense of the word ‘*Avatāra*’ stated in the *Śāstras*. Actually there is no contradiction in *śāstraic* statements occurring in both the categories, though they may appear opposed to each other. Because, spiritually speaking, God has no ascent or descent. He is complete everywhere and at all times. He does not have *karma* related births, really speaking. *Śāstras* attribute incarnation to him in the figurative sense.

Whenever he manifests himself to the *Jīvas* here, by his will that (manifestation) is called *avatāra* in the *Śāstras*. *ŚrīmadanandaTīrta* (*Madhvācārya*) presents the same purport in his *Gītābhāṣya*. “जगृहे इति तु व्यक्तिः वसुदेवादिषु जात इव प्रतीये”

In the *Bhagavadgītā*, the word “सम्भवामि = देहवानिव भवामि, जात इव आत्ममायया”

(Please refer to the commentaries of the *Ācāryas-Śaṅkara*, *Rāmānuja* and *Madhva* for the *ślokas* 5 and 6 of the fourth chapter of the *Bhagavadgītā*). आत्मनो मायया, न परमार्थतो लोकवत्” Here *Śrī Śaṅkarācārya* also has bestowed the same meaning. The ambrosial words of *Śrī Raṅgamahāguru* may berespectuflly recalled here. He said—ಆದಿಮಧ್ಯ ಅನ್ತರಹಿತವಾದ ಆ ಪರಮಾತ್ಮನಿಗೆ ಜನ್ಮದಿನವೆನ್ನುವುದು ನಗುವ ಮಾತು.” (The concept of ‘birthday of god’ itself sounds funny because God has no states such as beginning, middle and end). “When we say, “here the sun is not born, here he was seen,” the statement is only with reference to people who are located at different longitudes, and latitudes and it does not apply to the sun.” “The birth of god has originated in us and it has not happened in the real sense”.

In this way the incarnation of God is just a manifestation and not a descent in the real sense and so in no way it contradicts his completeness and all-pervasiveness. *BhagavadRāmānuja* in his

Gītābhāṣya states that incarnations of God are out of his own free will and not out of the obligations of *Karma*. He is not touched by the blemishes and faults related to birth. “अपहतपाप्मत्वादि समस्त कल्याणगुणात्मकत्वं सर्वमैशं स्वभावमजहत्..... आत्मसङ्कल्पेन देवादिरूपः सम्भवामि स्वेनैव रूपेण स्वेच्छया सम्भवामीत्यर्थः” “अजायमानो बहुधा विजायते” The meaning behind the vedic words quoted earlier is also the same.

Those who oppose the theory of God’s incarnations put forth another important objection. They argue that even the stupid does not do anything without any benefit.

“प्रयोजनमनुद्दिश्य न मन्दोऽपि प्रवर्तते” When such is the case, for what purpose should He the *Jñānaprabhu*, who has all the desires fulfilled, take an incarnation?

Devotees who have faith in his incarnation say that He takes the incarnations only to protect the virtuous and vanquish the wicked, and He has no selfish motives in that. They quote the famous words of God-

परित्राणाय साधूनां विनाशाय च दुष्कृताम् ।

धर्मसंस्थापनार्थाय सम्भवामि युगे युगे ॥

“Is not the Lord omnipresent? Omniscient? and Omnipotent? When he can fulfill all these purposes without taking incarnations, why should he take the trouble of taking *avatāras*? - some may ask. To

this, the devotees say - "Though he can fulfill them without incarnations, should he not will to fulfill them by incarnations? Doesn't the Lord of everything have freedom with regard to the methods and modes of his acts? Has he not proclaimed that he has such a will? Has he not declared "I will create myself when *Dharma* wanes and *Adharma* raises its head? “यदा यदा हि धर्मस्य ग्लानिर्भवति भारत । अभ्युत्थानमधर्मस्य तदात्मानं सृजामृहम्” - गीता अ. 4-7.), they say.

Some have commented on the above words of the *Gītā* thus — "*ŚrīKṛṣṇa* was not a God as such. He was a *Dharmātma* and wished to protect *Dharma*. And so, there is nothing wrong in his aspiring for taking incarnations from time to time to safeguard the virtuous and vanquish the wicked. It is indeed said “परोपकाराय सतां विभूतयः” (*Satyāratha prakāśa ullāsa* - 7.)—and thus have refuted the theory of incarnation of *ŚrīKṛṣṇa*. But this argument (commentary) cannot be honoured, because it is contrary to *Śrī Kṛṣṇa*'s own words viz: (अजोपि सन्नव्ययात्मा भूतानामीश्वरोपि सन्) (I am birthless, immortal and the Lord of all beings) (*Gītā* 4-6)

God takes incarnations mainly for the sake of his devotees. *Śrī Vedāntadeśika* experiences the Lord's merciful greatness in the words, "*Anbarke Avatarikkum Māyan*" This great devotee lists ten intentions of God for taking the incarnations viz., to

make his devotees experience happiness, to make them surrender at his feet, to become an inseparable kin in various ways, to help to attain *purushārthas*, to help to make the mind rid evil objects of desire, to help the mind to get fixed on him, to rout out the sins, to cause enlightenment and to make the devotee totally merged in Him.

"Inbattil irainjudalil isaiyum petril

Ihalāda palluravil, irāgam mātril,

Tan patril, vinaivilakkil, taruvokkattil

Tattuvatte uṇartudalil, tannai ākkil".

Śrī Raṅgamahāguru used to classify the incarnations, as the ones visible only to the antardṛṣṭi and the other ones which display the glories to the external word also, which are the replica of glories seen by the inner eye. He used to state that Narasimha, Varāha and others belong to the first category, and ŚrīRāma, Śrī Kṛṣṇa and others, to the second category. The second type of incarnations are enjoyable even by ordinary people. It can be noted in this context that the divyamaṅgala vigraha which is enjoyed and experienced by the external sense organs, can be invoked inside also, can be meditated upon, making it an auspicious base, and can be a great aid in the accomplishment of the ultimate Purushārtha.

Some people deride saying—"It is believed that the Lord incarnates in this world whenever *adharma* waxes. According to Hindu belief, *Narasimha*, *ŚrīRāma*, *Śrī Kṛṣṇa* and other incarnations happened in *Bhārata* only. So, from a long time *Bhāratha* is the only country where *adharma* was full to the brim and overflowing." But we observe that such derisions can be brought to an end by giving a serious consideration to the truth that such *avatāras* might have occurred in other countries also in different times, but, it was indeed the distinction of the sages of our country who identified such *avatāras*, respected them and incorporated them harmoniously in our culture and civilization.

"How can *avatāras* more than one, can happen in the same period of time.? It is said that *ŚrīRāma* is the *avatāra* of *Vishṇu*. How can it be possible that *Paraśurāma* also, regarded as an *avatāra* of *Vishṇu*, was a contemporary of *Rāma*?" - some may ask. It should be understood that it is not something impossible as such. As *Śrīmadbhāgavata* puts it, the *avatārās* are like many canals springing from a great lake." "यथाविदासिनः कुल्याः सरसस्युः सहस्रशः" (*Śrīmadbhāgavata*, part 1-3-26.) There is nothing absurd indeed in a number of canals emerging from a great lake and keep flowing! This (the

incarnations) can be compared to electricity flowing through many electric bulbs at the same time.

What is the number of these *avatāras*? What are their types? These questions are also worthy of examination here. *Avatāras* are infinite and innumerable, say the *Śāstras*. It is natural that they too are in thousands like the Lord's countless auspicious-purposes (wills) and actions. "अवतारा ह्यसङ्ख्याता हरेः सत्त्वनिधेर्द्विजाः (*Bhāgavata*, 1-3-26) Even so, important *avatāras* of *Vishṇu* are considered to be three, ten, twenty four etc. Which are done depending on the times, circumstances and actions.

Incarnations are classified as real (*sākshāt*) *avatāras* and *anupraveśāvatāras* (entering into great human souls for a limited time as incarnation). *ŚrīRāma* and *Śrī Kṛṣṇa* etc are the examples for the former type. In the latter type, God bestows his auspicious presence in some blessed persons for an intended period of time, and thereby accomplishes a supreme purpose. Those blessed persons become worthy of worship like God himself, during that period. *Sanaka* and others, *Prajāpatīs*, emperor *Prthu* etc., belong to this category.

In some contexts, incarnations are also analyzed as *pūrṇāvatāras* and *amśavatāras*. In the former, the Lord is endowed with all the six divine virtues. In the second, only a few those *gunas* are seen. For example, we see all the six qualities

namely *jnāna*, strength, wealth, valour, power and radiance in *Vāsudeva*. In *San̄karshaṇa*, *Pradyumna* and *Aniruddha*, only a set of two such *guṇas* are seen correspondingly. But when associated with the *mūla*, these *aśas* also become *pūrṇas*, virtually speaking.

We have previously taken note of the classification of *avatāras* viz. *avatāras* of the inner world and *avatāras* of both the inner and the outer worlds.

Of the above, to which category does *ŚrīRāma* belong? As per the categorization, he is a real *avatāra*. According to the third categorization, he is an incarnation of both the inner and the outer worlds. Some say that he can be considered as an *ardhāmśavatāra* as per the second categorization and quote the words of *Rāmāyaṇa* “विष्णोरर्धं महाभागम्”, in support of their statement. This manifestation of "half power" is only for a specific accomplishment, and in actuality, he is (always) complete. If a millionaire happens to be doing of a business amounting to around Rs. 5,00,000 for some purpose, he continues to be millionaire only, isn't it? In the same way our *Mūla Rāma* is *Pūrṇa*. Once, a person who belonged to the *Kṛshṇa* sect went to *Śrī Tulasīdās*, a great devotee of *ŚrīRāma* and bragged—"Our *Kṛshṇa* is a *Purṇavatāra* and your *Rāma* is an *Ardhāvatāra*". *Tulasīdas* who was

an ultimate in *jnānaśakti* replied, "Our *Rāma* is not an incarnation at all. He is *Pūrṇa Śuddha Brahmaparātpara*" (complete, purest and the greatest *Brahma*) and thereby taught that person a lesson, goes a story.

Some may say—"Śrī *Kṛshṇa* performed miracles like lifting the *Govardhana* hill, trampling the vicious serpent '*Kāliṅga* etc. So we can agree that he is an incarnation. How can *ŚrīRāma* be a divine incarnation, as he displayed only the human behaviour and did not perform any superhuman act?" This is a weak objection of the laymen, who think that the feature of an incarnation is performing a miracle. Performing earthly miracles is not a great thing for the God of gods, who is a power all-in-all, and who creates, sustains and destroys the whole universe. One should understand that either showing or not showing superhuman activity in HIS divine incarnations, is subject to HIS will. We have to remember that the activities of *ŚrīKṛshṇa* were not worldly miracles but divine philosophical acts.

