

Thiruvallam Sree Parasurama Swami Temple

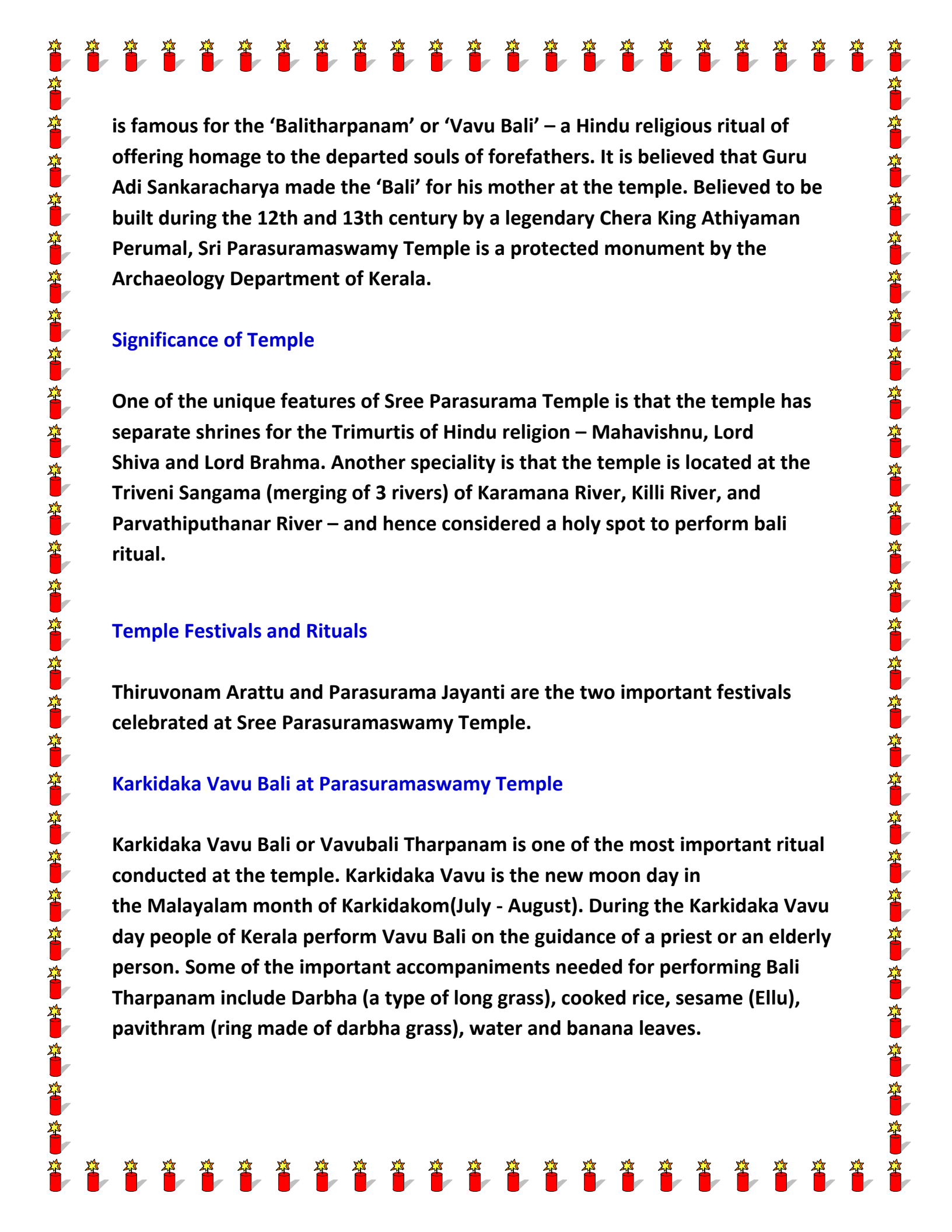


This is one of the most ancient temples of South India. It is situated on the banks of Karamana River near Thiruvallam, Thiruvananthapuram. It is the only temple in Kerala dedicated to Lord Parasurama. The temple is 9 km from Kovalam Beach and Trivandrum Airport.

