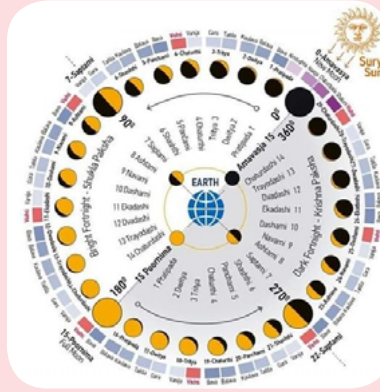


The Hindu New Year - Ugadi

Yugadi, Ugadi, Samvatsaradi falling on Chaitra Suddha Padyami /Chaitra Shukla Pratipada (9th April 2024) is celebrated as the new year in the Dakshina states of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Goa, Telangana, and is celebrated as Gudi Padwa in Maharashtra. This follows the Chandramana or the lunar calendar of the ancient Hindu Panchanga. People celebrate variously with Ugadi pachchadi/chutney which has the shadruchi or the six ingredients of sweet, salt, sour, chilli/spicy, bitter and astringent. People decorate their homes with mango leaves and flowers and colorful muggus/rangolis. Special dishes like pulihora, bobbatlu/holige etc are made and relished.

The new year is celebrated in other parts of the nation, Sindhis celebrate the day as Cheti Chand, Manipuris as Sajibu Nongma Panba, Sikkim and Ladakh, parts of Arunachal Pradesh too celebrate

new year in Chaitra masa. The Hindus in Bali in Indonesia celebrate the new year as Nyepi and Ugadi is also a public holiday in Mauritius, showing the cultural connect of Bharat with other nations.



The regions which follow the solar calendar – soura mana, the new year is fixed on Apr 14th or 15th, the new year is celebrated as Baisakhi in Punjab, Rongali Bihu in Assam, Puthandu in Tamil Nadu, Vishu in Kerala, Pana Sankranti or Odia Nababarsa in Odisha and Poila Boishakh in Bengal. Interestingly, many Southeast Asian countries and China too celebrate the new year as per solar calendar

signifying the cultural connect of ancient India with these far-off lands. It is celebrated as Thingyan in Myanmar, Pi Mai in Laos, Songkron in Thailand, Choul Chnam or Maha Sankranthi in Cambodia and as Water sprinkling festival in Yunnan China

Srirama Navami

The occasion of Srirama Navami falling on 17th April 2024 is special this year, Hindus all over the country will celebrate the sacred festival in the newly built grand Ayodhya Rama Janmabhumi Mandir for the first time in 500 years. Many strongly believe that the Prana Prathishta ceremony conducted by the Hon'ble PM Modi and others in Ayodhya on 22nd January 2024 will herald the cultural revival of Bharat. In Telugu states, Sitarama Kalyanam is conducted in all Vaishnava temples of SriRama/Venkateswara, the

most prominent being Bhadrachalam in Khammam district in Telangana and Vontimitta Kodanda Ramaswamy temple in Kadapa, Andhra Pradesh where the Kalyanam is conducted on the Pournami falling this year on 22nd April 2024.

General Elections

2024 is also the election year; the general elections to the Lok Sabha are going to be conducted between April-May 2024 in seven phases all over the country. Along with Lok Sabha, Andhra Pradesh and Odisha will also elect its Legislative Assemblies.



Srirama Navami in Dakshina states

- Sri Kanneganti Subhramanyam -

I was studying my plus 1 in Vijayawada. We were in a hostel, and I was having a casual chat with my close friend Sandeep. The conversation drifted towards Gods, and I asked him who his favorite God was. He replied that it was Sri Rama. Playfully, I asked him why it was Sri Rama and not Sri Venkateswara. He said the Suprabhata of Sri Venkateswara starts with "Kausalya Supraja Raama." I had to give in. Sri Venkateswara is the most famous God in Telugu states. However, the Ram-bhakti of Telugus is unparalleled. It is common for many Telugu people to write Sri Rama on the top of the page before they write anything on the page. Sri Bammera Potanaamaatya, who translated Srimad Bhagavatam into Telugu, starts the book by saying.