"If the deeds of God in the incarnations are the acts of HIS divine form, why then the term '*avatāra*' has come to be used, at least in the formal sense to denote descending? It is only because GOD in those incarnations appears like descending to the level of humans by HIS actions and by his human activities

such as eating, speaking etc., and therefore we say that HE descended. In reality he always dwells in his divine form only. One requires the vision of *jnāna* only to comprehend honestly this divine incarnation. And in the suprasensory world too, when it is felt that god has descended, it is termed as a divine incarnation of the inner world.

Thus, (it is clear that) God takes incarnations. We have explained that ŚrīRāma is an *avatara*, supported by a discussion on the objections and answers pertaining to that. And relevant lines from *Srutis* and *smṛtis* have been quoted as proof. Even arguments have been put forth. It is indeed possible to interpret the quotes from *Srutis* etc in a different way. Counter arguments can be advanced for arguments. But the experience of pure souls cannot be refuted. This is because, when the mind becomes pure as a result of *tapas*, *jnāna* and *samādhi*, truth can be experienced by all people of all the places at all times. Only such pure souls, after identifying (understanding) such truths, have the right to instruct. As a number of *jnānis* who have had such experiences have extolled the glory of Śrī Rāma's incarnation, we also adore HIM as a great *avatāra* only.

Then wans't ŚrīRāma an ideal human being? He was, and there is no doubt about it. The intention of Vālmīki was to experience Rāma's character (life)

eminence even from that angle, and become blessed. (It has to be noted that we don't intend to belong to the group of people, who keep attributing divinity artificially to all the human deeds of Rāma and making *Rāmāyaṇa* a composition bereft of *Rasa* (poetic sentiment)). Also in the point that Śrī Rāma is a deity known as *Upendra*, who provides help to *Indra*, there is truth. But, when one discerns in the fathoms of experience, it can be known that ŚrīRāma, is indeed an ocean of enlightenment and compassion, and the one who bestows the pearl of liberation.

Śrī Raṅgamahāguru declares—"The Rāma of Vālmīki is a human for the external eyes, a deity for the subtle eyes and the ultimate light for the highest vision."

Some may ask "What was the necessity of dilating the issue and discussing whether Rāma was a god-incarnation or a human, when the elaboration was pertaining to the festival of *Rāmanavamī*?" The answer is, because this theory of incarnation may arise when the elaboration of the festivals like *Nṛsimha jayanti* and *Kṛṣṇa Jayanti* are taken up. This also happens to be an important question related to an essential custom occurring in the tradition of the *Rṣhis*. So, if a satisfactory answer is found hereby, we feel that it may help in the assimilation of the points in that sphere, giving no room for any doubts when the

discussion pertaining to other festivals is taken up in the coming chapters.

When should this festival be celebrated ?

In this background, the day on which it has to be celebrated, the modalities, finer aspects, benefits and such other matters may be taken up for discussion. Firstly let us take up the matter regarding the day on which *Rāmanavamī* should to be celebrated.

Śrī Raṅgamahāguru used to say "Spiritually speaking, *ŚrīRāma* is the Supreme God. He is a divine light that always sports in the hearts of the enlightened devotees, and a supreme being who causes the ultimate feast to the eyes. *Kausalyā* is the pure sacred nature. The time of the birth of *ŚrīRāmacandra* in her womb, i.e. the time at which the vision of that Lord is experienced in the internal world is itself the time of manifestation of *Rāma* and that itself is *Rāmanavamī*". *Jnānis* have identified the occurring of that opportune moment in nature, which helps in such a vision, and also, the place for that in the human body which is the Time form of the Lord. And, customarily it is called *Rāmanavamī*. *Navamī* occurs both in the dark and the bright half of the lunar month. Among the two, the *Navamī* of *śuklapaksha* is very auspicious for the worship of *Rāma* ('केवलापि सितोपोष्या नवमी

शब्दसङ्ग्रहात्' निर्णयसिन्धु परि. II) Even though the *Navamīs* of the *Śukla Paksha* of all months are auspicious for religious worship, the *navamī* of *Caitraśukla* is considered the most appropriate, and that day is accepted as *Rāmanavamī*. Though every *caturdaśī* of *Kṛṣṇapaksha* is a *Śivarātri*, only the *caturdaśī* of the dark half of the month of *Māgha* is considered *Śivarātri*. The day of *Śrī Rāmanavamī* should also be understood in the same manner.

Sometimes, *navamī* occurs on two successive days in the bright half of month of *Caitra* itself. Which of the two days should be considered for performing *Rāmanavamī vrata*? Sometimes *Navamī* extends upto the afternoon in one of those two days and sometimes, in the afternoon of both the days. Sometimes, the *punarvasu* star, famously known as the birth star of *ŚrīRāma* also pervades on that day. (नक्षत्रेऽदितिदैवत्ये स्वोच्च संस्थेषु पञ्चसु-रामायण, बाल. सर्ग 18.)

When such different *yogas* (junctures) occur, when should *Rāmanavamī* be celebrated? This question occupies our minds.

Śāstras provide some answers to this question. But many times it becomes very difficult to think and comprehend the answer acceptable to the sages. At such times, some treatises which have discussed the matter with extracts from scriptures related to this, come to our help. But, which treatise can

provide the conclusion? Is it the *Dharmasindhu*? Is it the *Nirṇaya Sindhu*? Or the "*Sindhu*" (conclusion) based on family custom? When such problems start mazing the mind, should one resort to '*Anukūla Sindhu*'? Such questions need to be answered.

Moreover, in determining the auspicious time for celebration, a feeling of rivalry arising out of mutual hostility may also play a role in this dark age. It is said that a certain disciple asked his *guru*, "*Guruji, Rāmanavamī* can be celebrated tomorrow, or even on the day after tomorrow, as there is scope for both in our tradition. When shall we have it in our *Maṭha* (monastery)? At once the *Guru* asked the desciple "When are "they" going to celebrate in that *Maṭha*? "Tomorrow Sir" Then the *Guruji* ordered—"In that case we will celebrate it the day after tomorrow." This may be a cooked up story. But this goes to say that there is no dearth of people in the society, who give a go-by to the scriptural discussions, and think it great to do differently from what the other party does.

On such occasions, we have to take note what the *Śāstras* say. If interpolations are found in them, they have to be identified and rejected. Authoritative statements proved as chaste and traditions concluded as pure, should be drawn and rightly interpreted. These conclusions should be made only with help (guidance) of *Jnānis*.

At the outset, let us have a look at the statements in the *Śāstras* pertaining to the time (of celebrating) *Rāmanavamī*. They describe the exact day of *avatāra* of Lord *Rāma* as under:—

ततश्च द्वादशे मासे चैत्रे नावमिके तिथौ ।

नक्षत्रेऽदितिदैवत्ये स्वोच्चसंस्थेषु पञ्चसु ॥

ग्रहेषु कर्कटे लग्ने वाक्पताविन्दुना सह ।

प्रोद्यमाने जगन्नाथं सर्वलक्षणसंयुतम् ॥

कौसल्याऽजनयद्रामं सर्वलोकनमस्कृतम् ।

विष्णोरर्धं महाभागं पुत्रमैश्वराकुवर्धनम् ॥”

(वाल्मीकिरामा. बाल. सर्ग 18/8-10)

चैत्रे शुक्ले नवम्यां तु जातो रामः स्वयं हरिः

(अगस्त्यसंहिता. अ. 28. श्लो. 1)

चैत्रे नवम्यां प्राक् पक्षे दिवा पुण्ये पुनर्वसौ ।

उदये गुरुगौरांशोः स्वोच्चस्थे ग्रहपञ्चके ॥

मेघं पूषणि सम्प्राप्ते लग्ने कर्कटकाह्वये ।

आविरासीत्सकलया कौसल्यायां परः पुमान् ॥

(quoted as *Agastya vacana* in the *Nirṇaya Sindhu* Ch. II)

“उच्छस्थे ग्रहपञ्चके सुरगुरौ. सेन्दौ नवम्यां तिथौ लग्ने कर्कटके पुनर्वसुद्विने मेघं गते पूषणि” चम्पू रामा. I)

According to these statements the following were in a phenomenal union at the time of *avatāra* of *ŚrīRāma* - The month of *Caitra*, the month of *Mesha*, the *navami* of *śuklapaksha*, star *punarvasu*, midday, the rise of Jupiter and Moon, *Karkata*

lagna and the exalted position of five planets. There can be no doubt in the fact that *ŚrīRāmanavamī* should be celebrated when the time of conjunction of the above is found. But the conjunction of all these is a rarity. By and large, only a few of these normally come together on that day. In that case, what and how much importance should be given to the matter of the month, the day, the star and their *Vyāpti* (pervasiveness) etc? Such questions do arise and the statements of the *Śāstras* command as follows:

"If the star on the day of *navamī* is *punarvasu*, it is highly commendable. That time is more auspicious than even a crore of solar eclipses. Even a small duration of that star on that day can bestow many meritorious benefits" - says the *Agastyasamhita*.

पुनर्वस्वर्क्षसंयुक्ता सा तिथिः सर्वकामदा ।
श्रीरामनवमी प्रोक्ता कोटिसूर्यग्रहाधिका ॥
पुनर्वस्वर्क्षसंयोगः स्वल्पोऽपि यदि विद्यते ।
चैत्रशुक्लनवम्यां तु सा तिथिः सर्वकामदा ॥''

(अगस्त्य सं. अ. 28/1-3)

चैत्रे मासि पुनर्वस्वोः जन्म रामस्य मङ्गलम् ।
तिथौ नवम्यां लग्ने च कुलीरे कमलासन ॥''

(पाद्यसंहिता XIV)

ऋक्षे पुनर्वसौ कार्यं चैत्रे नावमिके तिथौ ।

(वासिष्ठ सं. पटल 23)

माघमासेऽथवा ब्रह्मन् राघवोत्सवमुत्तमम् ।''

(विष्वक्सेनसं. अ. 29)

तथा वसन्तसमये मधुमासे द्विजोत्तम ।

सिते पक्षे नवम्यां च तारकेऽदितिदैवते ॥

प्रादुर्भूतं च मध्याह्ने मुहूर्तेऽभिजिते द्विज ।''

(विश्वामित्र सं. पु. 24)

चैत्रे मासि सिते पक्षे नक्षत्रं च पुनर्वसौ ।

(विष्णुसिद्धान्त, पटल 9.)

If it is not possible to celebrate *Rāmanavamī* in the month of *Caitra*, it can be celebrated in *Māgha*, says one *samhita*. All scriptural statements declare that when *Navami* and the star *punarvasu* come together, it is the most auspicious time to celebrate *Rāmanavamī*.

