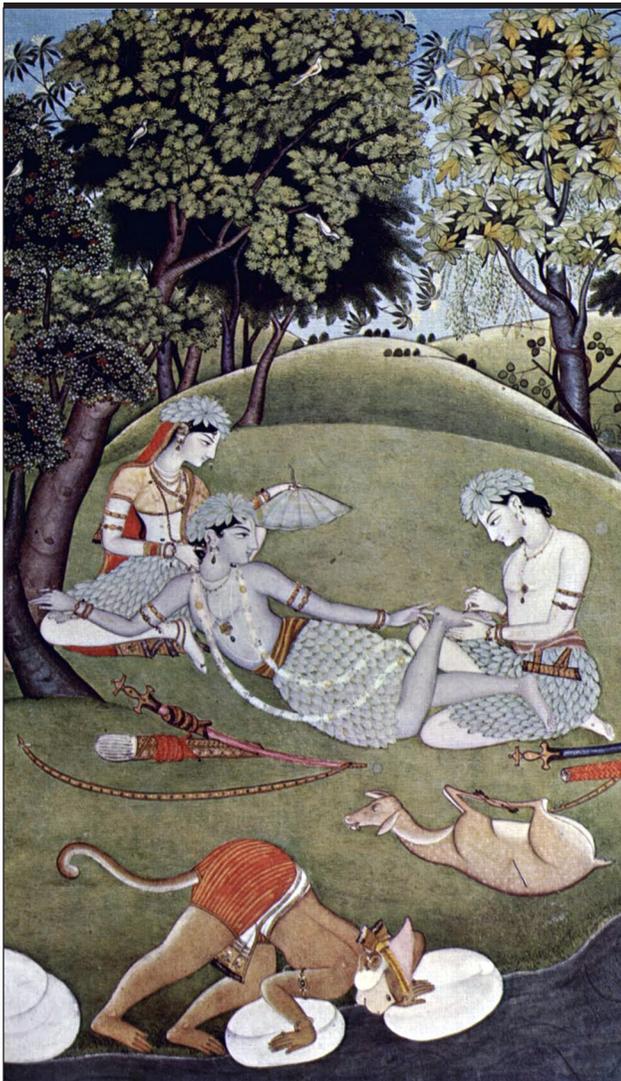


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Features

THE FORM OF THE LORD WITH SIX ARMS

His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

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THE FORM OF THE LORD WITH SIX ARMS
*His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami
 Prabhupada*

Lord Sri Ramachandra is so kind and merciful to His devotees that He is very easily satisfied by a little service rendered by anyone, human or not. This is the special advantage of worshiping Lord Ramachandra, and there is the same advantage in worshiping Lord Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. Lord Krishna and Lord Ramachandra, in the manner of *kṣatriyas*, sometimes showed Their mercy by killing asuras, but Lord Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu awarded love of God without difficulty even to the *asuras*. All the incarnations of the Supreme Personality of Godhead—but especially Lord Ramachandra, Lord Krishna and, later, Lord Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu—delivered many of the living entities present before Them, indeed almost all of them. Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu is therefore represented in the six-armed form of

nityaṁ bhāgavata-sevayā

ṣaḍ-bhūja-mūrti, which is a combination of Lord Ramachandra, Lord Krishna and Lord Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. The best purpose of human life can be fulfilled by worshiping the *ṣaḍ-bhūja-mūrti*, the form of the Lord with six arms—two arms of Ramachandra, two arms of Krishna and two arms of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu.