History says that the temple was built during the 12th and 13th century. The temple is considered a protected monument by the Archaeology Department of Kerala. The temple is managed by the Travancore Devaswom Board. It is famous for *Balitharpanam* (a tribute to ancestors).

Legend has it that Lord Parasurama is the creator of Kerala and the temple dedicated to him is considered as a holy place for his devotees. During the *karkidaka vavu* day (a holiday in the Malayalam month of *karkidakam*) as part of the *bali* (a religious ritual), devotees pay homage to the departed souls of forefathers, after taking a dip in the holy water.

Thiruvallam Sree Parasurama Temple is the only Lord Parasurama Swami Temple in Kerala, situated around 7 km from Thiruvananthapuram city. Lord Parashurama is the 6th avatar of Lord Vishnu. This centuries old granite temple



is famous for the ‘Balitharpanam’ or ‘Vavu Bali’ – a Hindu religious ritual of offering homage to the departed souls of forefathers. It is believed that Guru Adi Sankaracharya made the ‘Bali’ for his mother at the temple. Believed to be built during the 12th and 13th century by a legendary Chera King Athiyaman Perumal, Sri Parasuramaswamy Temple is a protected monument by the Archaeology Department of Kerala.

Significance of Temple

One of the unique features of Sree Parasurama Temple is that the temple has separate shrines for the Trimurtis of Hindu religion – Mahavishnu, Lord Shiva and Lord Brahma. Another speciality is that the temple is located at the Triveni Sangama (merging of 3 rivers) of Karamana River, Killi River, and Parvathiputhanar River – and hence considered a holy spot to perform bali ritual.

Temple Festivals and Rituals

Thiruvonam Arattu and Parasurama Jayanti are the two important festivals celebrated at Sree Parasuramaswamy Temple.

Karkidaka Vavu Bali at Parasuramaswamy Temple

Karkidaka Vavu Bali or Vavubali Tharpanam is one of the most important ritual conducted at the temple. Karkidaka Vavu is the new moon day in the Malayalam month of Karkidakom(July - August). During the Karkidaka Vavu day people of Kerala perform Vavu Bali on the guidance of a priest or an elderly person. Some of the important accompaniments needed for performing Bali Tharpanam include Darbha (a type of long grass), cooked rice, sesame (Ellu), pavithram (ring made of darbha grass), water and banana leaves.



How to reach Sree Parasurama Temple

Sree Parasurama Swamy Temple in Thiruvallam is on the Thiruvananthapuram - Kovalam Bypass road around 6 km south of Thiruvananthapuram city in Kerala. Thiruvananthapuram Central Railway Station is the nearest railway station and Trivandrum Bus Station is the nearest bus station. Thiruvananthapuram International Airport is just 10 km away from the temple. The temple of Padmanabha swamy, Thiruvananthapuram

Legend of Padmanabha Swamy Temple, Thiruvananthapuram

It is believed that Sage Vilvamangalathu Swamiyar alias Divakara Muni who stayed near Ananthapuram Temple in Kasargod prayed to Lord Vishnu for his appearance. The Lord pleased from the prayer and appeared in disguise like a small, naughty boy. The boy degraded the Saligrama that was kept for Pooja. The Sage turned angry for this then chased the boy. The boy vanished. Then the Sage arrived at Ananthan kadu looking for the boy. Here the sage noticed the

boy merging with an Iluppa tree (Indian Butter Tree). The tree collapsed and turned to Anantha Sayana Moorti (Vishnu reclining on Anantha). *However the Lord was in the very big in size with head at Thiruvallom, navel at Thiruvananthapuram and lotus-feet at Thrippadapuram (Thrippappur).*

The Sage asked the Lord to reduce in size to a lesser size - three times the length of his body. Instantly, the Lord reduced his. But even at that time numerous Iluppa trees obstructed an entire image of the Lord. The Sage viewed the Lord in three parts - thirumukham, thiruvudal as well as thrippadam. The Ananthan Kadu Nagaraja Temple still exists towards the north west of Sri Padmanabhaswamy Temple. The Samadhi (last resting spot) of Sage exists towards the west of Sri Padmanabha Temple. A Temple dedicated to lord Krishna was constructed over the Samadhi. This Temple, generally known as Vilvamangalam Sri Krishna Swami Temple, belongs to Thrissur Naduvil Madhom.