Agastya samhita prescribes that the duration of *navami* till midday is a must.

सैव मध्याह्नयोगेन महापुण्यतमा भवेत् ।

When *navami* extends for two days, when should the festival be celebrated? In such a case, if *navami* happens to be extending in the noon of only the first day, the festival should be celebrated on that day only. On the other hand, if *navami* prevails in the noon on both the days, or if *navami* does not prevail on both the days at noon, then the festival should be celebrated when *navami* is touching *daśami* (It should not be celebrated on the day when *ashtami* is touching *navami*.) Even if the star *punarvasu* is present on *Ashṭami*, the festival should not be celebrated.

अष्टमीविद्धा सक्षीपि नोपोष्या

नवमी चाष्टमी विद्धा त्याज्या विष्णुपरायणैः

उपोषणं नवम्यां वै दशम्यामेव पारणम् (अगस्त्य सं. आ. 28-12)

दशम्यादिषु विद्धा चेत् विद्धा त्याज्यैव वैष्णवैः (रामार्चनचन्द्रिका)

"But", says the *Nirṇayasindhu*, "the *smārtas* should observe *Rāmanavamī* even if it is touched by *Ashtami*, if *Daśami* happens to end before sunrise itself, due to *kshaya* (decline). It is because, if not done so, they may miss the *Pāraṇa* (breaking the fast) which is a part of the *Navami* ritual, as *Ekādaśī* commences on the third day, and fasting has to be observed on account of *Ekādaśī* (*Pariccheda* II. *Rāmanavamī Nirṇaya*)

Thus, the answer to the question as to when *Rāmanavamī* is to be celebrated has been provided hereby, culled out from *Śāstras* and traditional texts. Having obtained the answers for the possible objections in this context and after discerning the path of the final conclusion, let us take up the elaboration of the modalities and the evaluation of celebrating the festival, later.

The sum of all the opinions of the scriptures is that *Rāmanavamī* should be celebrated on *Caitra śukla navami*. Treatises of authority say that it is highly commendable, if the conjunction of *Punarvasu* also happens on that day.

“पुनर्वस्वर्क्षसंयुक्ता सा तिथिः सर्वकामदा”

(*Agastya Samhita* 8-28)

A question may arise here as to why *Rāmanavamī* should be celebrated on the particular day of conjunction of the *māsa*, *Paksha*, *tithi* (and if possible the star also), and why it should not be celebrated on any other day.?

We can answer this question broadly as follows:- *Rāmanavamī* is the birthday of *ŚrīRāma*. The *Itihāsas* and *Ākhyānas* say that he was born on the day when the *yoga* referred to above takes place. Therefore it is proper to celebrate the festival only on the day specified. Don't we celebrate the birth anniversary of popular persons like *Gandhiji* and others on the specified date of the month they were born? One may say that the same method can be applied to *Śrī Rāmanavamī* as well. This may be an easy answer, but not an answer coming up as a result of incisive and serious discernment. If someone questions why *Gāndhi* was born on the 2nd of October only we can say that it is simply a coincidence. We don't expect any other reason for that. In the case of *ŚrīRāma*, it is a different matter altogether. As we have earlier discussed, he is a divine incarnation. *Mahāviṣṇu* by his will, took the incarnation in the form of *ŚrīRāma*. Acts of enlightened souls performed out of a specific will, will not be either coincidental or meaningless. And

that too, the deeds emerging as a result of the will of God, who is omniscient and an embodiment of all knowledge, cannot be termed like that at all.

God chose *Daśaratha* as his dear father. “पितरं रोचयामास तदा दशरथं नृपम्” says the *Rāmāyaṇa* clearly. (*Bālakāṇḍa sarga 15-20*) But no reference is found in the authoritative texts which state that he chose the particular half year, season, month, date and star (for his birth). So, let us examine, whether the appropriate *dharma*s exist on the day of the conjunction of the *ayana* etc. for the birth of that *Purushottama*, whether the tranquility of nature etc. which are necessary for the experiencing both internally and externally divine manifestation of *ŚrīRāma* are available. If it can be established that such *dharma*s do exist, then it can be determined that it is the right day for the celebration of the auspicious incarnation.

It is prescribed that the celebration of *Rāmanavamī* should be in *Uttarāyaṇa*. *Śāstras* say that this half year happens to be the day time of the deities, the divine path of the heavenly vehicles and the way to *Brahmaloka* (*gītā* - 8- 24) What is the real meaning of this *Uttarāyaṇa*? Why it is praised so much? This, we shall discuss in detail, when the topic of *Uttarāyaṇa* is taken up.

For the present, it can be noted in short, that it is very commendable for the worship of gods, and a distinguished time to make the divine centers in us get opened up. *ŚrīRāma* is the ultimate God and God of gods. “नरो वेद यो देव चूडामणिं त्वां” (*Śrī Śaṅkaracārya’s Rāmabhujāṅga stotram.*) HE, who is the emperor of gods is indeed the goal of those who travel in the path of the divine vehicles. “सोऽध्वनः पारमाप्नोति तद्विष्णोः परमं पदम्” (*कठोपनिषत्*) Therefore it is natural that the day of his incarnation should be in the part of the year which is dear and suitable for the gods. (Then why is that *Śrī Kṛṣṇa*’s birthday is celebrated in the *Dakṣiṇāyana*? This question will be taken up in the chapter of *Śrī Kṛṣṇa Jayanthi*.)

The season in which *Rāmanavamī* is celebrated is the spring season, dear to *Vasantamādhava* (*Vishṇu*). And the period when nature adorns itself with fresh flowers, and heralds the message of freshness to the world. And the time when nature sends a message to the devotees to shake off the sloth of the past, and to start a new phase in the *Sādhana-mārga*. And the time when a call is given i.e. "Just as flowers blossom in nature outside, let your hearts also blossom upwards and you worship *ŚrīRāma* who is also an *Ātmārāma* in the eight petalled lotus of your heart." The external beauty of nature inspires us to enter the beautiful world

inside. All these are messages for the sentimental persons.

Even from the philosophical point of view, it is the time when *Śiva* and *Śakti* come together. The dominating force of the warm *vasanta* is *Agni* or *Śiva* and the dominating force of the preceding season, the (cold) *Śisira*, is *soma* or *Śakthi*. The meeting time of these two seasons causes the union of *Śiva* and *Śakti* internally and develops into an auspicious time which helps one to ascend the state of *Samādhi*. In that state indeed, the message of the manifestation of *ŚrīRāma* comes up! And, it should be noted that the temperate climate of this season is most conducive to worship God and also to collect materials for *devatāpūja*.

And the month of *Caitra* is the time when honey is produced. It is the right time for the blissful devotee to worship the Lord who is sweet like honey, by the sweet knowledge of worship. (‘‘मननीयत्वात् मधुरतमत्वात् ब्रह्मैव मधु’’ (Mahānārāyaṇa Bhattabhāskara Bhāṣya). The light of the *Śuklapaksha* is the time which causes development, and the ‘‘Āpuryamānapaksha’’ of the Lord of plants. It is the *Paksha* of prosperity, happiness and nourishment. And the optimum *Paksha* for the manifestation of the Lord who grants both material and spiritual happiness. (As the significance of the *ayana*, *Ṛtu*, month and *paksha* is

dealt with in detail in the discussion of the *Ugādi* festival, it is stated here only briefly.)

The *Navami* of *śuklapaksha* is the most appropriate time for the worship of *ŚrīRāma*. From one point of view it is the meeting time of two seasons and hence a node of time. It is because the brightness of the moon will be in a state of waxing, and darkness will be in the state of waning. This indeed heralds the *Phalaśruti* (the upcoming benefits) of the *avatāra* of the Lord viz the increase in the divine wealth and the decrease in the demonical wealth. Though this *dharma* is present in all the *navamis* of *Śukla Paksha*, many nourishing divine advantages concur when it combines with *caitramāsa*, and so it is customary to call *Caitra śukla navami* only, as *ŚrīRāma navami*.

The reigning deity of the star *punarvasu* according to the *Purāṇas* is Goddess *Aditi*, the mother of *Indra*, *Upendra* and all the *devatas*. It is indeed natural for *Aditi* to wish and accomplish the prosperity of the son who manifests from her own disposition and gets nourished. To put it in philosophical terms, this time belongs to the authority of the star which provides nourishment internally and externally, to experience the manifestation of *ŚrīRāma*, who is an *avatāra* of *Upendra*.

The time of birth of ŚrīRāma is midday, which is a symbol his effulgence. (Then why should *Kṛshṇa Jayanti* and *Śivapūja* be observed during night only? We shall deal with this aspect under the respective chapters.) The science of astrology is of the opinion that the exaltedness of the five planets and the conjunction of *Bṛhaspati* with *Candra* indicate the birth of a great soul.

Thus, when we discern at the *ayana*, season, month, fortnight, *tithi*, star and the time of celebration of *Rāmanavamī*, it evident that it is not an event of mere coincidence, but one which is full of meaning and that it is a suitable gift of the *Kālapurusha* (Lord of time) for the auspicious incarnation of the almighty.

Some more important questions which airse out of the statements of the *Śāstras* regarding the celebration of this festival, will be taken up for discussion later.

Some of the questions raised on this subject viz. celebration of *ŚrīRāmanavamī* may sound unnecessary for the present day ordinary people. The discussion that follows, is intended to provide a satisfactory answer to those who may entertain such questions.

1. The first question relates to the month of the observance of *Rāmanavamī*. We have already stated

that it is the best option to celebrate it in the month of *Caitra*. Sometimes this month of *Caitra* overlaps with *Mesha Māsa* (the first month of the solar calendar). Sometimes it comes separately. When the latter is the case, a question arises as to why should it be celebrated in the month of *Caitra* only and not in *Mesha*.

For this, we have already given sufficient scriptural evidence to prove that ŚrīRāma incarnated in the month of *Caitra*! Further, it has been expounded that the *dharmas* which foster the observation of the festival, are abundant in *caitramāsa*. Therefore *Caitra* is the most suitable month for the celebration of this. And If one says that the problem of the month of *Mesha* does not arise at all, (it has to be noted that) there are references in the scriptures which state that ŚrīRāma's incarnation happened in the month of *mesha*. For example, on the occasion of ŚrīRāma's incarnation five planets were in the exalted position. “स्वोच्चसंस्थेषु पञ्चसु” (*Bala* 18).—says the *Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa*. The sun is one among the five. Therefore, this indicates that the day of ŚrīRāmas incarnation was in the month of *mesha*. “मेवं पूषणि सम्प्राप्ते लग्ने कर्कटकाह्वये” (दशनिर्णय, पुट. 179) *Agatsya samhita* very clearly refers to the month as *mesha*. So, to the question why Śrī Rāmanavamī should not be celebrated in the month of *Mesha* which was the

month of *Rāmāvatāra*, the reply shall be that there is clearly a provision for that also.