—*Srimad Bhagavatam* 5.19.8, Purport ❀

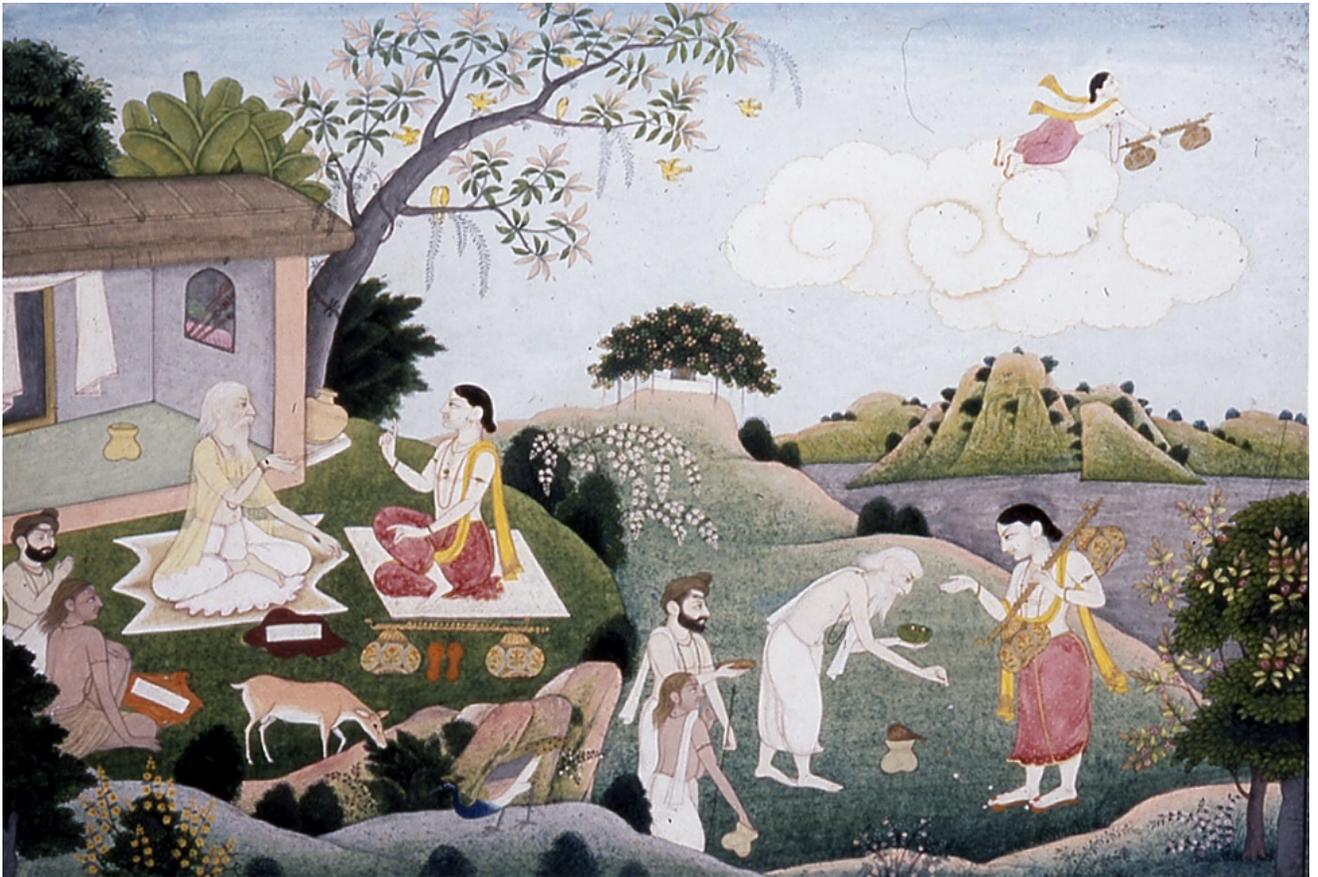
APPEARANCE OF ŚRĪ RĀMĀYAṆA

Sri Valmiki Rāmāyaṇa

A long time ago, there lived a great mystic sage named Valmiki. Once while Valmiki was explaining the nectar of Krishna consciousness to a group of his disciples, the great sage Sri Narada Muni, the transcendental spaceman who travels continuously throughout the spiritual and material worlds broadcasting the message of love of God, appeared at Valmiki's hermitage. Upon seeing Sri Narada, Valmiki and his entourage immediately offered their respectful obeisances. Then, according to religious custom, Narada Muni was offered an elevated sitting place and his feet were washed while sweet words were spoken to him, inquiring about his welfare.