Inside sanctum sanctorum, the main deity Lord Padmanabha swamy is in the sleeping posture on his serpent Anantha or Adi Sesa. The serpent has five hoods facing inwards, signifying contemplation. The right hand of Lord Padmanabha swamy is placed over a Shiva lingam. Sridevi, the Deity of Wealth and Bhudevi the Deity of Earth, two wives of Lord Vishnu are by his side. Lord Brahma emerges on the lotus, that originates from the navel of Lord Padmanabha. The statue of deity is created from 12,000 saligramams. These

Saligramams are from the banks River Gandaki in Nepal, also to celebrate this some rituals was once carried out at the Pashupatinath Temple. The statue of Sri Padmanabha is protected with, "Katusarkara yogam", a special Ayurvedic mixture, that forms a plaster that retains the deity clean.

The Temple consists of two other important shrines, Thekkedom and Thiruvambadi, dedicated for the Deities, Sree Yoga Narasimha and Sree Krishna Swami respectively. The Padmanabhaswamy Temple stands by the side of a tank, named Padma Theertham (literally means the lotus spring).

Lord Parasurama.

Lord Parasurama is the sixth avatara of the Dasavatara. Of the twenty-five lila-avatars, Bhargava Parasurama is the nineteenth. In the Sri Caitanya-caritamrita, Madhya-lila 20.246 Anubhashya commentary of Srila Bhakti Siddhanta Sarasvati Gosvami Thakura, Parasurama has been enumerated as one of the *saktyavesa-avatars* (a descent of the Lord's extraordinary power). Parasurama is the manifested form of the power to suppress miscreants. Brahma, Siva and other demigods and sages such as Narada and so on, offered prayers to Sri Krishna after He had entered into the womb of Devaki. In those prayers, Lord Parasurama has been referred to as an avatara of Sri Krishna:

In response to questions of the sages headed by Saunaka, Srila Suta Gosvami has described the pastimes of twenty-two *avatars* of which Parasurama is the sixteenth. In Srimad-Bhagavatam, 9th Canto, Chapters 15 and 16, Sri Vedavyasa Muni has described the pastimes of Parasurama as follows:

Lord Brahma was born from the lotus that sprouted from the navel of Garbhodakasayi Vishnu. Brahma had a son named Atri and Atri's son was Soma (Candra). The son of Candra was Budha. Pururava was born from Budha and his wife, Ila. Jahnu Muni appeared in the dynasty of Pururava, otherwise known as the Aila lineage, and Kusa was then born as a descendant of Jahnu. From Kusa came Kusambu and from Kusambu, Gadhi was born. Gadhi had a daughter named Satyavati. A brahmana sage named Ricika desired to marry Gadhi's

daughter Satyavati. However, in dowry, Gadhi demanded one thousand horses with special characteristics. The horses were to shine like the moon and one ear, left or right, was to be black in colour. Ricika Muni brought one thousand such horses from the demigod Varuna, gave them to Gadhi and then married Satyavati.