"The reckoning of *Catiramāsa* is done as per the lunar calendar, and *Mesha* as per the solar calendar. Therefore, let people who live in regions where *cāndramāna* system is followed celebrate this festival in *Caitra*, and in *mesha* in the regions where the *sauramāna* system is observed. So this problem is easily solved, one may say. Though it is an easy answer, it cannot be decided as the correct answer. Because, though there are scriptural evidences which state that on the day of ŚrīRāma's *avatāra*, there was a conjunction of *Caitra* and *Mesha*, there are no statements in scriptures that prescribe that *Rāmanavamī* should be celebrated in the month of *mesha*. On the other hand, there are abundant references which state that this festival should be celebrated in the month of *Caitra*. Further, *Cāndramāna* is considered best for the celebration of festivals. "व्रते चान्द्रमसं शस्तम्" There are no scriptural statements which state that ŚrīRāmanavamī in an exception. Therefore it is the opinion of the commentators of scriptures, that only *Caitramāsa* is considered most suitable for the celebration of *Rāmanavamī*. **Śrī Raṅgamahāguru also had prescribed that *Caitra* alone as the most suitable month for the special worship accompanied by meditation on the occasion of Śrī**

Rāmanavamī. The natural state of the environs also happens to be abundantly conducive for worship (and meditation). And so, we feel that it (*caitra*) is the more suitable month for the celebration of *Rāmanavamī*. Coincidentally *Mesha* could also be in conjunction at that time.

2 *Śāstras* very clearly state that like the *navami tithi*, the star *punarvasu* also was very much there at the time of the day of Rāma's *avatāra*. "नक्षत्रे अदिति दैवत्ये" "दिवा पुण्ये पुनर्वसौ". The second question is, which of the two among *tithi* and the star, should be given more importance for the celebration of ŚrīRāma's birthday? There is a custom in our country to take into account the *janmanakshatra* (the star of the day when the person was born) for the celebration of the birthday. There is a custom of considering the *janmatithi* also. Both the *tithi* and the star are aspects that exert influence. This happens to be the causative factor for the two systems. But the *Nāradya Smṛiti* says that the (considering) if the *nakshatra* for the celebration of birthday is more effective than taking the *tithi*. "तिथिरेकगुणा प्रोक्ता नक्षत्रं तु चतुर्गुणम्" (दशनिर्णय, जयन्तीनिर्णयाध्याय, पुट. 25) "ऋक्षे पुनर्वसौ कार्यम्" (अगस्त्य सं. २८, पाद XIV) "चैत्रे मासि पुनर्वसोः" say the *āgamas*. So it can be concluded that it is more important to consider the star. But *Śāstras* give more importance to the *tithi* in the case of *Rāmanavamī*, though

primacy is there for the *nakshatrayoga*. There is no alternative to that. Among the ten *avatāras* of God, *tithi* itself is more important with the exception of Śrī KṛṣṇaJayanti and trivikramajayanti for the purpose of celebrating the day of birth. “जयन्ती द्विविधा प्रोक्ता मत्स्यादि दशजन्मनाम् । तिथिप्रधानं सर्वेषां विना कृष्णत्रिविक्रमौ” (सङ्ग्रहरचन, पुट 185 दशनिर्णय)

Because it is clearly laid down in the *Śāstras*, we submit to conclude that the *navami tithi* is more important for the celebration of ŚrīRāma's birthday.

3. While discussing the features of the *cāndrasamvatsaras*, we had mentioned under the subject matter of *Kālanirṇaya*, that during some years, an intercalary month called *malamāsa*, happens to occur. "If such a *malamāsa* occurs in any year, should *Rāmanavamī* be celebrated in that month itself or in the regular *caitra*? Or can it be taken that it can be celebrated in either of the two months?" - This is the third question. It can be answered thus:

Rāmanavamī is one among the *Mahāvratas*. That *Śāstras* state that *Mahāvratas* and *Mahādānas* should not be performed in the *malamāsa*, “न कुर्यान्मलमासे तु महादानव्रतानि च”. (*Mādhavīya Saṅgraha* p. 182) But no *śāstra* states that *Rāmanavamī* is an exception to this rule, as in the case of *Ekādaśī*.

So, the *Śāstrasāṅgrahakāras* opine that it is in accordance with the *Śāstras* to reject the *malamāsa*, for the celebration of this festival. Tradition also supports this opinion. During the *malamāsa*, certain defects develop in the *dhātuprakṛti* which hamper the fealty of the *vrata*. It requires powerful efforts to ward off these defects. "Therefore when it is convenient, it is advisable to celebrate the festival only in the *Śuddhamāsa*. *Malamāsa* is not commendable" —ŚrīRaṅgamahāguru had stated. We feel that this conclusion is in tune with *Śāstra*, logic and experience.

4. Is *Rāmanavamī* a *nitya vrata* or a *kāmyavrata*? This is the next question. *Nitya* means something which should be performed (observed) without fail. It is a *Karma*, the nonobservance of which may cause *pratyavāyadosha* (dimunition), the *Śāstras* say. *Kāmya* means an optional act. It is not unavoidable. No sin (or blemish) will get accrued if it is not performed. To which category does *Rāmanavamī* belong? This is an issue that needs an inquiry.

On this issue critics of *Śāstras* have two opinions.1. *Śāstras* consider *Rāmanavamī* a very important religious festival. Everyone has to celebrate it. It amounts to a great sin if one does not observe it.

सर्वेषामप्यं धर्मः भुक्तिमुक्त्येकसाधकः ।

यस्तु रामनवम्यां तु भुङ्क्ते मोहाद्विमूढधीः ॥

कुम्भीपाकेषु घोरेषु पच्यते नात्र संशयः ।

अकृत्वा रामनवमीव्रतं सर्वोत्तमोत्तम् ॥

व्रतान्यन्यानि कुरुते न तेषां फलभाग्भवेत्

(हेमाद्रि अगस्त्य सं. पु. 180 दशनिर्णय)

In the *Śāstras*, we come across such statements regarding *Kṛshṇajayantī* and *Mahāśivarātri* also. Therefore, some people state that these three *Vratas* should be observed by both *Vaśiṣṭhas* and *śaivas*.

2. There are some people who say "The *śastraic* statements quoted above are just *arthavādas*. It is stated so, only to praise them. All the *vratas* are *nitya* to the devotees of the respective gods, and *Kāmya* for others. *Rāmanavamī* is also one such *Vrata*.

It could be *nitya* or *Kāmya* or both. Technically any name could be given to that. But *Rāmanavamī* is a *mahāvratā*. To those who worship *ŚrīRāma* as *paradevatā*, it is not only a *vrata* with special rules but also, like *Śrī Kṛshṇa Jayanti* and *Mahāśivarātri*, it is an auspicious day that infuses inspiration to meditate, to all the seekers of divine knowledge. It is the day of the divine incarnation of the God of gods, who is an *Ātmarāma*. It is the day of harvest for the accumulation of both *yoga* and

bhoga, the day of delight, the day of festival justified — This is our humble submission. It need not be commented upon that these are also mere words of praise. This opinion of ours is not merely based on the *Śāstras*. We have already expounded that special facilities both in the internal and external dispositions become available on the day of *Caitra Śuddha navami*. It is a preeminent day, the greatness of which has been proved by the experience of *yogis* who are (constantly) engaged directly in *Dhyānayoga*, and who do not merely keep ruminating the *Śāstravākyas*.

5. One *āgama samhita* states that *Rāmanavamī* celebration may be observed during *punarvasu nakshatra* of *śukla navami* in *Caitra*, or, this great festival may also be observed in the month of *māgha*. (ऋक्षे पुनर्वसौ कार्यं चैत्रे नावमिके तिथौ । माघशमासेऽथवा ब्रह्मन् राघवोत्सवमुत्तमम् ॥ विष्वक्सेन संहिता - 29)

"Then, can the two months *Caitra* and *māgha* be considered as alternatives for the celebration of *Rāmanavamī*? Are these two months equally qualified? Or is it that one of these is main and the other is secondary?" - To this question, our answer is as follows: The month of *Caitra* is the most commendable month for the celebration of *Rāmanavamī*. The distinction of *Caitra* has already been expounded earlier. In the month of *māgha* also, some aspects of conveniences provided by

nature for the special worship of God are available. For example, it also occurs in *Uttarāyaṇa*. But the month of *caitra* comes is *vasantartu* and it is the month of ŚrīRāma's incarnation. Thus, it indeed provides special inspiration for the celebration of this festival. "If, due to some unforeseen inconveniences, it does not become possible to celebrate it in that month, then it may be celebrated in the month of *māgha*. It is a secondary provision" say some knowledgeable people. Celebrating in the month of *caitra* is the tradition which in practice by and large.

(“नवमी चाष्टमी विद्धा त्याज्या विष्णुपरायणैः—अगस्त्यसंहिता. “अष्टमी सक्षीपि नोपोष्या” (माधवीय), “विद्धानिषेधश्रवणान्नवमी चेति वाक्यतः । वैष्णवानां विशेषात्तु तत्र विष्णुपरैरपि” [रामार्चन चन्द्रिका] Some *śāstravākyas* say - "*Vaiśṇavas*" should not celebrate *Rāmanavamī* if there is any touch of *ashṭami* on the *navami* of *caitra*. Even if it happens to be a *daśami*, it should be celebrated the next day only. Even if there is star *punarvasu*, *Rāmanavamī* should not be celebrated on the day where there is a touch of *ashṭami*." Commenting on these statements, some recent texts say - "The above rule applies to *vaishṇavās* and not to *smārtas*. *Smārtas* must celebrate the festival on that day only when there is the touch of *ashṭami* (Ex-nirṇaya *Sindhu.pari.11*)

Now, one more question arises "In this commentary, the part which states that this rule does not apply to *smārtas* is disagreeable, because the meaning of the word 'smārta' as it is understood generally, is not found in treatises written by *maharshis*. There the word *smārta* means something related to *smṛtis* or something which comes under the rules of the *smṛtis*. In this sense, all those who follow vedic traditions are *smārthas* only. Those who are called presently by the names 'vaishṇavas' and 'Śrīvaishṇavas', are also *smārtas*; because they consider the *smṛtis* which are not opposed to *śrutis*, as authority. "श्रौतस्मार्तनित्यकर्मानुष्ठानयोग्यतासिद्ध्यर्थम्" is the vow made by them (before taking up any observance). And those who are called 'smārtas' today worship *Vishṇu* and so they are indeed *vaishṇavas* only. Therefore from the point of view of the *Śāstras*, *Vaishṇavas* and *smārtas* do not belong to different religious groups or categories. It is not acceptable to *śāstras* to classify them into different classes and ask them to observe the worship of the same deity. (ŚrīRāmachandra here). If so, who are those *Vaishṇavas* that are authorized to celebrate the festival on the day when there is no *vedha*? (of *navami*). And who are the rest that are authorized to celebrate the festival on the day of *vedha*?

