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YOUR COMMUNITY CONNECTION

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Cyclone Tomas Hits - Vanua Levu And Taveuni

Special report by Fijian Herald Reporters
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The trail of destruction left by tropical Cyclone Tomas a category four hurricanes that struck Fiji this week was intense and powerful, but mercifully took only one life of women who died trying to save family members. The western side of Viti Levu escaped the brunt of the Tomas, which had at its peak, wind speed of up to 220 km per hour, but Vanua Levu from Taveuni up to Cikobia took major hits forcing villagers to escape to higher ground with major damage to some villages and plantations. A number of houses, building and plantations sustained major were destroyed and suffered major damage in a number of villages and on the coasts and outlying Islands. The Western Division was spared the wrath of Cyclone Tomas. Although some parts of the mainland and outlying Islands country hit by high winds.

Director of Meteorology, Rajendra Prasad confirmed, "most parts of the

Destruction And Damage But Only One Person Dead

country, according to the weather forecast, we were supposed to be hit but the weather conditions did change somewhat". Fiji had been on cyclone alert since the week and Western Division Commander Cawaki told THE FIJI HERALD "We were very lucky this time. We had the whole of Fiji was under a cyclone warning and my department and emergency teams were anticipating the worst."

The Fiji authorities had not taken any chances however and 1738 people in the Western division did seek shelter in the 40 evacuation centers in the division.

Around 900 adults and 700 children took up refuge in evacuation centers in Nadroga, Nadi, Lautoka, Ba, Tavua and Rakiraki.

Tourist Center Go Unscathed

Peni S. Toracakabau- Lautoka

Reports also say guests in holiday in resorts in the northeastern region escaped the main force of Hurricane



A Fijian child walks past damage caused by Cyclone Tomas

Tomas, although some resorts and hotels suffered damage. Speaking to the FIJI HERALD Tourism Fiji chief executive Josefa Tuamoto said the country's tourism hot spots in Viti Levu, the Mamanucas and Yasawa Islands, were under Hurricane warnings, but were fully operational and escaped the hurricane and the vital inter-island ferry companies in the Mamanucas and Yasawa Islands, including South Sea Cruises, Captain Cook Cruises and Blue Lagoon, had resumed operations once wind

warnings were lifted.

Government's Response

- By Jensen Koravai In Suva

Head of government Commodore Voreqe Bainimarama said in a statement on Wednesday that the restoration of schools and medical facilities in the most badly hit areas would be the priority of the Government.

"The Fiji "Government's first priority at this stage is to carry out an assess-

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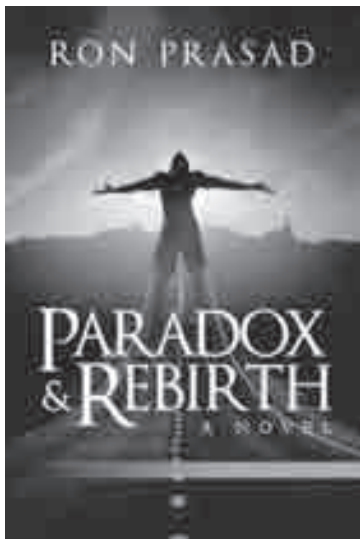
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COMMUNITY PAGES

The Search For Meaning



Debut Author Follows Homeless Man Embarking on Life-Changing Mission in a New, Inspirational Novel

Ron Prasad, who lives and writes in Vancouver, British Columbia, introduces his newest novel to his beloved city. He is the son of Cindy and (the late) Reggie Prasad, who immigrated to Canada from Fiji in 1975, from Nausori and Suva respectively.

Paradox and Rebirth is his first published novel.

About the Book

In his uplifting and inspirational book, Paradox and Rebirth: debut author Ron Prasad reveals how we can all find salvation and redemption by simply providing a helping hand and searching for the moments that define our characters.

One man overcome with depression finally decides to help those around him and at least try to make a lasting contribution with his life. How does one seek salvation from a life that has no meaning?

After he sells all his worldly possessions, Cirrus Jacobs packs a single bag, sets out into the Vancouver streets, and begins to live as a homeless man. Although his final destination is unknown, he walks the city

streets, keeping his eyes open for answers and direction; however, he is constantly haunted by the voice of his inner conscience, a voice that has taken on a life and personality of its own, one that continually tries to steer Cirrus back to the safe life of routine and monotony, a meaningless existence.