Once, Satyavati and her mother both desired sons, and therefore requested Ricika Muni to prepare an oblation (*caru*-a special preparation of rice, milk and sugar boiled together) for them. Ricika Muni prepared two oblations, one to obtain a brahmana son from the womb of his wife and another for a kshatriya son from the womb of Gadhi's wife, and then gave the oblations to them. The sage then went out to bathe. Meanwhile, Satyavati's mother thought that since a husband naturally has more affection for his wife, the oblation that Ricika had prepared for Satyavati must be better. So, she asked her daughter for the oblation that had been prepared for her, while Satyavati took the oblation prepared for her mother. When Ricika Muni returned after bathing and found out what had happened, he said with dissatisfaction, "Satyavati's son will be a kshatriya holding a staff signifying the infliction of punishment and Satyavati's mother's son will be *brahma-tattvavid*-a knower of the ontological true nature of Brahman." Later, upon the humble request of Satyavati, Ricika Muni said, "All right, instead of your son being born as a kshatriya, your grandson will be a kshatriya." Jamadagni was then born from the womb of Satyavati. He married Renuka, the daughter of Renu, and among the sons of Jamadagni, his youngest son became famous as Parasurama.

yam ahur vasudevamsam


haihayanam kulantakam

trih-sapta-kritvo ya imam

cakre nihkshatriyam mahim

(srimad-bhagavatam 9.15.14)


"Learned scholars accept this parasurama as the celebrated *avatara* of *vasudeva* who annihilated the dynasty of karttavirya and killed all the kshatriyas on earth twenty-one times."



Karttaviryarjuna, chief of the dynasty of the Haihayas, obtained ample power and opulence by worshipping Dattatreya and became a mighty king. Such was the unsurpassed power of Karttaviryarjuna that once while touring to gain victory over the whole world (*dig-vijaya*), he came across the warrior Ravana worshipping the demigods on the banks of the Narmada River. Disturbed by the water turbulence caused by Karttaviryarjuna, he became enraged and attempted to punish Karttaviryarjuna. However, he lost the battle in a very dramatic way and ended up tied like a monkey. Later on, Karttaviryarjuna released Ravana upon seeing how weak and powerless he was.

One day, Karttaviryarjuna went out hunting and while wandering, arrived at the asrama of Jamadagni, the sage of the demigods. Jamadagni Muni received the king respectfully and, with the help of the kamadhenu (the fabulous cow that grants all wishes), provided the king, his soldiers, ministers and servants, with food and other supplies to their full satisfaction. Upon seeing that the kamadhenu's opulence was greater than his, the king desired to possess her. He forcibly took Jamadagni's cow used for performing agnihotras and set off for his capital, Mahishmati, on the banks of the Narmada River. Jamadagni felt sad on hearing the pitiable cries of the kamadhenu being kidnapped along with her calf. When Lord Parasurama heard this, He became very angry and taking up His bow, attacked Karttaviryarjuna just as a lion attacks an elephant. As Karttaviryarjuna was about to enter his capital, Mahishmatipura, he saw a furious man with matted locks of hair, wearing a black deerskin, His face shining like the sun and holding a bow and arrows, an axe (parasu) and other weapons, coming after him with great speed. Being fearful, he sent seventeen akshauhinis constituted of many elephants, horses, chariots and infantry soldiers equipped with clubs, arrows and many other weapons, to check Lord Parasurama. But Lord Parasurama alone killed all the soldiers, elephants and horses.


Lord Parasurama sliced the enemy army with strokes of His chopper at the speed of mind. The battlefield became wet with the blood of the soldiers. Upon seeing this, Karttaviryarjuna came onto the battlefield and with his one thousand arms, simultaneously released five hundred arrows. However, using His bow, Lord Parasurama immediately destroyed all the king's bows and



quivers. Seeing his weapons cut to pieces, Karttaviryarjuna uprooted many trees and hills and began to fight. Parasurama first used His axe to cut off Karttaviryarjuna's arms and then decapitated him like a mountain peak. When Karttaviryarjuna's ten thousand sons saw their father killed, they all fled in fear. Lord Parasurama brought the cow of *agnihotra* back and gave her to His father Jamadagni. Upon hearing about the death of Karttaviryarjuna, Jamadagni sadly spoke to his son as follows:

“O mighty-armed Rama! You have committed a sin by killing the king who is the embodiment of the demigods. We are brahmanas and because they possess the quality of forgiveness brahmanas are worshipped by everyone. It is only due to this quality of forgiveness that Lord Brahma, the supreme spiritual master of this universe, has achieved his position. The Supreme Lord is quickly pleased with those who are forgiving. The killing of an emperor is a greater sin than the killing of a brahmana. You should atone for this sin by surrendering Yourself to Sri Acyuta, Sri Krishna, and by worshipping the holy places.” Accepting His father's order, Lord Parasurama travelled to the holy places for one year before returning to the asrama.