Our answer to all these questions is as follows:

The term *vaishṇava* also means a *paramaikānti* i.e. one who prays for *moksha* only. The above problem gets solved if the sense (of the word *vaishṇava*) is taken to denote one who does not have interest in *dharma*, *artha* and *kāma* but worships *Mukunda*, only for achieving *moksha*. Such *Paramaikāntis* should celebrate the festival on a *tithi* free from *vedha*. The rest who pray for the other *purushārthas*, should celebrate this festival even if there is *vedha* on *navamī*. Both these groups are devotees of God and are *bhāgavatas*. They are not heretics. But *śāstras* ordain that the stipulation of the day of *pūja* observations are decided, based on different aspirations (*purushārthabheda*). The question of the differences in the traditions viz., *Śāṅkara*, *Rāmānujīya* and *Mādhva*, does not at all arise here.

This approach of solving the problem should not be deemed as a cleverness of exposition. The wise way is to understand the intention according to logic and experience (i.e., first hand knowledge)

केवलं शास्त्रमाश्रित्य न कर्तव्यो विनिर्णयः ।

युक्तिहीने विचारे तु धर्महानिः प्रजायते ॥

When this question was posed to Śrīraṅgamahāguru who was a great soul and an incarnate of knowledge and wisdom, he gave an answer and we would like to quote the same: "The

results of observing a festival on the days without *vedha* and on the days without *vedha*, will be different. The first one helps only for *mukti*. The second one helps one to attain *moksha* along with the other *purushārthas*. Both the days are suitable for worship."

3. Should people observe *pāraṇa* the next morning, after fasting totally on the day of performing the *Vrata*, or can they take food (i.e. *pāraṇa*) after *ŚrīRāma Pūja* on the same day? *Śāstras* have convincing answers to both these questions. For example;

यस्तु रामनवम्यां तु भुङ्क्ते मोहाद्विमूढधीः ।

कुम्भीपाकेषु घोरेषु पच्यते नात्र संशयः ॥

प्राप्ते श्रीरामनवमीदिने मर्त्यो विमूढधीः ।

उपोषणं न कुरुते कुम्भीपाकेषु पच्यते ॥

(अगस्त्यसंहिता)

These statements tell us that one should necessarily fast on *Rāmanavamī* day, or else sin may accrue.

जयन्तीनां च सर्वासां उत्सवान्ते तु पारणम् ।

कर्तव्यमैहिकासङ्गैः पञ्चकालपरायणैः ॥

(अनिरुद्धसंहिता)

तिथ्यन्ते वाथ भान्ते वा ह्युत्सवान्ते तु पारणम् ।

मुमुक्षूणामकामानां उत्सवान्ते तु पारणम्'' ॥

(जयत्सेन संहिता)

Such *śāstravākyas* state that *pāraṇa* should be done soon after the *pūja* on the same day itself. Actually there is no difference of opinion here. Because, the *Śāstras* prescribe fasting for those

who perform this festival with some desires and *pāraṇa* only after *pūja* for those who worship without any desires. The rule may change depending on the state of disposition of the devotees. This decision has to be made based on the science of the respective natures. If the devotee who is supposed to fast is weak, he may take some light *prasāda* allowed by the *Śāstras*.

We have already discussed the most suitable time for the celebration of *Rāmanavamī*. For example, we have expounded that *cāndramāna* is more commendable than *souramāna*. But in some parts of *Bhārata* there exists the practice of celebrating it according to *sauramāna*. No one should mistake that God may be displeased if the festival is celebrated at that time. If means such as devotion are in abundance, good results are obtained even if God is worshipped in times like these. It should be noted that we have discussed only about the facilities of the natural conditions and the time, which occur additionally on certain days.

Now we shall dwell on the details of modalities and rules for observing the festival.

At the outset let us take note of what the *Śāstras* and *pūjakalpas* say about the details pertaining to the *vidhis* on the observance of the

festival. The *āgamagranthas* like *Agasthya samhitā*, *Vāsishṭha samhitā*, *Vishvaksena samhitā*, *Viśvāmitra samhitā*, *Vishṇu siddhānta*, and other *vrata pūja* treatises such as *ŚrīRāmārcana Candrika*, *Vratārāja*, *Vratārka*, and others, and traditional compilations like *Nirṇaya sindhu*, *Daśnirṇaya* and others throw light on this.

There is a precept of beginning *Śrī Rāmanavamī* on the *prathamā* of *caitra śukla* and performing the *maṅgala* (concluding) *pūja* on *navamī*. It is called "*Vasanta Navarātra Rāmanavamī Ārādhana*" Those who cannot perform *pūja* for all those days, perform *pūja* for three days i.e. on the day of *Rāmanavamī* and on the preceding and succeeding days. If this also is not possible, the custom of doing *ārādhana* only on the day of *navamī* is also in practice.

"On the first day the festival should be observed after *aṅkurārpaṇa*. After *Abhisheka*, *Puṇyāhavācana* and *Pañcopanishanmantra*, *homa* should be performed in *Agni* with *Purushasūkta* and *Mūlamantra*. The *Ācāryas* and *dīkshitas* should be respectfully offered remuneration. The next morning *maṅgalotsava* should be performed. God should be bathed in ghee and scented water. He should be decorated and should be taken in a procession accompanied by dance and music (vocal and instrumental) and with exclamations of victory.

He should be offered the *mahāhavis* with ghee, *sūpa* and *vyāñjanas*. He should be offered the royal services." These may be taken as the modalities of worship, as per the opinions of Āgama works like *Vāsishṭhasaṁhita*.

But, *Agastya saṁhita* provides in special detail, the rules of *pūja* and *pratimā dāna*. In this treatise, in a dialogue between *Sutīkshṇa* and sage *Agastya*, the *pūja* and *dāna saṅkalpa* are clearly explained. According to this book, the preparation for the *pūja* starts on the previous day itself.

On the day of *Caitraśuddha aṣṭami*, the person who performs the *vrata* should subjugate his senses and clean his teeth in the early morning. He should take bath in any one of these water sources viz a river, a tank, a pond, a well or a spring. Meditating upon *Lord Rāma* in his heart, he should perform the *Sandhyāvandana* and the *agnikārya*. Then he should invite a superior *Brahmin* who is a *jitendriya*, a scholar in the *Vedas* and *Śāstras*, a staunch devotee of *ŚrīRāma*, an expert in the worship of *Rāma* with *Rāma mantras* and the one who happens to be a householder. And he should honour him with devotion.

श्रीरामप्रतिमादानं करिष्येऽहं द्विजोत्तम ।

तत्राचार्यो भव प्रीतः श्रीरामोऽपि त्वमेव मे ॥

(अगस्त्यसंहिता अ. 26, श्लो. 25)

("O the best among Brahmins! I am offering this idol of *ŚrīRāma* as a gift to you. With a pleasant mind you must assume the role of the *ācārya* in the this *vratha*. You are *ŚrīRāma* to me") - with these words, he should be prayed. Then he should be bathed (with oil etc.) and should be offered white clothes, sandal paste and flowers. And after that, the devotee also should take bath and wear such clothes along with sandal paste and flowers. Thereafter he should perform *mādhyāhnikā*. Then he should feed the *ācārya* with *sāttvik* food and he too should take the *prasādam* after that. Till the evening, he should be engaged in meditation upon *Rāma* and should keep listening to the story of *ŚrīRāma*. In the evening, after the *Sandhyāvandanam*, he should constantly remember *ŚrīRāma*, and should sleep on the bare ground in solitude. Both should fast that night. The next day i.e. on the day of *ŚrīRāmanavamī*, both should finish bath early in the morning and perform *Sandhyāvandanam* early.

Then, accompanied by scholars who are well versed in the *mantras*, a bright *dānamanṭapa* should be erected on the northern side of the house. It should be tall and should have four doors. It should be decorated tastefully with canopy, sprouts, buntings, and flags and flower garlands. On the eastern entrance of this *alaṅkāra manṭapa* there

should be (picture or images of) *śankha*, *cakra* and *Hanuman*. The southern entrance should be decorated with *Garuḍa*, *śārṅga* bow and arrows. On the western entrance there should be *gadā*, *padma* and armlets, and the northern entrance should have *padma*, *svastika* symbol and blue lotus.

In the middle of the *manṭapa* a square shaped dias of the length and breadth of four arms measure should be constructed. One should enter the pandal accompanied by vocal and instrumental music and dance. *Puṇyahavācana* should be performed by pleasant minded *jnānis*, and remembering *ŚrīRāma* the following *saṅkalpa* should be made.

अस्यां रामनवम्यां च रामाराधनतत्परः ।
उपोष्याष्टसु यामेषु पूजयित्वा यथाविधि ॥

इमां स्वर्णमयीं रामप्रतिमां सुप्रयत्नतः ।
श्रीरामप्रीतये दास्ये रामभक्ताय धीमते॥

प्रीतो रामो हरत्वाशु पापानि सुबहूनि मे ।

अनेकजन्मसंसिद्धान्यभ्यस्तानि महान्ति च ॥ (अगस्त्य संहिता - 39-41)

(On this holy *Rāmanavamī*, I am engrossed in *ŚrīRāma Pūja*. Fasting the whole day, I keep myself engaged in the worship of *ŚrīRāma* as per the rules prescribed in the *śāstras*. At the end I am going to gift this golden idol of *ŚrīRāma* to a great soul, who is a *Rāmabhakta* and a learned man, for the love of *ŚrīRāma*. May *ŚrīRāma*, pleased by this, destroy

the pile of sins I have committed again and again during my many previous births.)

The idol proposed to be given as a gift, should weigh either one *pala* (three ounces), half a *pala*, a quarter *pala* or even just half of it. It should be made of gold. Those who cannot afford, can get it done in other metals, or stone or even in wood, and gift it.