Narada briefly described to Valmiki, the pastimes of Lord Ramachandra. He concluded by telling him that this same Lord Rama now rules over His subjects in a most righteous and exemplary manner. He explained that during the reign of Lord Rama no one would suffer from the effects of any disease or mental disturbance. Everyone within Lord Rama's kingdom would be happy and prosperous, never fearing from thieves, scarcity or hunger. All the cities and villages will be filled with abundant grains, fruits, vegetables and milk products. Indeed, the people would experience the same degree of piety and happiness that was exhibited during the Satya-yuga. There would be no natural disturbances, like floods, earthquakes or famine, and all the women will be chaste and never suffer widowhood. Lord Ramachandra will rule over the earth in this way for 11,000 years before returning to His supreme abode in the spiritual sky, Vaikunthaloka.

Thereafter, Sri Narada again took up his travels of spreading the glories of the Supreme Lord. The sage Valmiki then journeyed to the banks of the River Tamasa, accompanied by his disciple, Bharadvaj. At the river's bank, Valmiki sat down to meditate upon the words of Sri Narada.



Srila Narada Muni describing the glories of Lord Ramchandra to sage Valmiki

Sitting within the forest, Valmiki happened to see a pair of cranes nearby, fully absorbed in sexual intercourse and singing in melodious jubilation. At that time a malicious hunter of the Nishad race appeared from his hiding place and released an arrow that pierced the body of the male bird, causing it to fall shrieking to the ground. Then, upon seeing her mate writhing upon the ground and smeared with blood, the she bird cried out in terror, having suddenly been cast down from the heights of sensual pleasure to the greatest depths of despair.

Witnessing this tragic scene, feelings of great compassion welled up within the breast of Valmiki. Considering the Nishad's violent act to be extremely sinful, Valmiki instantly became angry and impulsively cursed the hunter, saying, "O killer of birds, as punishment for your heartless murder of an innocent creature engaged in gratifying his mate, may you never find peace of mind for endless years."

However, no sooner after the curse was uttered, Valmiki felt an internal pang of shame for becoming a victim of uncontrolled anger. Indeed, as an enlightened soul he knew well that all living beings are acting helplessly under the influence of material nature. Thus, he soon regretted retaliating against the hunter.

Regardless, Valmiki was simultaneously astonished to realize that the curse he uttered had come from his mouth in a wonderfully poetic meter. Indeed, his curse seemed to hint of the predominant emotional expression of the *Rāmāyana*, about which he had been contemplating since his meeting with Sri Narada.

This caused Valmiki to remark to Bharadvaj, "From my sorrow came a verse of four lines, each containing eight syllables. From shoka(despair) has come a wonderful shloka(verse), for without compassion, there is no possibility of genuine poetic expression."

Thereafter, Valmiki bathed in the River Tamasa and returned to his ashram with Bharadvaj. While continuing to meditate upon his curse of the hunter, he suddenly saw Lord Brahma descending from his abode, the topmost planet within the universe. Overwhelmed with wonder and jubilation, the speechless Valmiki stood up to receive the first-born being of the universe.

When Lord Brahma appeared before him, Valmiki offered his respectful obeisances and worshipped Lord Brahma with great awe and reverence. Then, Lord Brahma, the universal grandsire, who can understand the hearts of

everyone, said, “O blessed sage, please do not grieve by thinking you have wrongly cursed the Nishad hunter. In truth, the words that you appeared to utter in anger were my own. They were instrumentally spoken through your mouth for the purpose of inspiring you to accomplish a great task. Indeed, the time has come for you to compose the history of Lord Ramachandra’s life—great transcendental pastimes meant for the ultimate welfare of the world. “My dear Valmiki, there is no cause for you to be anxious, for by the strength of my benediction, everything that is unknown to you will become clearly revealed within your heart. Thus, by my grace, your narration of the *Rāmāyaṇa* will be faultless.”

