

Shree Raam Vijaya Dashami - Vijayotsava  
Victory Celebration of The Killing of the Demon Ravana



On the tenth day of the waxing moon of Padmanabha (Ashvina) month (this year it falls on Saturday the 19<sup>th</sup> October), occurs Vijayotsava. On this day Lord Ramachandra heard from Shree Hanumanji that he had found and seen Mother Sita beneath the Sami tree in Shree Lanka. Hearing this, Lord Ramachandra held a festival, and then set out for Shree Lanka. On this day one may perform prayers to Lord Ramachandra (We have added at the bottom of this article a simple way on how to perform this prayer to Shree Raam) and then in His honour feed the poor. This is a popular festival in north India, where, on this occasion, large paper effigies of the demon Ravana are burned to the resounding chants of Victory to Shree Rama, Victory to Shree Rama.

If any Vaishnava wants victory everywhere, then he should observe the victory day of Lord Shree Hari, which falls on tenth day of the light part of the month of Ashvina (September-October). (HARI BHAKTI VILASA 15/661 from BHAVISYA UTTARA PURANA)

The katha on Vijaya Dashami

This day has much to do with the life Shree Raam. Below is a katha from the Ramayana...

“Lord Raam then ordered, "Matali, drive quickly to where Ravana is staying, but at the same time be very cautious." Then, remembering that He was speaking to Lord Indra's charioteer, Lord Raam felt embarrassed and so He apologized, "I'm very sorry to have instructed you as if I were your master. It's just that I am eager to kill Ravana, so please excuse My offense."

Matali was very touched by Lord Raam's wonderful display of humility. As he maneuvered Lord Indra's chariot close by Ravana's side, Lord Raam and His adversary began to exchange arrows. Soon, the fighting became very intense. Clouds rained blood upon Ravana's chariot, and a flock of vultures followed him from behind. A huge meteor fell nearby and so all the Rakshasas (the monster/demon clan) became exceedingly despondent, while Ravana became convinced that he would soon die.

On the other hand, very pleasing signs appeared before Lord Raam, and so He became convinced that victory would soon be His. In the duel that followed, Lord Raam and Ravan gradually exhibited the entire wealth of their respective prowess. The competition became so intense that both armies became stunned with amazement. Indeed, all the soldiers stood motionless, just like paintings, and because they were so absorbed in watching the fight, they did not even think of attacking one another.

When Ravana tried to knock down Lord Indra's flag, Lord Raam deflected his arrows with His own. Then, because He was determined to match Ravana, blow for blow, Lord Raam knocked down the Rakshasa King's flag. Ravana then pierced Lord Indra's horses, but when the celestial steeds did not even stagger, he became angry and frustrated.

At last, Ravana resorted to the Rakshasa power of illusion to send forth mace-clubs, huge shuriken-discs, trees, and mountain peaks. Lord Ramachandra was able to counteract all these before they reached His chariot, and so they fell upon the army of monkeys. Lord Raam and Ravana continued to dispatch thousands of weapons at each other, and as they collided in the air, they fell down onto the battlefield. In this way, the fighting continued for about an hour. Lord Raam matched Ravana, blow for blow, while all created beings looked on, their minds astonished with wonder.

Both drivers also displayed great skill. But, when the chariots came side by side, Lord Raam forced Ravana's four horses to turn away by piercing them with four arrows. This incited Ravana's anger, and so he repeatedly pierced Lord Raam in retaliation. Lord Raam remained undisturbed, and thereafter, the exchange of all varieties of weapons became so feverish, that the fighting that took place was unparalleled in the history of warfare.

Sometimes Ravana fought in his ten-headed feature, and at other times he fought in his normal form, having one head. On one occasion, Lord Raam managed to sever Ravana's head with an arrow. But, as that head fell to the ground, a duplicate one miraculously cropped up in its place. Lord

Raam then severed that head, but once again, another one immediately manifested itself as a replacement. Again and again Lord Raam cut off Ravana's head, until; altogether one hundred such heads lay on the battlefield.

