

Ram Leela: A Great Indian Epic Story, at Skeeter's Stadium on Oct. 19



By Dr. Nik Nikam

HOUSTON: Great Sage Valmiki wrote the first transcripts of Ramayan, which constrained 24,000 Sanskrit verses. Sage Tulsi Das translated that into 16,000 Dohas (Shlokas or poetry) in Hindi. In the late nineteen eighties (late 1980s), Ramanand Sagar created a series of 78 TV episodes in Hindi, that captivated the Indian nation and millions of people around the globe. It became the most watched TV series in India.

The Ramacharitmas by Sage Tulsi Das divides Ramayan into seven chapters called Kaands:

Bal Kaand

Ayodhya Kaand

Aranya Kaand

Kishkindha Kaand

Sunder Kaand

Lanka Kaand

Uttar Kaand

Bal Kaand describes the birth of Lord Ram, his childhood and his marriage to Sita.

The Ayodhya Kaand describes the preparations for Lord Ram's coronation and his subsequent exile into the forest.

Aranya Kaand talks about Lord Ram's life in the forest during exile and the kidnapping of Sita by the Demon King, Ravan.

Kishkindha Kaand describes the meeting of Hanuman with Lord Ram, destruction of Vanara King, Bali, and the coronation of Bali's younger brother, Sugriv, for the Kingdom of Kishkindha.

Sundar Kaand narrates the heroism of Hanuman in his flight to Lanka and meeting with Sita.

Lanka Kaand describes the battle between the armies of Lord Ram and the Demon King, Ravan.

Uttar Kaand describes the birth of Luv and Kush to Sita, their meeting with Ram and coronation to the throne of Ayodhya, and Lord Ram's final departure from the world.

BAL KAND: King Dashrath of Kosala (Ayodhya was the capital city) had three queens, namely Kaushalya, Sumitra, and Kaikeyi. He had no children for a long time. He performs a fire sacrifice known as Putra-Kameshti Yagna for enabling him to become a father. Following the fire-sacrifice, Lord Ram is born to Kaushalya, while Bharat is born to Kaikeyi. Sumitra gives birth to twins named Lakshman and Shatrughn. The four sons study Vedas, scriptures, religion, politics, and warfare under the guidance of Sage Vashisht. Shri Ram is considered to be a human incarnation of Lord Vishnu himself.

When Shri Ram is sixteen years old, Sage Vishvamitr comes to King Dashrath and asks for help against the Demons disturbing his sacrificial rites. Sage Vishvamitr chooses Shri Ram, who is accompanied by Lakshman for this purpose. Ram and Lakshman destroy the Demons with the weapons and techniques of warfare taught by Sage Vishvamitr.

King Janak of Mithila finds a female child in a deep furrow in a field. The King regards this as a gift from God and names her Sita, the Sanskrit word for furrow. Sita grows up and King Janak decides to have a Swayamvar for Sita. He places a heavy bow presented to him by Lord Shiva and announces that Sita would marry the person who would tie the bow. Ram and Lakshman attend the Swayamvar, along with Vishvamitr.

Several princes, who had come to the contest, couldn't even move the heavy bow. Shri Ram, while tying the bow, breaks it. Sita puts the garland around Ram's neck. Along with Ram's marriage, the other sons of King Dashrath also get married to other daughters and nieces of King Janak.

Stay tuned next week for part 2 of this article.