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Sri Ramadasu



KancherlaGopanna (c 1620 - 1680 CE), popularly known as BhadradiRamadasu or BhadrachalaRamadasuwas a 17thcentury Indian devotee of Rama and a composer of Carnatic music. He is one among the famous vageyakaras (same person being the writer and composer of a song) in the Telugu language, the others being Tyagaraja, Annamayya, Kshetrappa. He lived in the village of Nelakondapalli near Bhadrachalam, Andhra Pradesh during the 17th century and is renowned for constructing a famous temple for Rama at Bhadrachalam. His devotional lyrics to Rama are famous in South Indian classical music as RamadaasuKeertanalu. Even the doyen of South Indian classical music Saint Thyagaraja learned and later improved the style now considered standard krithi form of music composition.He also wrote DasarathiShatakamuwith a 'Makutamu' DasaradheeKarunapayonidhi', a collection of nearly 108 poems dedicated to the son of Dasaratha (Lord Rama). Early life and background Ramadasu was born KancherlaGoparaju in an affluent Telugu Nandvarika Brahmin family to Linganna Murthy and Kamamba in Nelakondapalli village of KhammamettTaluk (Warangal Division of erstwhile Hyderabad State)of northern Andhra Pradesh (Deccan region). Ramadasu was appointed as the Tahsildar (revenue collector) of 'PalvonchaParagana' by Akkana, his uncle and the administrative head in the court of QutubShahi Sultan Abul Hassan Tana Shah. He discharged his official duties earnestly and collected revenues due to the Sultan - while continuing his unswerving service to Lord Rama by chanting his name and feeding the poor. Construction of Temple One day, he visited Bhadrachalam for a Jatar (fair) and was disturbed by the dilapidated state of the temple there. Bhadrachalam was significant to devotees of Rama for many reasons. Lord Rama is said to have stayed near the Parnasala there with Sita and Lakshmana during his exile and also to have visited Sabari near Badrachalam. Pothana is believed to have been given direction by Rama to translate the BhagavataPurana into Telugu here. In spite of its significance, the temple was utterly neglected. So, Ramadasu started to raise funds for the renovation and reconstruction of the temple. After he emptied his coffers and could raise no more money, the villagers appealed him to spend his revenue collections for the reconstruction and promised to repay the amount after harvesting crops. As such, Ramadas finished the reconstruction of the temple with six hundred thousand rupees collected from land revenues - without the permission of the AbulHasanQutb Shah. As the temple was nearing completion, he was perplexed one night about fixing the Sudarshana Chakra at the crest of the main temple. On the same night, it is believed that he saw Rama in his dream and asked him to have a holy dip in the Godavari River. When Gopanna did so the next day, he found the holy Sudarshana Chakra in the river very easily. Soon after the reconstruction though, his miseries started. He was dismissed from his job for misusing the Sultan AbulHasanQutb Shah's revenues and was imprisoned in the Golconda Fort (near Hyderabad) with orders that he be released only after the exchequer received all the taxes in full. Ramadas implored Rama through many emotional songs that were popularized from the stanzas of 'DasaradhiSathakam ' and 'Keertanas' of BhaktaRamadasa. They praise the Lord for all his mysterious ways in popularizing his devotees and Ramadasu regularly sings the Lord. The songs ended in a state of total and unconditional surrender to the will of the Almighty.



After 11-12 years of imprisonment, Lord Rama decided that his devotee's suffering had reached its pre-ordained ending (because of a certain transgression his soul had committed in a previous birth). Lord Rama and Lakshmana, disguised as two young warriors, entered the bed-chambers of the Sultan Tana Shah in the middle of the night. They presented themselves as Ramoji and Lakshmoji and gave the king six lakh gold coins imprinted with Rama's own seal in return for the spent six lakh silver coins. The Sultan was bewildered at the presence of these charming but strange youngsters in his inner quarters at late night irrespective of tight security. They demanded and obtained on the spot, a written receipt for the money. The receipt was shown to the jailer who released Gopanna the same night. The next day, both Gopanna and the Sultan realized what had happened. Gopanna did not care much for his release but was inconsolable at his not having seen his Lord even with all his devotion while the Sultan was visited by the Lord.



The Lord then appeared to Gopanna in a dream and explained him the real reasons for his actions and

- [History](#)
- [Aims](#)
- [Concept](#)
- [Parenting](#)
- [Events](#)
- [Training Programmes](#)
 - [October 11](#)
 - [December 09](#)
- [Expansion](#)
- [Development](#)
- [Syllabus](#)
- [Bal Vikas Administration](#)
- [Past Students](#)
 - [June 2010](#)
 - [September](#)
- [Home](#)

Activities from States

[At the Lotus Feet](#)[Gurus Corner](#)[Children's Corner](#)[From the Annals of the World History](#)[Special Page](#)[Glory of Bharath](#)

promised him salvation at the end of his natural life. The king was convinced that what had happened was a miracle of Lord Sri Rama. He returned the entire money to the Bhadrachalam temple. Since then, it has been the royal custom of the Hyderabad State (now part of Andhra Pradesh State) to send gifts to the temple on the occasion of Sree Rama Navami celebrations every year.