Once, upon the instruction of Jamadagni, his wife Renuka went to the Ganges to get some water. There, she saw that Apsaras (celestial women) were sporting with the king of the Gandharvas, Padmamali (Citraratha). Upon seeing their sporting, fleeting thoughts of desire for his association appeared in her mind. She became bewildered and failed to remember that the time for her husband's fire sacrifice was passing. When she came back to her senses, she realised her mistake. Fearful of the sage's curse, she stood near her husband with folded hands. The great sage understood the adultery in the mind of his wife and ordered his sons to kill her. However, his sons refused to carry out his order. Jamadagni then instructed his youngest son, Parasurama, to kill His mother Renuka and His brothers who had disobeyed his order. Lord Parasurama, knowing the power of His father, thought that if He refused to carry out His father's order He would be cursed, but if He carried out the order, His father would be pleased and would give Him a benediction. He would then be able to bring His mother and brothers back to life with that benediction. Parasurama



therefore killed His own mother and brothers. When Jamadagni, being very pleased, offered to give Him a benediction, Lord Parasurama requested that His mother and brothers be brought back to life and that they would not remember having been killed by Him. His mother and brothers immediately came to life as if awakened from sound sleep. Lord Parasurama was fully aware of His father's power of austerity and had therefore decided to kill His family members.

Although the sons of Karttaviryarjuna ran away to save their lives, they did not forget the killing of their father, and a desire for revenge awakened in them. One day when Parasurama was out in the forest with His brothers, the sons of Karttaviryarjuna took the opportunity to enter into Jamadagni's asrama. In spite of the pitiful prayers of Renuka, they cruelly killed Jamadagni while he was meditating upon the Supreme Lord, and ran away with his head. Hearing the distressed cry of His mother, Parasurama hastily returned to the asrama and lamented for sometime upon seeing His dead father. Then, entrusting the dead body to His brothers, He decided to put an end to all the kshatriyas of the world. Lord Parasurama went to Mahishmati, which was already doomed because of the sinful killing of a brahmana. Killing the sons of Karttaviryarjuna, Parasurama created a mountain of their heads. With the blood of Karttaviryarjuna's sons who were hostile to brahmanas, a ghastly river was created. In this way, Lord Parasurama freed the earth from the kshatriya class twenty-one times. In the place known as Samanta-pancaka, nine lakes were created with their blood. Parasurama joined His father Jamadagni's head to his body and placed it upon kusa grass. He then worshipped Lord Vasudeva who is all-pervading and identical with the Vedas, by performing sacrifices. Upon completion of the sacrifice, Lord Parasurama gave the eastern direction to the *hota* (the priest who performs the sacrifice), the south to Lord Brahma, the west to the *adhvaryu* (the priest conversant with Yajurveda), the north to the *udgata* (reciter of the prayers of the Samaveda) and the four corners of *isana*, *agni*, *nairita* and *vayu* (northeast, southeast, southwest and northwest) to the other priests as an honorarium. He gave the middle portion (*madhya-desa*) to Kasyapa, the place known as Aryavartta to

the *upadrashta* (advisors or preceptors) and the remaining portion of the world to the other participants of the sacrifice.

At the end of the sacrificial performance, Lord Parasurama cleansed Himself of all sins in the water of His bath. Standing on the bank of the river Sarasvati, He appeared like the bright sun in a clear, cloudless sky. Thus Jamadagni, being worshipped by Lord Parasurama, regained his own body, and became the prominent Seventh Sage in the *Rshi-mandala* (assembly of sages-the constellation of Ursa Major).