*palikeDidi bhaagavatamaTa
palikinchu vibhunDu raamabhadrunData*

Meaning :

I am speaking Bhagavatam, but the person making me speak is Sri Raamabhadra.

That's the Ramabhakti of the Telugu lands.

In fact, many people translated and wrote the Ramayana into Telugu, it is said that there are more than 100 poets who translated Ramayanam into Telugu. The following are the most famous ones.

Shri Gona Buddha Reddy translated the epic as Ranganatha Ramayanam in the 14th century.

Shrimati Aatukuri Molla (also called Kummari Molla as she comes from the community of potters) was a 15th century poetess who wrote a 'swecchaanuvaada' - free translation of the epic. 'Molla Ramayanam' is revered by all Telugu scholars as one of the greatest works in literature. Shri Tikkanaamaatya wrote Nirvachnottara Raamayana. Shri Potanaamaatya wrote Ramayana as a part of Srimad Bhagavata translation.

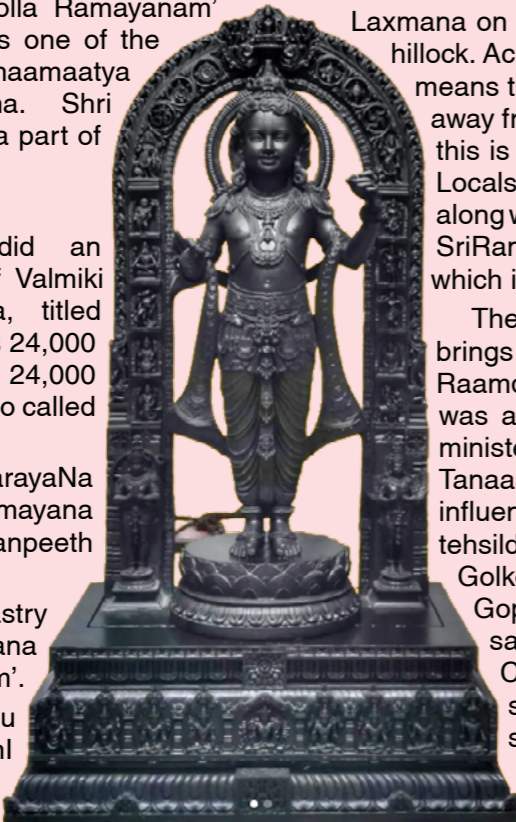
In the recent times (After 1900s)

Sri Vavilakolanu Subbarao did an exact translation of every Sloka of Valmiki Ramayana into a Telugu padya, titled 'Ramayana Mandaram' and as it has 24,000 Telugu padyas corresponding to the 24,000 Shlokas of Valmiki Ramayana it is also called yadha--valmika--ramayanamu.

Sri Viswanaatha Satyanarayana had written the great work 'Ramayana Kalpavrukshamu' and won a Gyanpeeth award for the work.

Shri Tadepalli Venkatappaya Sastry and Sri Tadepalli Raghava Narayana Sastry wrote the 'Raama Kathamrutam'.

Sri Pulela Sri Raama ChandruDu gave a wonderful 'Balaanandin Vyaakhya' to every Sloka of Srimad Raamaayanam.



Telugu literature has many vaaggeyakaraas (poets who wrote Kirtanas and composed them on the meter of Carnatic music) who dedicated their lives to Sri Rama bhakti. Bhakta Ramadasu of Bhadrachalam was one of them. More than 90% of Tyagaraaja Kritis are on Sri Ramachandra, and all of them are in Telugu.

There is an old saying that you would not find a village without a Rama Mandira or Ramalaya. Sri Ramanavami is a big festival, and one would see Sita Ramakalyanam followed by Ratha yatra or Ooregimpu or Pallaki seva (Palanquin Seva) of Sri Rama Chandra in almost every village and town in the Telugu states.