Because each time a new head appeared to replace the old one, Lord Raam began to wonder, "With these arrows I formerly killed Maricha, Khara and Viradha. I pierced seven Sal trees and killed the invincible Vali. These arrows had humbled great mountains and agitated the fathomless sea. How is it that they are now ineffectual against Ravana?"

The duel continued at a furious pace. Both combatants were obsessed with the desire for killing the other. At last, when Matali saw that Lord Raam was not gaining His desired victory, he inquired, "Why are you simply fighting defensively? My Lord, are You not aware of Your limitless potencies? The hour of doom has now arrived for the King of the Rakshasas. Why don't You employ the divine Brahmastra?" Being thus reminded of this ultimate weapon, Lord Raam picked up the arrow that Agastya Rishi had formerly given Him at the time of their meeting in the Dandaka forest. Lord Brahma had constructed that arrow personally for Lord Indra's use, and later on it was presented to Agastya Muni. Garuda supplied the feathers of that wonderful arrow and the sharp head combined the energy of the Fire god, Agni-dev, and Sun god (Surya-dev). Mount Meru and Mount Mandara contributed their gravity to the arrow's weight, and its shaft was made from the subtle ethereal element.

This Brahmastra weapon was omnipotent and infallible, and its dazzling effulgence made it rival the splendor of the sun. After empowering the Brahmastra with the required mantras, Lord Raam placed it upon His bowstring. As the monkeys gazed upon that flaming arrow, their hearts became filled with delight, while a dreadful fear penetrated the cores of the hearts of all the Rakshasas.

As Lord Raam pulled the bowstring back to His ear, the earth trembled and the heavens also appeared to become disturbed. When Lord Raam released the Brahmastra, it sped through the air like death itself, and then violently fell upon the chest of the wicked Ravana. After piercing right through the King of the Rakshasas heart, that effulgent arrow entered deep into the earth, taking his sinful life along with it. As that awesome Brahmastra came and re-entered Lord Raam's quiver, Ravana dropped the bow from his hand and fell down dead from his chariot.



With great, transcendental ecstasy, the monkey warriors loudly proclaimed Lord Raam's victory as they attacked the fleeing Rakshasa army. From the sky, the devas shouted, "Sadhu! Sadhu!" ("Well done! Excellent!"), as they completely covered Lord Raam's chariot with showers of flowers, and beat upon their celestial drums. Now that Ravana was dead at last, the devas and great rishis felt blessed relief and a peace of mind that they had not enjoyed for a long time. A cool and gentle, fragrant breeze began to blow, and the sun spread its rays very serenely, so that happiness seemed to pervade all directions. Jai Shree Raam

Another katha on Vijaya Dasami. Mother Durga fought with a very powerful demon named Bhandasura and his forces for nine days and nights. This Bhandasura had a wonderful birth and life. When Lord Shiva burnt Kamadeva with the fire of his "third eye", Lord Ganesh playfully molded a figure out of the ashes and he breathed life into it. This was the terrible demon Bhandasura. He engaged himself in great penance and on account of it obtained a boon from Lord Shiva. With the help of the boon, he began harassing the three worlds. Because of this Mother Durga fought against him for nine nights and on the 10<sup>th</sup> day in the evening she killed



him and thus this day is known as Vijaya Dashami. The learning of any science is begun on this highly auspicious day. It was on this day that Shree Arjun worshipped Mother Durga before starting the battle against the Kauravas on the field of Kurukshetra.

On Vijaya Dashami, all aspirants are given initiation of various mantras, according to their Deities. Deserving aspirants are initiated into the holy order of Sannyasa. Initiation in the study of the alphabet is imparted to young children and to the older children also. New students commence their lessons in music and so forth.

On Vijaya Dasami Kanya puja (Prayers to Virgin/unmarried girls) is also performed. Nine girls below the age of ten are worshipped as the embodiments of the divine mother. They are fed sumptuously and amongst other things presented with new clothes. (The Kanya Puja proper is given at the end of this article). On this day a grand havan is performed in temples with the recitation of the Durga Saptashati (700 verses glorifying Mother Durga) and other verses in praise of the Divine mother.