As he walks the city streets among the homeless and wrestles with the ghosts of his past, Cirrus is forced to see the beauty that is all around him and reflect on his life in search of the doorway to his redemption and the meaning that will finally bring him peace of mind and happiness. Meanwhile, Raymond and Emily Porter, two individuals who have achieved all the success in the world, drive across country to start a new life. LitSnew family know that they will unwittingly collide with Cirrus, instigating a chain of events that will provide clarity for both sets of characters in the end.

Although dark at times, Prasad's Paradox and Rebirth provides readers in search of meaning with the hope that the future holds a brighter tomorrow, one where we can appreciate the lives we have and conquer depression even in the face of illness and mounting depression.

Interested readers and media professionals can visit www.ronprasad.com for more information.

Books are now available to order online from: chaptersindigo.ca, barne-sandnoble.com and amazon.ca;

Place an order at your favorite bookstore now!



Author: Ron Prasad

FIJIAN HERALD

Ram Navami - Hindus Across The World Celebrate

by Remika Sharma

The birth anniversary of Lord Rama is celebrated in the month of Chaitra, which usually falls in March or April according to the Hindu calendar is known as Ramnavami. Ramnavami is dedicated to the memory of Lord Rama. It occurs on the ninth day (navami). The festival commemorates the birth of Rama who is remembered for his prosperous and righteous reign. Ramrajya (the reign of Rama) has become synonymous with a period of peace and prosperity. It is celebrated with great devotion across the nation and every region has its own regional significance behind the celebration. The public worship starts with morning ablutions, chanting Vedic mantras dedicated to Vishnu, and offering flowers and fruit to the god. People keep a fast throughout the day, breaking it only at midnight with fruit.

Significance in India

In some parts of India, especially Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, public gatherings called satsangs are organised to commemorate the birth of Rama. The pilgrims flock the temples of Ayodhya in Uttar Pradesh, where Rama was born and Pondicherry to participate in Ramnavami festivities. Excerpts from the Ramacharitamans are recited on the occasion. Rama Leela (the play depicting the major life events of Rama) are organized in different parts of the country. The highlights of the festival are these Ram Leela and colorful processions with brilliant floats of Rama, His consort Sita, brother Lakshmana and the great devotee and monkey-general Hanuman, which are taken out in the streets of different states. People visit sacred places associated with Lord Ram during this holy time. Places like Ayodhya, Ujjain and Rameshwaram, attracts thousands of devotees.

Significance of Ram Navami

The festival of Ram Navami marks the birthday celebrations of the Hindu God Rama, who is considered to be one of the incarnations of Lord Vishnu. According to the Hindu calendar, it falls on the ninth day of the Chaitra month, which is the Spring season. In some parts of India, it is celebrated as a nine-day festival that coincides with Vasanta Navratri, dedicated to the female force better known as Durga or Shakti. Though Rama Navami is a major festival for Vaishnavites, it is widely celebrated by worshippers of Shiva, too. It is considered auspicious to undertake a fast on the day in the name of Rama. Devotees perform elaborate pujas and chant the name of Rama. Temples of Rama have special services and bhajan sessions through the day. Stories from the Ramayana are read out in joyous



public gatherings and satsangs. Most people fast until midnight. They break their fast with a prasad of fruits and milk.

One significant and popular element of the celebration is the Ramayana parayana, a discourse on the Ramayana, by a pundit or a professional story-teller. It usually lasts nine days, beginning on Ugadi and ending on Rama Navami. A skilled story-teller who can liven up the event by weaving in contemporary events attracts massive crowds. The main significance behind the celebration of this festival is that the character of Lord Ram signifies an ideal son, an upright husband, a righteous King, and a loving brother and even an ideal man, someone who follow the right path against all odds in life. He was also the true embodiment of humanity.

A Celebration of Goodness

So celebration of Ramnavami is some way special reminder of all the noble deeds or ideals for which Lord Ram symbolizes. So if we see it in true sense it is not only a festival to enjoy and have fun there are lot more things to be learnt. It is a celebration of goodness and its victory against all evils. Sacred places associated with Rama, like Ayodhya, Ujjain and Rameshwaram, draw tens of thousands of devotees. In Rameshwaram, thousands take a ritual bath in the sea before worshipping at the Ramanathaswamy temple. Many places in North India host fairs in connection with the festival, culminating in spectacular fireworks on Rama Navami.

Lord Ram is said to have taken birth on this earth in human form to obliterate the evil forces from here. It is believed that Sri Rama took birth in the kingdom of Kosala in Ayodhya to King Dashratha and his Queen Kaushalya. An ideal son and king, a man of virtues and morals he is popularly referred to as 'Maryada Puroshottam' literally meaning the perfect man. life stuck to Dharma to perform any action despite the many hardships as a result of this he had to face.

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