Bhadrachalam

When talking about Sri Ramanavami, Sita Rama Kalyanam is the biggest event of the day. People in Telugu states would be glued to the television to catch a glimpse of the Sri Sita Ramakalyanam that happens in Bhadrachalam. Bhadrachalam is the biggest and most popular Sri Rama temple to the south of Vindhyas.

As per the legend, Bhadrachalam, gets its name from a sage named Bhadra, who was the son of Menaka and Mount Meru, and he was an ardent devotee of Sri Rama who did hard tapas (penance) for Sri Rama. When Sri Mahavishnu gives him a darshan in the form of Sri Rama and grants a boon of his choice, Sage Bhadra asks him to be seated on his head. Sri Maha Vishnu who was in the form of Vykunttha Rama, with Sita seated on his thigh, and with Laxman on his left, obliged the request. Bhadra, being the son of Mount Meru, turned into a mountain again and seated Rama, Sita, and Laxmana on his head, which was the peak of the hillock. Achalam means hill, and Bhadrachalam means the Hill of Bhadra. Parnasala is 30 km away from Bhadrachalam; many believe that this is where Ravana abducted Sita Maata. Locals also believe that 14,000 raakshasas, along with Khara and Dushana, were killed by Sri Rama near a place called Dummugudem, which is 25 km from Bhadrachalam.

The place Bhadrachalam, immediately brings Kancharla Gopanna or Bhakta Raamdas to our minds. Kancharla Gopanna was a relative of Akkanna and Madanna, ministers in the court of Abul Hasan Tanaasha (Tanisha) of Golkonda. Using their influence, they made Kancharla Gopanna a tehsildar in the Qutub Shahi government of Golkonda. In his capacity as the Tehsildar, Gopanna visited Bhadrachalam where he saw the dilapidated temple of Sri Rama Chandra. He gets to know about the sthalapurana, and he immediately starts the construction of the new temple. Initially, he takes donations from the people in the villages,

and when he was short on funds, he wrote a letter to Tana Shah seeking more grants. Though receiving no reply, Gopanna goes ahead and uses the tax money he collected, for the construction of the temple. Tanashah got the news that Government money was used for temple construction. A furious Tanashah ordered that Gopanna be arrested and placed in a prison in Golkonda.

Gopanna faced inhuman atrocities and torture for the next 12 years. He became Ramdasu now as he was urging Sri Rama Chandra to come and save him. All his prayers were in the form of songs, each keertana of Ramadasa is filled with agony, pain and suffering that he was going through. Some of the keertanas have become household songs among the Telugus. In the song 'Seetammaku cheyisti chintaaku patakamu', Ramadasu gives details of the money he spent on each of the ornaments that he made for the Rama parivaaram. In the same song, through 'ninda stuti' he says he insulted Rama because he was unable to endure the physical beatings and torture that he was subjected to.

Another magnum opus of his keertanas is 'Ee teeruga nanu dayacch Ucedav O Inavamsottama Raama', in which he says he seeks repentance. Personally, I love the line 'Krura karmamulu neraka chesithi, neramulenchaku Rama, daridramu pariharamu seyave, daiva sikhamani Rama'- 'Oh Ramaa, out of ignorance, lack of knowledge, I did make mistakes, O Rama, do not count those bad deeds and crimes, please lead me out of this misery'. There are many wonderful Keertanas of Bhakta Ramdasu which touch our hearts.

After 12 long years, when his bad Karma is over, Sri Rama and Lakshmana appear in the dream of Tanashah and present him with the money. Upon waking up Tana Shah saw the money and realized that he had the Darsana of Sri Rama and Lakshmana. He quickly gets Ramadasu released and donates the money to the Bhadrachalam temple. He also started the practice of sending 'Mutyalu Talambralu' (Pearls) to Sita Ramakalyanam in Bhadrachalam on the day of Sri Rama Navami. This practice was followed by the Asaf Jahi Nizams and then by the Governments of United Andhra Pradesh and currently by the Telangana government. The Andhra Pradesh government is continuing this practice by sending the Mutyalu Talambralu to Vontimitta and Rama Teertham temples in Andhra Pradesh.