ततः स्वर्णमयीं रामप्रतिमां पलमानतः ।

पलार्धेन तदर्धेन तदर्धार्धेन वा मुने ॥

लोहेन निर्मितां वापि शिलया दारुणापि वा ।

The idol must have two shoulders. *Sītā Devī* should adorn the left lap. The hand must sport the *jnāna mudra*. *Devī* should be (in the posture of) embracing the Lord with her right arm. On the sides there should be *Bhārata* and *Śatrughna* holding the sacred umbrellas. *Śrī Rāma* also should be in the picture of holding his bow and arrows. Or the idol can also be of *Rāma* in the form of an infant looked on with tender love by *Daśaratha*, adorning the lap of mother *Kausalyā*, say some *Kalpas*)

The idol of the Lord must be placed on a throne made of six *tolas* of silver. Then the Lord should be worshipped, after some religious observations. Then the bathing with *pañcāmṛtha* should be performed with the chanting of *ŚrīRāma mūla mantra* The *dvāra devatās*, *pīṭha devatās* and *aṅgadevatās* are

also worshipped first, and then *Lord Rāma* should be worshipped with *shoḍaśopacāra pūja*. The custom of *daśāvaraṇa pūja* at this point is also in vogue. *Daśaratha* should be worshipped with the *mantra* “नमो दशरथाय” and *Kausalyā* should be worshipped with the *mantras* “रामस्य जननी चासि रामरूपमिदं जगत् । अतस्त्वां पूजयिष्यामि लोकमातर्नमोऽस्तु ते”

Then *ŚrīRāma* should be offered *arghya* with *aśoka* flowers with the chanting of the *śloka* as under:-

दशाननवधार्थाय धर्मसंस्थापनाय च ।

राक्षसानां विनाशाय दैत्यानां निधनाय च ॥

परित्राणाय साधूनां जातो रामः स्वयं हरिः ।

गृहाणार्घ्यं मया दत्तं भ्रातृभिस्सहितेऽनघ ॥

There is a practice of offering *pitṛ tarpaṇa* after the *pūja* at noon. (“उपोषणं जागरणं पितृनुद्दिश्य तर्पणम् । तस्मिन् दिने प्रकर्तव्यं ब्रह्मप्राप्तिमभीप्सुभिः” - निर्णय सिन्धु अII).

Jāgarāṇa should be observed during the night and the story of *ŚrīRāma* should be listened to. God should be offered worship with the dance, drama and instrumental and vocal music and praises and also with *gandha*, *pushpa* and *akshatās*. And the devotee should be in the company of *Rāmabhaktas* only.

In this way the night should be spent in the meditation of the Lord and on the morning of *Daśami*, *homa* should be performed with

mūlamantra after *sandhyāvandanam*, as was done on the previous day. The *Homa* should be performed after placing the holy fire in a *homa-kunḍa* shaped after a lotus, or in some other clean place, as said earlier. The *Ācārya* should be worshipped with the offering of sandal paste, *akshatā*, flowers, new clothes and diamond studded earrings and finger rings (If diamonds are not available only gold can be used to offer *dāna* and *dakshiṇā*). Then remembering *ŚrīRāma*, the idol should be offered to the *Ācārya* along with other gifts and remunerations, in keeping with the ability (of the devotee).

इमां स्वर्णमयीं रामप्रतिमां समलङ्कृताम् ।

चित्रवस्त्रयुगच्छन्नां रामोऽहं राघवाय ते ।

श्रीरामप्रीतये दास्ये तुष्टो भवतु राघवः (अगस्त्यसंहिता अ II, 62-63)

("I who am immersed in *Rāma*, am making a gift of this idol of *ŚrīRāma*, made of gold, beautifully decorated by a cloth of various colours, to you who is also immersed in *ŚrīRāma*, for the love of *ŚrīRāma*. May HE be pleased") Afterwards *Pāraṇa* should be done along with *brāhmaṇas* and *dakshiṇā* should be offered to them, in keeping with the capacity (of the devotee). There should not be any ostentation, hypocrisy or stinginess in offering gifts. “वित्तशाठ्यं न कारयेत्”

In all the parts of the country, the custom of performing a special worship to the Lord in some chosen way and doing *Bhāgavatārādhana* is in vogue, though it may not be possible to perform the *pūja* of the Lord elaborately, as described above. *Rāmanavamī* is celebrated in all pomp and grandeur in *Ayodhyā* on that day. Devotees take a bath in the holy *Sarāyū* River that has been sanctified by *Rāma's* bath and then go to the temple to have the *darshan* of *Rāma*, and offer *pūja*. Those who cannot afford to go to *Ayodhyā*, indeed consider the place where they stay itself as *Ayodhya*, and adore the Lord of Lords. In all temples and houses, the *Pārāyaṇa* of *Rāmāyaṇa*, *jāgaraṇa* during night and listening to *harikatha* etc, are carried out. *Rāmalīla* (a drama of *Rāma's* story) is enacted in some places. After the *pūja*, the custom of distributing a mixture of ginger and jaggery as *prasāda* in temples, is also in practice. And the custom of inviting the devotees with the feeling that they are *Rāmā* himself and worshipping them with sandal paste, flowers and *akshatā*, and offering them *Kosambari*, *pānaka*, tender coconut water, buttermilk etc., is also there. This custom is called "*Vadāyāti*" or "*pānaka pūja*" Some people observe fast also on that day. The custom of having meals after *Pūja* is also there.

The ways in which *ŚrīRāmanavamī* is celebrated as specified by customs and *Śāstras* has been explained in a brief manner so far.

The object of celebrating this festival is attaining *purushārthas* namely *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma* and *moksha*. How do the *pūja*, the modalities of worship and things used for the *pūja* help in this accomplishment? What are the principles behind the celebration? We shall deal with these topics later.

According to the *mukhya kalpa*, the celebration of *ŚrīRāmanavamī* should begin on *caitra śukla prathamā* on the day of *Ugādi*. It is the day on which the plan for the activities that should be full of *dharma*, is drawn up for the whole year. It is indeed most appropriate that it is prescribed to begin the celebration of the worship of *ŚrīRāma*, who is the very Lord of *Dharma*, to make the devotee tread in the direction of the accomplishment of those plans and to continue the pace without any break.

ŚrīRāma is the very embodiment of *Dharma* “रामो विग्रहवान् धर्मः” “सत्ये धर्म इवापरः” Who else but HE can inspire one for the accomplishment of the goal i.e. the victory of *Dharma*? Some people are highly knowledgeable in *dharma*, are experts only in preaching, but they do not put them to practice. They resemble the lame who can't walk even though

they possess eye sight. Some celebrate festivals but they do not have the knowledge of the scientific background of celebrating them. Though they keep walking they are like the blind who cannot see the path. Both get fallen, unable to reach the goal. None of these people are models in the path of self realization. Only the one who comprehensively and harmoniously shelters both knowledge and practice can become a worthy guide to us. When such a person happens to be a *daivāmsa purusha*, he becomes a most capable leader, not just as the role model for everyday life, but becomes the greatest object of worship for the attainment of the greatest goal. And only *Rāma* the *Purushottama* is the person who is endowed with such an ability. As *Vālmiki* has described vividly in his eternal epic in an unforgettable manner, *ŚrīRāmacandra* was a *Dharmajna* and at the same time was also firm in its practice.

“धर्मज्ञश्च कृतज्ञश्च सत्यवाक्यो दृढव्रतः” “विद्धि मामृषिभिस्तुल्यं केवलं धर्ममास्थितम्”

Thus HE is the benefactor-god who bestows the fruits of practicing *dharma* viz. prosperity and deliverance, HE is *parādevathā* as well. He is the supreme divine incarnation bridging the divine and the human. We remember the nectarlike words of Śrī Raṅgamahāguru who said— "He is a human being for the gross vision, a deity for the subtle eye

and the eternal effulgent light for the suprasensory vision." And if he is worshipped in all these forms, then only it will be the first step towards the accomplishment of the plans and resolutions of Ugādi.

We have noted that if there is any practical difficulty in commencing the *Rāmanavamī* celebrations on the day of *Ugādi* it will be better to begin the celebrations of *ŚrīRāmanavamī* on the previous day itself even if it happens to be an *ashtami*. The performance of religious worship on that day will prepare the mindset which is necessary for the performance of the main *pūja* on the following day. But one should not think that it would be good to gorge food all the three times the previous day, as fasting has to be done the next day. The *Śāstras* prescribe that, on that day (i.e. the previous day) only *sāttvik* food has to be consumed and that too only once. By this regulation of food, and also by the worship of god and listening to the stories (of *Rāma*), a suitable condition for the divine worship on the coming day, gets set up.

Now about on the details of the worship to be done on the day of *Rāmanavamī*. The *kalpas* state that a special *pūja* pandal should be erected after attending to the early morning rituals. It prescribes a variety of pictures and decorations. "Why so much of pomp and show for the worship of God? Is it not

enough if he is worshipped in a clean place in a simple way?" One may ask. Yes. Those who are *dhyānasiddhas* can do so. They do not need the *manṭap* even. No external worship of any kind is necessary for them. Praising the Lord is superior to external worship. Doing *japa* is still superior. *Dhyāna* is much superior to *japa*. *Samādhi* is much superior even to *dhyāna*.

“पूजाकोटिगुणं स्तोत्रं स्तोत्रात्कोटिगुणं जपः । जपात्कोटिगुणं ध्यानं ध्यानात्कोटिगुणं लयः”॥ — so says the *yoga śāstra*. All these are fine with *siddhās*. But ordinary devotees need pandals, decorations and worship. All the religious disciplines and decorations prescribed for that, help to get divine inspiration and there is no doubt in that. But a mere festoon outside and no stuff inside, will serve no purpose. What is needed most is the internal beauty. Those who can't afford to construct the external pandal, can worship in the *mantapa* of devotion inside, and it will reach HIM. Śrī Raṅgamahāguru has said - "Whether decorated or not, the boat taken to travel reaches the shore. The only requirement is, it should be sturdy and should be driven properly."

"When it is affordable, it is always the best alternative to do the external decorations and *pūja* that match the divine feelings inside" - say the knowledgeable persons. Because, by such a decorative arrangement both civilization and

culture come together. Culture refers to the imprints inside and civilization happens to be the enchanting external form of that. While the inner pedestal and pandal and meditation happen to be the culture, the external platform, pandal and *pūja* deliberations happen to be the civilization. When both of these, i.e., the culture and civilization come together, both *jnānis* and laymen can benefit out of that. The *jnānis*, on seeing the inner images outside also (in the form of decorations etc.) happen to recall the experiences inside, and rejoice overflowingly. And when they design the external arrangements (matching their inner impressions), others also are benefited and it serves as a big help to the world. And, the ordinary devotees, even on seeing such an arrangement often, will be transported to the inner cultural abode of the almighty (eventually, and) during some distinct times.