“In the next manvantara, the lotus-eyed Personality of Godhead, Lord Parasurama, the son of Jamadagni, will be a propounder of Vedic knowledge and will become one of the Seven Sages.”

Having given up the task of punishing and killing the kshatriyas, Lord Parasurama still lives at Mahendra Mountain in tranquility. The Siddhas, Gandharvas and Caranas-different classes of demigods, always sing of His exalted holy character and activities. In this way, the Supreme Spirit of the universe, Controller Sri Hari, descended in the Bhrigu dynasty and freed the earth from the burden of undesirable kings by killing them.

The character and activities of Parasurama have been described in the Santi and Vana Parvas of the Mahabharata. In the Vana Parva, Ricika is mentioned as the son of Bhrigu. There, it is written that Bhrigu gave the oblation to Satyavati and her mother. Satyavati’s son, Jamadagni, married King Prasanejita’s daughter Renuka. Renuka gave birth to five sons of which Lord Parasurama was the youngest. The five sons were Rumanvana, Sushena, Vasu, Visvvasu and the youngest, Parasurama. According to another opinion, they were Vasu, Visvvasu, Brihadbhanu, Brihatkanva and Rama. Lord Parasurama satisfied Lord Mahadeva on Gandhamadana Mountain and by his benediction, received a very dazzling parasu (chopper) weapon. Therefore, His name became Parasurama: ‘*pasuna kutharakhyasastrena ramah ramanam yasya*’.

The sage Vasishtha’s asrama was burned by fire produced from the arrow of Karttaviryarjuna. The sage cursed him that Parasurama, the son of Jamadagni,

would cut off his one thousand arms. After ridding the world of the kshatriya race twenty-one times, Parasurama then stopped killing kshatriyas on the prohibition of His grandfather Ricika. Parasurama's other names are Jamadagnya, Parsurama, Parasuramaka, Bhargava, Bhrigupati and Bhrigulapati.