After bestowing his benediction upon Valmiki, Lord Brahma departed to his abode upon his celestial swan carrier, filling all who beheld him with wonder. Valmiki then sat down in meditation to discover all the pastimes of Lord Ramachandra, as indicated by Lord Brahma.

Thereafter, absorbed in a deep trance of meditation, Valmiki clearly envisioned within his heart all the events of Lord Rama’s manifested appearance, just as one might view them upon a television screen. Valmiki then composed the *Rāmāyaṇa* in 24,000 verses.

—*Rāmāyaṇa of Valmiki, By Purnapragya Dasa.* ❧

SRI RAMACHANDRA AND LORD PARASURAMA

Sri Valmiki Rāmāyaṇa

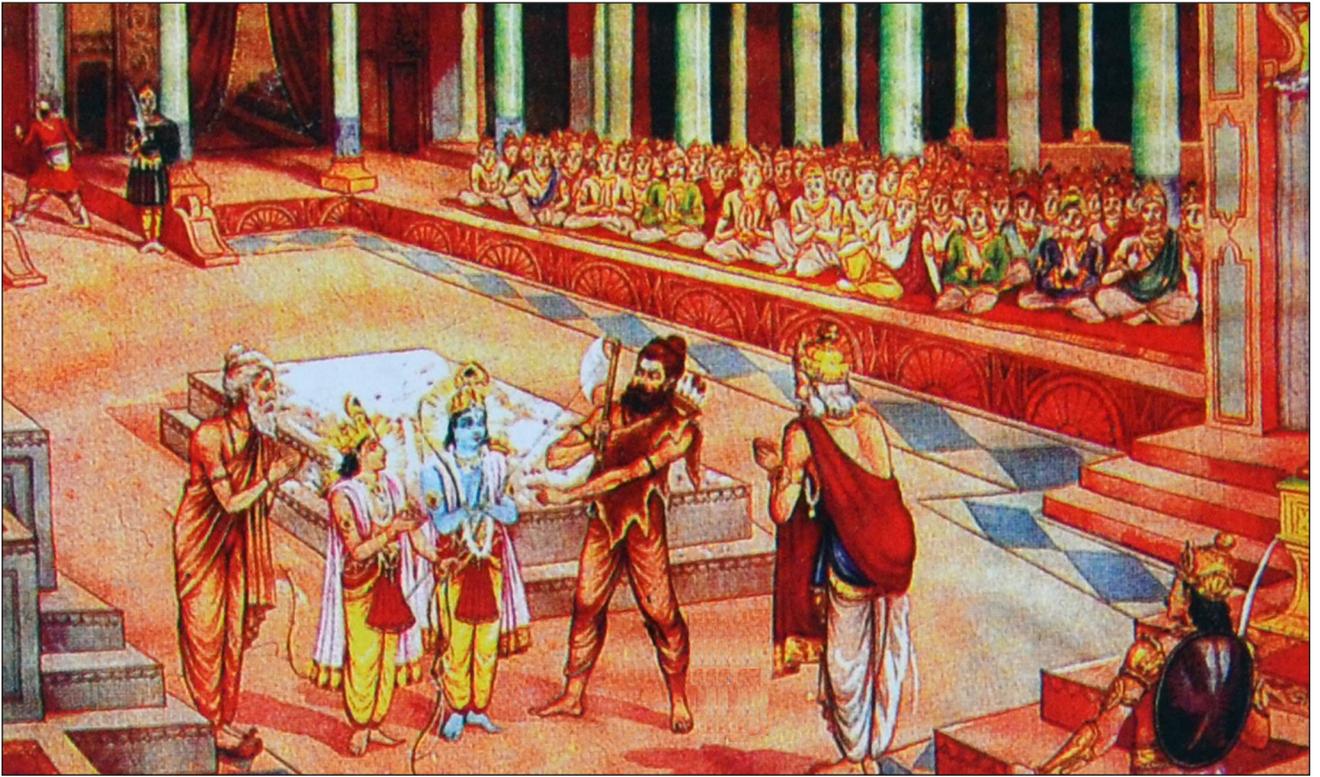
O King, the pastimes of Lord Ramachandra were wonderful, like those of a baby elephant. In the assembly where mother Sītā was to choose her husband, in the midst of the heroes of this world, He broke the bow belonging to Lord Shiva. This bow was so heavy that it was carried by three hundred men, but Lord Ramachandra bent and strung it and broke it in the middle, just as a baby elephant breaks a stick of sugarcane. Thus the Lord achieved the hand of mother Sītā, who was equally as endowed with transcendental qualities of form, beauty, behavior, age and nature. Indeed, she was the goddess of fortune who constantly rests on the chest of the Lord.