Below is a simple prayer format for the Worship of Mother Sita and Shree Raam... this is only a guideline and you can add more to it and it should be performed according to your means and circumstances. It is always appropriate to worship Lord Raam with His consort Mother Sita.

Firstly have a bath and then wear clean/fresh clothes, at your prayer place already have a picture/murti of Sita-Raam before hand make sure the prayer place is already clean/tidy and ready for your worship. Light incense/agarbatti and play in the background devotional music according to the occasion of this prayer. This is to give the prayer a special feeling.

When you are standing in front of a Murti/picture of Sita-Raam keep your hands in a Namaste position and chant

1) Om swagatam su swagatam - Om Sita Raamaya namah  
(Swagatam means O Mother Sita and Shree Raam I welcome you.)

Then offer flower (Pushpam) or flower petals to Their Lotus Feet  
2) Om idam pushpam – Om Sita Raamaya namah.

Then offer incense (Dhoopam) 7 times (clockwise) around Their body  
3) Om tato dhoopam aghraapayaami – Om Sita Raamaya namah.

Then offer lamp (Deepam) 7 times (clockwise) around Their body  
4) Om pratyaksha deepam darshayaami – Om Sita Raamaya namah.

Then offer sweet food/ sweet/ fruits (Naivedyam) and ask the Divine couple to accept the sweet food/ sweet/ fruits. Place by Their feet...

5) Om naivedyam samarpayaami – Om Sita Raamaya namah

6) Offer prayers for forgiveness

Om yaani kaani cha paapaani janmaantara kritaanee cha, taani sarvaani vinashyanti pradakshinaa pade pade//

Then offer your personal prayers to Mother Sita and Shree Raam to end.

It would be very auspicious to feed the poor thereafter and according to one means and circumstances...

### **Kanya Puja**



Kanya puja, is celebrated on the 8<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> day of Navaratri or on Vijaya Dasami. Kanya means female virgin child and puja is prayer. A kanya is a child who hasn't reached her puberty as yet. Nine young girls representing the nine forms of Mother Durga are worshipped and it is a custom to wash the feet of these girls as a mark of respect for the 9 Mothers viz (Shailaputree, Brahmacharinee, Chandrakantaa, Kushmaandaa, Skandamaataa, Kaatyaayanee, Kaalaraatree, Mahaagauree and Siddhidaatree).

Each young kanya devi is made to sit chair/stool or floor depending on you. (There should be 9 women to attend to the 9 little gals). Each child is worshipped by offering (sprinkling) 'akshat' (rice grains) on her then touching her feet with a little hurdi paste. Then each child is garlanded as you would garland a Deity. Next step is to turn incense sticks, then a ghee (or camphor lamp) 7 times around her and then sprinkling flower petals on her. Then feed her a little sweet dish. Then she is offered new clothes as gifts by the devotee. Thereafter each of the 9 little girls are fed sumptuous vegetarian meals

Each child is worshipped because, according to the philosophy of 'Striyah Samastastava Devi Bhedah', women symbolize 'Mahamaya' (Mother Durga). Even among these a girl child is considered to be the purest, because of her innocence. Thus, a virgin girl is the symbol of the pure basic creative force according to this philosophy.

Kanya puja as a part of Devi worship is to recognize the feminine power vested in the girl child and to give them as much importance in the social fabric as the so called heir apparent (boys) who are otherwise known to be pampered in an average household.

Religiously speaking, Devi is essentially a worship of the great feminine. In a kanya the great feminine potential is at its peak. Having developed into a girl of a certain age and before attaining puberty, a female child is considered the most auspicious, most jagrat, and the most clear minded and clear souled individual. While invoking the parashakti in such a form the purity of mind body and spirits is required and is fulfilled by a girl child of the said age of 8+ before reaching puberty. Such a female child is indeed Devi, who in her later life takes the roles of Parvati as a wife and mother, Lakshmi as a housewife, Saraswati as the first guru of her children, Durga as the destroyer of all obstacles for her family, Annapurna as the food provider through her cooking, Kali as the punisher to bring the members of the family on the right track, so on and so forth...





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