Let us reflect whether the pandal erected as per the prescriptions of the *Śāstras* for the celebration of *Rāmanavamī* matches the culture of *Rāmadhyāna*. Only those who have *jnānavijnāna dṛṣṭi*. (inner vision and knowledge of the spiritual science) can perceive it. Because, the *manṭapa* should be constructed facing north, it indicates the path of *uttarāyaṇa* towards which the great souls travel in their journey to reach the *parāmapada* along with the Lord. It also happens to be a map

that indicates the northern position, where the almighty is established. Isn't it that the spiritual texts describe the Lord as "Vishvoththirṇasvarūpa" 'Parāgati' Parākāshṭha and Pārāvārā?. And it may be remembered here, that *jnānis* call the northern door of a temple as the 'gate to the heaven.'

It will be a feast to the eyes, when the decorations of the pandal are viewed clockwise, with the pictures of the Lord's divine weapons such as the conch, the disc etc. in the directions of the east, the south, the west, and the north respectively. Knowers of the supreme soul say that the divine weapons stand for the principles of *buddhi*, *manas*, *ahaṅkāra* and *mahattattva* and images are the symbols of our *daśendriyas* (ten senses)

चेतश्चक्रति चेतनासिरमतिस्तत्संवृतिर्मालिका ।

भूतानि स्वगुणैरहङ्कृतियुगं शङ्खेन शार्ङ्गयते ॥

बाणाः खानि दशापि कौस्तुभमणिर्जीवः प्रधानं पुनः ।

श्रीवत्सं कमलापते तवगदामाहुर्महान्तं बुधाः ॥

Lord *Hanumān*, who adores the eastern entrance is the *prāṇadeva*, and happens to be the life itself of *ŚrīRāma*. *Garuḍa*, who appears brilliantly in the southern entrance, is the *Vedapurusha* himself. The *śrutis* and *purāṇas* praise him with these words—"सुपर्णोसि गरुत्मन् त्रिवृत्ते शिरः" "छन्दोमयेन गरुडेन समुह्यमानः" He is a *yogapurusha* who is endowed with two even wings and is

established in the state of equally balanced *Prāṇa* and *āpana*. Both these are great devotees of the Lord. There are two lotusses in the eastern entrance. One of them is the lotus of creation. The other one is the eight petalled lotus, which is the abode of the *Onkāra simhāsana* of *ŚrīRāma*, who is marked by a *jnānamudrā*. Thus, it can be clearly said that the design and construction of the pandal, in accordance with the reflection of the inner vision of the *yogis*, as the matching civilizational aspect of the culture of meditation.

Now, let us have a look at the *pūjāvidhi* (modalities of worship) of the idol of *ŚrīRāma*. The *Śāstras* state that gold is the best material for making the images of Gods. Some may comment that the Gods mentioned in the *Śāstras* are the gods of the rich and capitalists. Such people should note a point here. It is only humans who have priced gold to that extent! It is priced so high for the reason that it is a rarely found metal which does not fade or lose its sheen. In the economical nomenclature, it has been categorized as a rich man's possession. (Historians say that gold was very cheap in the past in Mexico and Peru, as it was abundantly available there.) But, it is not for this reason the *jnānis* have given importance to this metal for making images of gods. It is because it is highly invaluable, as it naturally fosters *jnāna* and *vijnāna*, which is a

property bestowed in it by god himself. It is because, the very touch and sight of gold enhances the internal centers in the body related to spiritual prosperity and also material happiness. Scholars describe its quality and merit in these words:

सुवर्णं शीतलं वृष्यं बल्यं गुरुरसायनम् ।
पवित्रं बृहणं नेत्र्यं मेधास्मृतिमतिप्रदम् ॥
हृद्यमायुष्करं कान्तिवाग्विशुद्धिस्थिरत्वकृत् ।
विषद्वयक्षयोन्मादत्रिदोषज्वरशोषजित् ॥ (भावप्रकाश-385)

Because of this value and merit, it has been accepted here. We need not blame the metal just because it has become unaffordable. And we need not blame the *śāstrakāras* also for this. It may be noted that *Śāstras* state that *ŚrīRāma* can be worshipped even in idols made of stone or wood. The *Śāstras* do not tag material wealth with God, who is an *Adhyātma mūrthy*. They only tell us how even material wealth can be utilized for the worship of God by those who possess it. Whatever may be the material from which the idol is made, be it an expensive or a cheap metal, stone or even wood, it acquires a worshipping status only after the *Prāṇapratiṣṭha*. Only thereafter it attains the state of the immortal *chinmūrti* shedding the mortal properties of the metal, stone or wood. If the worship is performed with this feeling and if it (i.e. the idol) is gifted to a deserving person, it bestows prosperity on both the giver and the receiver.

Eventually, a feeling of enlightenment flows from one to the other, and gold, which plays the role of the material needed for that, is indeed a priceless substance.

Śāstras say that even on the night of *Śrī Rāmanavamī*, one should keep awake as long as possible, for the purpose of listening to the stories of God and for meditation. In a way, this wakefulness is a kind of a sacrifice and penance itself. And, the *Śāstras* prescribe *agnipūja* and *homa* as a part of this *vrata*. This fire becomes "an emblem, an image, a representative and a recollection" of God, who is the embodiment of *jnānāgni*. And the offerings made there, reach God the *yajnapurusha* directly, who is invoked thereby.

The *Gītāsāstra* says that the *karmas* viz *yajna*, *dāna* and *tapas* render a person most auspicious. In the *ŚrīRāma Pūja* deliberations, all the three combine. In that (*pūja*) both *jnānadavyas* and *dravyayajnas* are offered to God. *Sāttvika dāna* is made. Penance of the body, speech and mind is also performed. The saying "*mūru seri pūrva sukr̥ta*" very well applies here and by such a combination, the devotee who observes *Rāmanavamī* becomes most blessed.

Now we shall discuss the various aspects of the celebrations such as *pārāyaṇa*, *Kathāsankīrtana*

(singing the glories of *Rāma*), music, *naivedya* offered to god on that day, and the special *bhāgavata pūja* etc.

As part of the *Rāmanavamī* celebrations, there is the custom of doing the *pārāyaṇa* of *Rāmāyaṇa* both in *Sanskrit* and regional languages. *Rāmāyaṇa* is an epic which has earned excellence as a work equal to the very *Vedas*.

इदं पवित्रं पापघ्नं पुण्यं वेदैश्च सम्मितं” (रामायण, बाल I-98)

“वेदः प्राचेतसादासीत् साक्षाद्रामायणात्मना” (पारायण पीठिका)

Bhagavān Vālmīki maharshi rendered this work, only to explain the meaning of *Vedas*.

वेदोपबृंहणार्थाय तावग्राहयत प्रभुः” (बाल, IV-6)

Thus, whatever the fruit that is earned by the chanting of the *Vedas*, is also earned by doing the *pārāyaṇa* of *Rāmāyaṇa*. The fruits of chanting the *Vedas* are, warding off the evils and the attainment of all the *Purushārthas*. The same benefits are enlisted for the *Pārāyaṇa* of *Rāmāyaṇa* also.

यः पठेद्भ्रमचरितं सर्वपापैः प्रमुच्यते”

“प्रार्थितांश्च वरान्सर्वान् प्राप्नुवन्तीह राघवात्”

“प्राप्नोति सर्वा भुवि चार्थसिद्धिम्

“तेषां वासस्त्रिविष्टपे”

“संसारं स विहाय गच्छति पुमान्विष्णोः पदं शाश्वतम्”

If these benefits are to be obtained, the person who engages himself in the *Pārāyaṇa*, should have a

pure mindset endowed with *bhakti* and *śraddhā*. He should have concentration. The *Prāyaṇa* becomes powerful indeed when the reader renders it with the correct intonation, clear pronunciation and comprehension of the meaning of (recited) passages. At this juncture, we feel blessed to recall the pithy words of Śrīraṅgamahāguru who said “*Pārāyaṇarāgi Pārāyaṇavannu Mādabeku*” (one should do the *pārāyaṇa* getting totally immersed in that)

Traditionally *Vedas* are honoured as superhuman utterances, immortal utterances and utterances of God. “अनादिनिधना ह्येषा वागुत्सृष्टा स्वयम्भुवा” They are the greatest authority for *Dharma* and *Jñāna* “प्रमाणं परमं श्रुतिः”. Some may question—“However exalted may be the composition of *Vālmīki*, does it not tantamount to *arthavāda* if *Rāmāyaṇa* is held on par—with the *Vedas*? Is it not a statement in praise of *Rāmāyaṇa* to create interest in it?” Also, ordinarily speaking they may question that there are no vedic passages like “अग्निमीळे पुरोहितम्” “इषे त्वोर्जेत्वा” etc., in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, and so how could it be equal to the *Vedas*? But the correct sense of equating *Rāmāyaṇa* with the *Vedas* has to be taken here. The milieu (environment) of *Vedas* is fully seen in *Rāmāyaṇa* also. *Rāmāyaṇa* also expounds in the same way, the

paratattva which the *Vedas* expound. Both of them have the aim in the *parañjyoti* 'Nārāyaṇa'

वेदे रामायणे चैव पुराणे भारते तथा ।

आदावन्ते च मध्ये च हरिस्सर्वत्र गीयते ॥'' (युद्धकाण्ड 431 सर्ग)

Both these preach dharma which brings prosperity and deliverance. ŚrīRaṅgamahāguru had expounded as follows: "Let us imagine that a guest comes to a house in a horse carriage. The host feeds him with food. He also feeds the horse with horsegram. In the same way the Rāmāyaṇa gives happiness to the ātma (self) and pleasure to the indriyas. Like the Vedas, Rāmāyaṇa also bestows both bliss, prosperity and material pleasures. Because it is in a beautiful poetic style which delights both scholars and ordinary people, it attracts more people." If Rāmāyaṇa is taken in this sense, it will be clear that equating the Rāmāyaṇa with the Vedas is not arthavāda but paramārthavāda.

While the meaning of *Rāmāyaṇa* is also studied while taking up the *Pārāyaṇa*, it should be enjoyed not just only as a spiritual treatise, but also as a story of the ways of the world, and a composition rich with poetic wealth. Both the description of the ideal life and the opposite of it should be observed; but only the ideal has to be honoured. Here some devotees may raise an objection—"ŚrīRāma was god himself. We have to worship him. That's all. We are poor humans.

There can be no comparison with him. Is it ever possible to follow his ideals? Even to suppose so will be an offence against God." This is only an objection arising out of gross thinking. Because, though ŚrīRāma was God himself, he lived the life of a human being to enlighten people, and this should not be forgotten. To say that all his conduct and words were only a drama, and the lesson and purport arising out of them are meant for him only, and we have nothing to do with that, amounts to a statement done without a deep study of the *ādikāvya*. The great intention of that *Nararūpi Nārāyaṇa* was that all *Naras* should follow his ideals. In the *Bhagavadgītā* also, God (*Kṛshṇa*) preaches this purport. "मर्त्यावतारस्त्विह मर्त्यशिक्षणम्" (It is in place to remember here the words of *Śrīmadbhāgavata* which says that the purpose of the human form incarnation of ŚrīRāma in the human form was to present an ideal to (all) the people)

(“यद्यदाचरति श्रेष्ठः तत्तदेवेतरो जनः । स यत्प्रमाणं कुरुते लोकस्तदनुवर्तते” - गीता) Even though ŚrīRāma experienced the joys and pains of life, he was above them, as he was a *Sthitaprajna* because of *ādhyātmabhāva*. He is indeed the most worthy ideal person to be remembered on the day of *Ugādi*, which gets started by tasting neem and jaggery. Devotees should realize that enjoying the splendour and

poetic beauty of all the facets of the gem epic, also happens to be his very worship.