On the way back to Ayodhya, everything became dark and the earth shook, and all the birds stopped singing. Dasaratha asked Visvamitra, “Is this Ravana?” “No, this is Parasurama,” Visvamitra said. “He is about one hundred miles away, that is why it is shaking. He is angry.” Dasaratha

said, “What are you going to do? Are you going to do anything to protect us?” And he asked Vasistha too. They replied, “In this we have only one opinion. Usually we have two opinions, but here we have only one opinion. We’re going to lay down and close our eyes, because Parasurama is coming.” So they laid down and closed their eyes, and Parasurama was coming closer and closer, and he was doing his umkara. Every step he was taking he was going, “Oom! Oom!” And by this sound all of Dasaratha’s army fainted, and the elephants screamed. By his attachment to Rama, Dasaratha didn’t faint, because he wanted to look after Rama.

Finally when Parasurama came, only two people were conscious, the supremely conscious people, Rama and Lakshmana. Even Bharata and Satrugna were on the ground. Rama looked at Lakshmana and said, “You have planned something?” So then Parasurama came to him and said, “Who is this Rama?” Ramachandra said, “It is you. You are the only Rama. You are Parasurama. Who else is Rama?” Parasurama said, “Some young child from Ikshvaku’s dynasty, how dare he break Lord Shiva’s bow? I have controlled the *kṣatriyas* so much. I have finished them all. And now someone else is coming. He must know that I am still here.” Ramachandra said, “No, no, what’s the problem? I didn’t break it, but the bow was so weak that I just lifted it and it broke into two pieces.” Parasurama said, “You mean to say that You are so strong and Lord Shiva’s bow is so weak? So the *kṣatriyas* are becoming strong again, and I am not going to leave it like that. If you think that you are so powerful, then why did you insult Lord Shiva? You don’t think that you have done aparadha? He’s the great Mahesha and you broke his bow! And how does this Janaka make a *svayamvara* like this, that someone should string Shiva’s bow? So he is also an impostor. Now again I will start, and I will finish all of you. Finish Dasaratha, finish Janaka, finish everyone.” So then Ramachandra said, “Yes, many people are supposed to be finished, but it is supposed to be done by me.” Parasurama said, “Now you are competing with me?” He took his axe and said, “You look at this.” Rama and Lakshmanapaid obeisances. “Why are you paying *namaskāra* to my axe?” Parasurama asked. They replied, “Because it killed all the bad *kṣatriyas*. It is a famous weapon. It is a weapon of Vishnu, and we are in the Surya dynasty so we must pay our obeisances.”

So Parasurama was perplexed. At one point they are instructing, and then they are paying obeisances. “There is something here that I am not



The great warrior Parasurama with Lord Ramachandra and Lakshmana

able to figure out,” Parasurama said. “So I will have to give them a test.” Then he addressed them. “If you are so courageous and so strong, I will give you the bow of Vishnu. Let us see if you can string it.” Ramachandra said, “Anything you give, I will take, and anything you say I will do by your blessing.” So then Parasurama closed his eyes and lifted his hands. He was invoking *sārṅga-dhanu*, the original bow of Vishnu. He was calling and calling, but it was not coming. And then he opened his eyes, and he saw that Rama was already holding it, and it was already strung. Then he said, “You are the source of all strength. Now I understand that it is you and not me. You are the Rama, I am not the Rama.