This Kalyanam is not just the festival where the leaders participate, every year we see lakhs of people thronging the temple on Sri Rama Navami with various gifts to Sri Rama and Sita maa. We see devotees come and give 1 crore rice grains as an offering, these devotees take the grains from the crop while chanting Raama naama, they remove the grain from the husk and put it in the bags; for the entire 1 crore grains every year. That speaks volumes about the Rama Bhakti in the Telugu Lands.

In the south of Vindhyas, Rama Bhakti is not limited to Telugu people alone.

Almost every Hindu Malayalee household has a copy of Adhyatma Ramayanam written by Thunchaththu Ramanujan Ezhuthachan. Infact, this is considered the

first major Malayalam classical work and Malayalees have dedicated one month for the chanting of Ramayanam alone, the month of Karikidakom is often referred to as the month of Ramayana recitation in Kerala. The Kings of Kerala usually added Rama to their names and strived to be ideal kings. Malayalees believe that Kollam is the final resting place of Jatayu. They have a huge Jataayu park in Kollam.

Some very famous Rama temples in Kerala are:

*Karimpuzha Sri Ramaswamy temple in Palakkad.
Thiruvananthapuram Ramaswamy Temple in Thalassery
Ramapuram Temple in Kottayam
Kadavallur Sri Ramaswamy temple in Thrissur
Sri Ramaswamy Temple in Tripayar
Seetha Temple Pulpally.*

Kannadigas also are proud devotees of Rama and they even boast of having sites linked with Ramayana.

Near Shivamogga there is a place called Mrugavadhe, the locals are proud of the Shiva temple, in which the Shivalinga was installed by none other than Sri Rama Chandra. Mrugavadhe literally means Mruga-Animal vadhe- kill. The legend says Lord Shri Ram killed Maareecha in this very spot when the latter came in the form of a golden deer. According to the locals Maareecha was Shiva Bhakta and a brahmana, so to get rid of Brhama hatya pataka, Sri Rama installed the Siva linga there. Locals believe that Sabarikolla in Belagavi district is the place where Sri Rama met Sabari. Devotees go to these temples with all love and affection and pray to Sri Rama. Kishkindha near Anegundi was the citadel of Sugriva and other Vanaras. In Namada cilume in Tumakuru district we see water continuously gushing out of stone, it is believed the Sri Rama shot an arrow to get water so that he could put his tilak. One can see Rama Mandira in every town, village, and city in Karnataka. One should visit the Rama Navami annual music festival in Bengaluru. Prominent classical singers perform during this event, which runs for 10 days. Thousands of music lovers attend this festival.

There is a huge misconception that Sri Rama is not worshipped in Tamilnadu. Nothing can be further from the truth. Northern Tamilnadu has communities where the family deity is Sri Rama. One can see many Sri Rama temples there. Tamils have a practice of writing Sri Rama jayam before they write anything. Kamba Ramayana is held in great esteem by the Hindus of Tamilnadu. In the famous Srirangam temple, a dedicated place for the recital of Kamba Ramayanam is there. One of the greatest alwars of Tamil Nadu Sri Nammazhwar says 'Karpar Ramapiranai allal matrum karparo?' (Tiruvaimozhi 7-5-1 'Will a learner learn anything other than Rama?').

The next time anyone says Sri Rama is not worshipped in the south of Vindhya you know what to say. Sri Rama is the force that joins India, He is the ideal in every walk of life. Hope we all strive to achieve the ideals and perfection of Sri Rama Chandra.

Happy Sri Rama Navami. Jai Sri Ram.