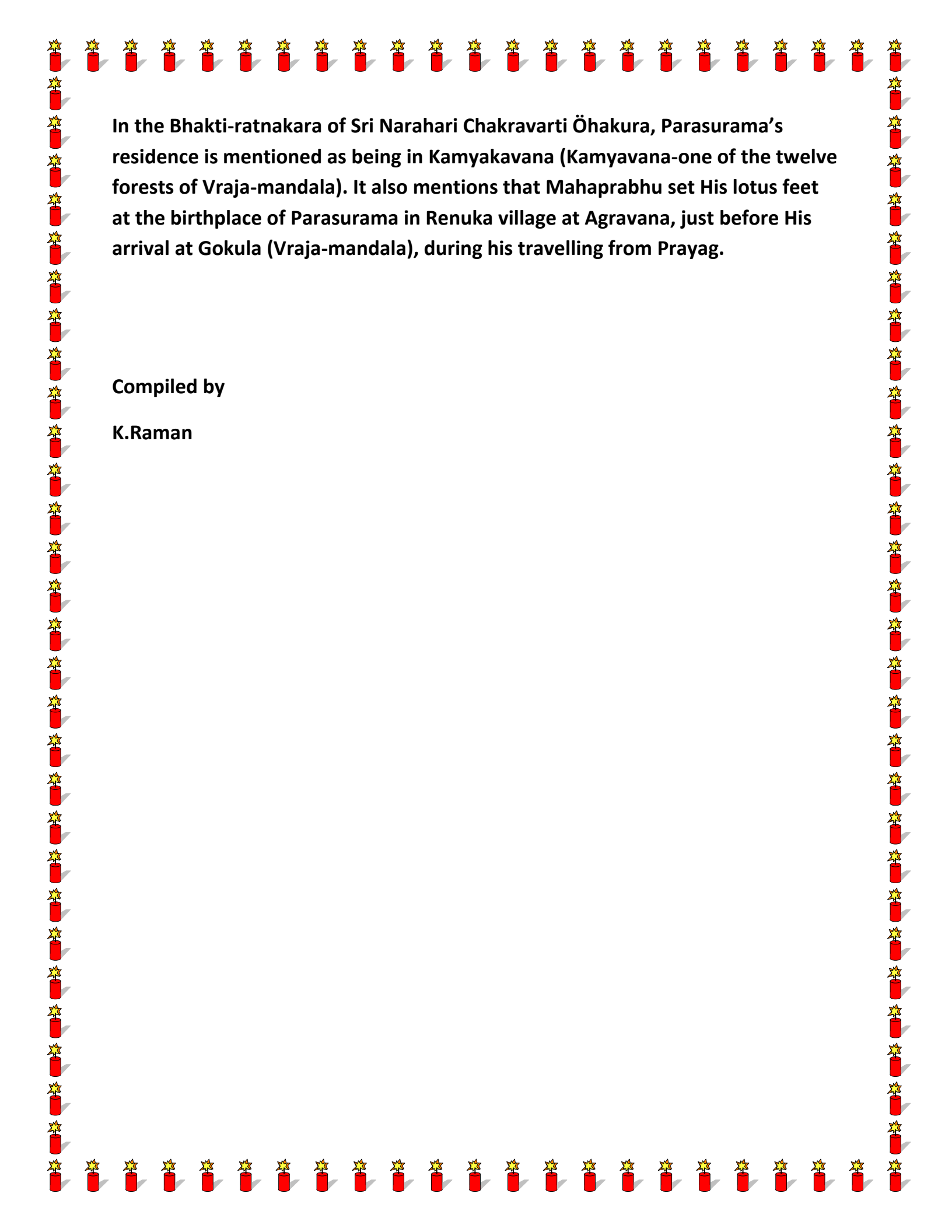
Parasurama's character and activities have been described in the Vishnu, Matsya and Kalika Puranas as well as Sahyadrikhanda. In these scriptures, there are some differences from the above-mentioned description. It is said there that due to the sin of killing His mother, the parasu became joined to Parasurama's hand and He had to go to Kailasa to perform austerities in order to remove the sin. Due to this He became known as Parasurama.

The following pastime of Parasurama has been described in the Adi-kanda of Ramayana:

After breaking Lord Siva's bow, Lord Ramacandra was returning to Ayodhya with His father and absolute counterpart internal potency, Sita, when He was confronted and challenged by Parasurama. He said to Sri Rama, "You have broken the Hara-dhanu (bow of Lord Siva). Upon hearing this, I have brought another bow. This bow is called Vaishnava-dhanu. This is in no way inferior to Siva's bow. My grandfather Ricika received this bow from Vishnu, My father received it from My grandfather and I have received it from My father. If You are able to string this bow then I shall (*dvandva yuddha*) fight with You."

Lord Ramacandra held the bow and said, "I can annihilate all opponents with this. Tell Me whether I should destroy all the planets that You have acquired by Your penance or if I should arrest Your movement in the sky?"

Becoming totally powerless and bewildered, Jamadagnya Parasurama said, "I have given the whole earth in charity to Kasyapa Rishi. Since then, I do not stay on the earth at night. Therefore, please do not stop My movement. You may destroy all the planets acquired by My penance." Sri Ramacandra then destroyed all the planets acquired by Parasurama. After being worshipped in this way by Lord Ramacandra, Jamadagnya set off for Mahendra Mountain.



In the Bhakti-ratnakara of Sri Narahari Chakravarti Öhakura, Parasurama's residence is mentioned as being in Kamyakavana (Kamyavana-one of the twelve forests of Vraja-mandala). It also mentions that Mahaprabhu set His lotus feet at the birthplace of Parasurama in Renuka village at Agravana, just before His arrival at Gokula (Vraja-mandala), during his travelling from Prayag.

Compiled by

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