So now I have no worries, I will go and meditate. That was what I was doing, but Narada came to me and said, ‘What are you doing, Parasurama? The *kṣatriyas* are becoming powerful again.’ And he told me that some king, he didn’t tell me who, he just told me that some king has a son, and this son has broken Lord Shiva’s bow. He never told me it was You.” So then Parasurama paid obeisances, and Ramachandra said, “Now what am I supposed to do? I have strung the bow, I have put an arrow upon it. I need some object. I am Rama. My arrow and my word never go wrong. This arrow has to get an object. So where should I aim it? You tell me. You have put me in a very

big dilemma. The arrow is there, I have to shoot it, so where shall I shoot it?” Parasurama said, “You shoot it on my strength, and you take it.” So this strength which had entered Parasurama, he was a *śaktyāveśa-avatāra*, so the arrow went on that strength. So Ramachandra’s arrows always come back, they are like boomerangs, so all the strength entered Ramachandra, and Parasurama’s lila was over. So he went to the Himalayas, a particular peak, and stayed there for meditation. Later Rama and Lakshmana woke up Dasaratha and Visvamitra and Vasistha, and then Dasaratha asked, “What happened?” Ramachandra said, “Oh, nothing. Parasurama came, and he talked to us about history, and after history class he left.” In this way they came back to Ayodhya, and there was a coronation.

—Valmiki Rāmāyaṇa, Translated by Atma tattva Das

MEETING OF BHARATA AND LORD RAMACHANDRA

Sri Valmiki Rāmāyaṇa

When Vasistha and the three widows arrived at Rama’s cottage, they were distressed to see Him. He looked like a demigod that had fallen from heaven. Rama quickly stood up & went to touch the feet of his mothers. Then, as He bowed before them, the three women wiped the dust from Rama’s back. Likewise, with tears in their eyes, Sita and Lakshmana touched the feet of the

mothers. Kaushalya embraced Sita while Rama approached Vasistha to touch his feet. Rama then sat down with his preceptor, as others also came around them. Bharata then told Rama “I want to return the kingdom of Kosala to You”. Although everyone present applauded this proposal, Rama replied, “ My dear Bharata, in this material world, no one can act independently. Under the control of eternal time, everything ultimately meets with defeat. Thus, no wise man should lament for lifes reversals. Union ends in separation, for as pieces of drift would float together and then disperse. Family and society meet briefly and then depart for their separate destinations. As solid pillars gradually decay, causing a house to collapse, a man totters into old age and finally meets death. As a river cannot return to its source, everyone must follow the path of his fathers and forefathers. Why should one mourn for others when he himself is dying? A mans skin becomes wrinkled and his hair turns grey. What can he do? He rejoices when the sun rises and rejoices when it sets, not thinking that he has died a little.

A sober and learned person should utilize his energy for following religious principles to attain a higher destination after death. There is no need to lament for our father, for he has given up an old body to attain heavenly happiness. Bharata, you must return to Ayodhya at once and execute our fathers order. I will remain here to carry out his will”.

Bharata argued, our noble father had become too infatuated with women in his old age. Indeed, he seemed to confirm the popular notion that at the time of death one invariably becomes obsessed with something. Rama, you should undo the harm that our father caused due to that obsession and return to Ayodhya. You are a ksatriya and your duty is to act as a ruler, not as a hermit. You’re a householder, the noblest of the four asramas. Why are you abandoning the duties of family life? If you refuse to return to ayodhya, then so shall I. I will remain here in the forest with you, like Lakshmana.