News Updates

HYDERABAD CHAPTER

Talk sessions

- The CSIS Hyderabad chapter conducted a lecture session on 'Sarvai Papanna'; the young scholar and author Sri Nishant spoke on the subject on the evening of 15th March 2024 at CSIS office.
- In an online session conducted on 31st March 2024, the young researcher and author of many books on Musunuri Nayakas, Sri Yadlapalli Amarnath conducted an engaging session on the 'Historical importance of Vilasa Grant'. Vilasa Grant gives comprehensive details on the kingdom of Musunuri Nayakas, the cruelty and barbarity of the Islamic invasions, and the fight-back of the Nayaka kings and the reestablishment of the Kingdom from Orugallu/Warangal, after the decline and ruin of the earlier Kakatiya dynasty.

Other activities:

- Discussions are held to prepare a handbook on Dakshinapatha's heritage and socio-cultural history, the team leads are identified and it is expected that the work will conclude in the month of May 2024. The handbook will serve as a source material for training the faculty members of colleges and help them in the conduct of series of one-day workshops on dakshina history and culture.
- 287 Books of importance for Reference are catalogued and getting uploaded the website www.dakshinapatha.com.
- Telugu Content Page is launched on the Dakshinapatha website with Telugu Articles and updates.
- CSIS Dakshinapatha Bi-monthly New Bulletins in English -Dakshinapatha Vaartha... and a monthly bulletin in Telugu Dakshinapatha Vaarthavani are being prepared and circulated.

KOCHI CHAPTER

- An online meeting was organized on 22nd March 2024 to discuss about various aspects, streams and perceptions that exist in Kerala pertaining to folklore and temple traditions. The meeting also proposed to organize a seminar in this connection in future. The Sabarimala study group is continuing with its work. 2024 is the 100th year of Indus Valley Civilization excavations and a seminar is being thought of to celebrate the event.

CHENNAI CHAPTER

Fact-finding team to find out about the work of Neelam Cultural Center – which was making an effort to convert SC/ST communities to Buddhism.

Neelam Cultural Centre founded by its Director P. Ranjith, has triggered discord among the SC/ST community. The Centre planned to start 85 centres in and around the Hosur Corporation of Krishnagiri district last year. There was some commotion among the residents of Binnanamangalam village, on the Karnataka border near Thally, over the immersion of a Ganesha idol during Ganesh Chaturthi last year. Using it, the Neelam Cultural Centre intended to convert Scheduled Castes to Buddhism. On 3rd March 2024, CSIS team went to the houses of SC/ST communities who are devout Hindus worshipping Krishna and Hanuman, and suggested that the local team get to know the work of Neelam Cultural Centre and to document their work. The local peoples understood the situation and peace returned to the village.

Published articles based on recent Tamil Nadu-related Issues

- Tamil Nadu: Outrage over Hinduphobic musician TM Krishna conferred with Sangita Kalanidhi award by Madras Music Academy... Read more [hyperlink](#)
- Pondicherry University Controversy: Play insults Mata Sita, shows her offering beef to Ravan; ABVP stages protest... Read more [hyperlink](#)

Documenting INA Veterans' families' memoirs

- The CSIS Chennai chapter is regularly publishing the collection of INA Veterans' families' memoirs. The series is called "Bosein Porpada" (INA's military force), and it is now available in 'Sarithira chuvadugal' channel.

YouTube www.youtube.com/@sarithirachuvadugal/

Facebook www.facebook.com/61556604800064/

Programs participated:

- Social media confluence on 6th April, 2024 at CPR convention centre, Chennai. Speakers of the confluence are Selvi, Rashmi Samant, Sri Kolahala Srinivas and Sri B. Prabhakaran. Sri. Mukul kanitkar delivered the conclusion address the confluence. https://youtu.be/_3ejsVIB0ps
- Participated in other programs including book release of author Vikram Sampath's 'Waiting for Shiva: Unearthing the Truth of Kashi's Gyan Vapi' on 8th April, 2024 at Naradha Gana Sabha, Chennai.

Dakshinapatha Studies

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