The philosophy which applies to the *pārāyaṇa* of the epic also applies to the *śrāvaṇa* of the same. Because, listening like chanting, is also a mode (form) of devotion.

“श्रवणं कीर्तनं विष्णोः स्मरणं पादसेवनम् ।
अर्चनं वन्दनं दास्यं सख्यमात्मनिवेदनम् ॥

It is in place to remember here, the preaching of the great devotee *Prahlāda* in *Śrīmad Bhāgavata* where he says: —एवं नव विधा भक्तिः." But it has to be noted that those who do *pārāyaṇa* and praise (the lord) with songs, should have greater qualification than the listeners. They have to carry out the responsibility of enjoying the story in their ownself first and make the audience also experience the same.

There is a custom of arranging dance and vocal and instrumental musical programmes to (help people) comprehend the story of *Rāma* through them. In this observance also, the above mentioned attitudes, extraordinary skill and artistry happen to be the requirements.

Now regarding various special offerings made to God on that day such as *Kosambari* made of green gram and Bengal gram, ginger jaggery mix, tender coconut and *pānaka*. In the deliberations of

worship, why is it that certain special *naivedyas* for various Gods such as *garika* and *Modaka* to Lord *Gaṇeśa*, Bengalgram (preparation) to lord *Hayagrīva* etc. are prescribed? Some give an easy answer" Lord *Gaṇeśa* is elephant faced. So it is said that grass, rice, jaggery and *modaka* which are dear to an elephant is also dear to the God who bears that face. Likewise, Bengal gram which is liked by horses is prescribed as *naivedya* for Lord *Hayagrīva*." But no such rules are found in the *Śāstras*, stipulating the food dear to animals as *naivedya* to Gods who bear the face of those animals. If such a rule were to exist, vegetarians can never think of offering any *naivedya* to Lord *Narasimha* who is lion faced! Mere coincidence should not be construed as a rule. It won't be applicable everywhere.

For example, the *śāstras* say that *brāhmī ghr̥ta* (a kind of medicine prepared using ghee and the leaves of *ondelaga* plant) is a *naivedya* dear to Lord *Hayagrīva*. But it is not a drink liked by the horses. Therefore the above said reason does not hold good in the stipulation of special *naivedyas* to various Gods stated in the *Śāstras*. The *Śāstras* say that those *dravyas* which cause a conducive state in a person for the visualization of the respective deities, and those *dravyas* which open up the active centers related to such deities are to be treated as *naivedyas*

dear to such deities. Offering such a *dravya* to the deities and receiving the same with a feeling of *prasāda* will specially inspire a devotee for the worship of those deities. It will also help in meditating upon that deity and getting back to the *Jāgrat* state after meditation.

Presently, this indeed happens to be the reason for stipulating greengram, *pānaka* etc as *naivedyas* dear to Lord ŚrīRāma. And ordaining to receive them with a feeling of *prasāda* is for the purpose of *dhātuprasannatā* which is necessary for the worship of Rāma and for meditating upon him. This is not a reason presented by clever imagination. This is a fact which has been experienced by those who have sincerely undertaken the worship.

"*Bhāgavatapūja* also happens to be an important part of this celebration. It is as important as the worship of the Lord. Even more, say the *Bhaktigranthas*.

“विष्णोराराधनात्प्रोक्तं तदीयाराधनं परम्”

Since the devotees who get absorbed themselves in the worship of god become immersed in God, which is evident from the words “त्वां चिन्तयन्स्त्वन्मयतां प्रपन्नः”, they have to be worshipped with the feeling that they are ŚrīRāma only. They must be offered the naivedya made to the Lord. "When one ascends to the state of Samādhi while

meditating upon ŚrīRāma, certain changes take place in the body. The naivedya when received, help the sādhanika to get back to the normal state from the state of Samādhi" — Śrīraṅgamahāguru had expounded.

Also, the typical combination of the abovesaid *dravyas*, helps one (to feel comfortable) in the season in which *Rāmanavamī* falls. It also fosters good health of the body. *Pānaka* and *kosambari* have a cooling effect, are tasty, and delightful in the hot season. Even though these *dravyas* when consumed separately may have certain good and bad effects, become completely defect free, when taken in the above said *yoga* (combination.) They cause nourishment, delight and satisfaction. This can be explained as follows. The properties such as removing phlegm and bile, cooling and sweetness mixed with astringence are the merits of raw green gram. Preventing cold, haemorrhage and bile, causing lightness in the body, astringent taste and removing fever are the merits of bengalgram. When raw, it is tender, is tasty and removes *pittaśukra*

“चणकः शीतलो रूक्षः पित्तरक्तकफापहः ।

लघुः कषायो विष्टम्भी वातलो ज्वरनाशनः॥”

“आर्द्रोऽतिकोमलो रुच्यः पित्तशुक्रहरो हितः ।

-भावप्रकाश

But these also have the defect of increasing constipation and rheumatism. But when mixed with

cucumber in *kosambari*, that defect disappears. Rheumatism will get removed by using jaggery (in) *pānaka*.

“गुडो वृष्यो गुरुः स्निग्धो वातघ्नो मूत्रशोधनः”

Fasting increases bile acidity. But, the presence of the juice of *bel* fruit and lemon brings down acidity. Ginger removes phlegm and rheumatism. It causes lightness in the body and increases digestive activity.

“शुण्ठी तु कफदोषघ्ना सस्नेहा लघुदीपिनी”

But it has the problem of pungency. But when ghee is added in sufficient quantity to the ginger - jaggery (mix), this defect gets removed. In this way, when certain *dravyas* are taken with the specific combination as stated above, defects get removed mutually, merits increase, and the well being of the body and mind occurs.

The *naivedya prasādam* prescribed by traditions and *Śāstras* for *Śrī Rāmanavamī* is most beneficial, both from the point of view of *Yogaśāstra* and *āyurveda*. They help in the removal of bodily and mental ailments and in attaining peace, happiness and nourishment.

Then comes the matter of *pitṛ tarpaṇa* "If one offers *pitṛ tarpaṇa* on *Rāmanavamī*, prosperity follows him" says *Agastya samhita*.

उपोषणं जागरणं पितृनुद्दिश्य तर्पणम् ।

तस्मिन् दिने तु कर्तव्यं ब्रह्मप्राप्तिमभीप्सुभिः । 28-5॥

Even though this is the statement of the *śāstras*, giving *pitṛtarpaṇa* on this day is not specially in vogue. All the same, the *śāstraic* stipulation is not improper. "Is it proper to perform *pitṛ karma* during an auspicious festival?" — One may ask. Yes, after *Rāma pūja*, for the love of gods, a section of the *pitṛs* may be offered *tarpaṇa*. There is no *acchonya* in that. Is not *tarpaṇa* offered to *pitṛs* everyday, as a part of bath?

“सोमः पितृमान् यमोऽङ्गिरस्वान् अग्निकव्यवाहनादयो

ये पितरः तान् पितृस्तर्पयामि”

Is not *nāndīśrāddha* performed as a part of marriage? So, offering worship to the auspicious category of *pitṛs* in the form of *tarpaṇa*, causes increase in prosperity only.

So far, the details pertaining to the observation of *Rāmanavamī* as per *Śāstras* and traditions have been discussed. But, to those who are celebrating it in the present days and to those who discern, it is amply clear that what is celebrated is not an *utsava*, but only an absurdity of an *utsava*. Not that it can be sworn that none is celebrating the festival as per the *Śāstras*. But, by and large, it is simply a mechanical observance. Disregard to *mantra* and *tantra* is seen now-a-days. The spirit of the festival has vanished and only the "ritual" is going on. And that too, is being performed either by the force of custom or out of fear, and without any focus in the

mind. Some do not worship at all. Those who do, are giving more importance to pomp. Classical music which was a sacred part of worship has been replaced by whimsical tunes and bizarre songs. Instead of effecting calmness and tranquility of mind, sickeningly tuned songs blaring out of loud speakers are piercing the ears.

In the august presence of Lord *Rāma*, vulgar songs disparaging Lord *Rāma* and songs sung by drunkards are spreading. Devotees engaged in *Pārāyaṇa* feel like fleeing when they hear them. Deities are routed and devils are being welcomed. Some people, as said in the *Vishakriminyāya* have got adjusted to that. Some may even question.—"Why should this type of music be hated so much? Don't they also generate happiness? Is it also not a worship of God to make people happy somehow? "सन्तोषं जययेत् प्राज्ञः तदेवेश्वरपूजनम्" They have to realize that only *sāttvik* pleasure has to be produced (and enjoyed) during the worship of *ŚrīRāma* and not the absurdity of enjoyment from inebriation caused by the bellow of *rājasa* and *tāmasa guṇas*. Only when the mix of those impurities is removed, it becomes pure and dear to God. Today, people need an education which can make them understand the significance of the words of the *Śāstras* and the modalities of the festivals, in the light of the true meaning brought out by *jnānis*.

Nobody should raise an objection that *ŚrīRāma's* worship is possible only by the rich as poor people cannot afford the construction of a pandal, decoration etc, described above. There can be no impediment for them to worship the almighty in the pandal of their heart, as they can be rich with the treasure of *bhakti* and *bhāva*, even though they could be poor materially speaking. Is not the inner worship the spirit (power) for the external worship?

People should not advance an excuse saying that it is very difficult to observe the festival now-a-days, as they do not have the necessary things for worship as ordained in the *Śāstras*, and also due to lack of time. Quality worship should be offered to God, utilizing the materials within one's reach, and by making as much time as possible.

पत्रं पुष्पं फलं वापि रामाराधनसाधनम्' (अगस्त्यसंहिता. 13-38)

Those who cannot procure even flowers or leaves can offer *pañcopacāra pūja* with the *pañca bhūtās* of their body. They can sing praises of *Rāma* and meditate upon HIM. Are not the materials in the form of the body, senses and the mind sufficient for the worshipper? But those who can afford should not be stingy. They should offer *pūja* to *ĀtmāRāma* with *antaryoga* and *bahiryoga* with the inner voice as the witness.