Rama replied, “Dear Bharata, you are wrongly criticizing our father, saying that he



Bharata taking the wooden sandals of Lord Rama back to Ayodhya.

was impelled by lusty attachment for Kaikeyi. At the time of Dasasratha's marriage to Kaikeyi, her father made him promise, that her son could succeed him as emperor. Bharata, please go back to Ayodhya now to keep our fathers promise intact. You must take the responsibility of ruling the Kingdom. Even if it is only for my sake."

Vasistha intervened, "In the dynasty of Ikshvaku, every great ruler of the past selected their eldest son to inherit the kingdom. The unbroken rule has been that for as long as the elder brother is alive, the younger brother cannot accept the throne. Therefore, we again implore You to return to Ayodhya. You should consider that to deny my order would be an irreligious act. The instructions of the guru takes precedence over those given by the mother or father."

Rama, however remained adamant, insisting that once duties towards his parents is inviolable. When Bharata realized that his attempt to persuade Rama was futile, He became so sad that He ordered Sumantra, "Spread kusa grass in front of the doorway of Rama's cottage. I will sit there blindfolded, foregoing all food and drink until Rama relents and accepts the royal throne."

Sumantra, however, would not act without Rama's order. Thus, Bharata, spread Kusa grass with his hands and sat down in front of Rama's cottage. Rama then said, "Dear brother? Why are you adopting this attitude? Why are you stubbornly trying to oppose me?"

Thus addressed, Bharata gave up the idea of fasting until death, but continued pleading, "Let me act as Your proxy by staying here in the forest for fourteen years while you return to Ayodhya."

Just then a host of celestial *ṛṣis* appeared invisibly in the sky and applauded the wonderful conversation between the two brothers. Then, desiring to accelerate the death of Ravana, the *ṛṣis* said, "O Bharata, you should follow the advice of your elder brother, Rama."

Finally surrendering to the inevitable, Bharata produced a pair of wooden sandals inlaid with gold. He then requested Rama to place his lotus feet on them. Rama did as his brother asked, and then returned the sandals to Bharata. Then, with the sandals in hand, Bharata bowed to Rama, saying, "after relegating the burden of ruling the kingdom to these sandals, I will remain outside Ayodhya, wearing matted

hair and clothing of the tree bark. O Rama I shall subsist upon only fruit and roots while awaiting Your return. If, however, after fourteen years You do not come back to Ayodhya, then I shall give up my life by entering fire."

Rama sanctioned this statement and then embraced Bharata and Shatrughna, assuring Them He would return after the term of His exile had expired. With tears in His eyes, Rama bid farewell to His brothers and urged them not to hate Kaikeyi. Rama then spoke sweet words to His mothers, although they were too upset to reply, Bharata then circumambulated Rama, and at last, while imploring everyone to leave for Ayodhya, Rama turned His back and entered the cottage.

— Adapted from the book 'Rāmāyaṇa, The story of Lord Rāma' by Srila Bhakti Vikāsa Swami. ❀

CAITANYA MAHAPRABHU IN THE MOOD OF LORD RĀMACHANDRA

Sri Lochan das Thakur

Sri Chaitanya was continually absorbed in the ecstasy of pure Krishna consciousness. Crossing the Godavari River, the Lord arrived in Pancavati where Sita, Rama and Lakshmana once lived. Observing the beauty of Pancavati, Lord Gauranga became entranced in love and repeatedly called "Sri Rama! Lakshmana!" Pancavati is the place where Lakshmana stayed in a thatched hut, protecting Sitadevi, while Rama pursued the golden deer. The moment Lakshmana left to search for Rama, the evil demon Ravana kidnapped Sitadevi. Seeing this place Lord Chaitanya became overwhelmed with remembrances of His previous pastimes here. At one moment Gauranga yelled, "Kill ! Kill! Kill !" The next moment He said, "Catch him! Catch him!" Then He loudly shouted the name of Lakshmana. Remembering Sita, Gauranga cried so deeply that His associates could do nothing to pacify Him. Finally, Mahaprabhu controlled Himself and became peaceful.

— Caitanya-maṅgala, Śeṣa-khaṇḍa, chapter one Translated by Mahanidhi swami ❀



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