

# The Ramayana

Once upon a time in Ayodya, the capital of the beautiful land of Kosala, ruled a fair and a noble King called Dasarata who was well liked by all his royal servants. King Dasarata, who was very old, began to realize that it was time for him to pass on his throne to his eldest son, Rama. King Dasarata knew that the people of Kosala loved Rama and that he would make an excellent King. So, King Dasarata announced to his people,

*“My good people of Kosala, I have some excellent news, my son Rama will soon be crowned as King and you are all invited to attend a magnificent ceremony”.*

The people of Kosala were very excited and for days on end talked about nothing else but the great event, which was soon to take place.

However, not everyone was looking forward to the event! Queen Kekayi, the King’s second wife, was not happy about King Dasarata’s desire to see Rama on the throne because she wanted her son on the throne instead. The day before Rama was to be crowned Queen Kekayi confronted her husband,

*“My Lord, do you not remember the time I saved your life?”*

*“Of course I do Kekayi. Indeed I am thankful to you for your bravery.”*

*“Then the King must also remember the reward of two wishes he offered?”*

*“Indeed I do.”*

*“My Lord I now ask of you my two wishes. One is that you banish Rama into the Dandaka forest for 14 years and the other is that you give our son Barata the throne.”*

For a few moments the King was unable to say a single word. His breathing became difficult, his chest shook with sorrow and he groaned as if an arrow had been thrust into him. His face was flushed with anger but at last he calmed himself.

*“I would rather never see the sun shine again than grant your disgraceful request,”* raged the King.

However, Kekayi persisted,

*“Do as you wish your Majesty but I want to remind you that it is a King’s duty to be true to his word.”*

So, after thinking for a few moments about his distressing dilemma, he at last reluctantly agreed to do as Kekayi wished.

Rama received the order and bravely accepted his fate so as not to add to his father’s misery. Later, Rama asked Shinta, his wife, to wait patiently in the city of

Ayodya until he returned for her. However, Shinta didn't want to stay in the city by herself, without her husband. She called out to Rama,

*"I would rather die than be separated from you Rama!"*

*"Shinta, you must stay in the palace and wait for my return. You don't understand how dangerous the Dandaka forest is!"*

It was not only Shinta who was determined to follow Rama but Lesmana also, wanted to follow his brother into the forest.

*"I will come with you and share your banishment, my dear brother. My life would be empty without you,"* cried Lesmana.

Despite Rama's firm refusal, Shinta and Lesmana persisted to try and convince Rama to let them follow him into the Dandaka forest. Finally, Rama gave in.

No words could describe the pain that the King felt about banishing his son and stopping him from being King. The King was unable to stand the stress and he soon became ill and died. Prince Barata was also upset to hear about Rama's banishment and hurried into the forest to find him. Prince Barata gave Rama the sad news of his father's death and pleaded with him to return to the palace.

*"Rama, you must return to Ayodya and take the crown that is rightly yours. I have no desire to be King,"* pleaded Barata.

*"I can't return to the palace, my dear brother, as it would go against our father's wishes. Now more than ever I am obliged to respect his decisions to banish me. However, I will return to Kosala in 14 years, to rule over the kingdom. In the meantime, Barata please be my regent and rule the country for me."*

Barata unwillingly agreed and returned to Ayodya with a heavy heart.

For many years, Rama, Shinta and Lesmana lived a quiet and simple life in the middle of the Dandaka forest. However, one day Rawana, an evil giant, saw Princess Shinta sitting by herself in the forest. He noticed how very beautiful she was and he desired to take her back to his kingdom as his wife. The next day, Rawana ordered one of his officers, Marica, to turn himself into a golden deer and go and play in the forest near where he had seen Shinta.

*"Oh, Rama, look at that beautiful golden deer! Could you please catch it so that we can take care of it?"*

Rama really wanted to please his wife as much as he could while they were living in the forest, so he decided to run after the golden deer and leave Lesmana behind to look after Shinta. He said to Lesmana;

*"Make sure you look after Shinta for me, Lesmana! Don't leave her alone not even for a moment!"*

But when Lesmana and Shinta heard Rama shouting,

© indospired

*“Help! Help!”*

Shinta convinced Lesmana to go and help Rama.

*“You must go and help Rama, Lesmana! Don’t worry I will be able to look after myself.”*

*“I will go, Shinta, but only if you promise to stay inside this magic circle.”*

Lesmana reluctantly agreed as he drew a magic circle around Shinta.

Rama had chased the golden deer into the forest, and had become suspicious so he took out his bow and arrow and shot the deer. As the deer was dying it changed back into the giant, Marica, with his dying breath he changed his voice to sound just like Rama’s and it was he who had called out for help. When Rama saw the deer change back into the giant, Rama knew he had been tricked and he ran back to where he had left Shinta and Lesmana in the centre of the forest. On his way back, Rama met up with Lesmana and they both ran as quickly as they could, afraid of what might have happened to Shinta.

Meanwhile, the evil Rawana had flown down to the innocent Shinta, disguised as a poor hermit. Shinta felt sorry for him and stepped outside her magic circle to offer him some food. As soon as she had stepped outside the circle, Rawana changed back into the ugly evil giant that he is. He took Shinta under his arm and flew high into the sky back to Alengka.

Meanwhile, Rama and Lesmana searched everywhere for Shinta but they had no success. They decided to go to Alengka to look for Shinta. During their journey, they met up with the monkey king, Sugriwa, who was eager to help them find Shinta. King Sugriwa wanted to help Rama because Rama had once helped him to win a war in his own monkey kingdom. King Sugriwa gave Hanuman, a brave white monkey with magical powers, the task of looking for Princess Shinta and reporting his findings to Rama. Hanuman soon left on his mission, carrying with him a ring, which Rama had given him to prove that he was a true messenger of Prince Rama.

After passing dangerous forests and an unsafe sea, Hanuman finally arrived in Alengka. He disguised himself as an ordinary monkey and leapt from tree to tree until he found the walls of a very large city. He waited until dark and then he climbed up the wall. Not long after, Hanuman approached Shinta and gave her Rama’s ring to prove that he was a true messenger sent by her husband. Shinta’s eyes welled up with tears.

*“You cannot imagine how relieved I am to know that Rama is still searching for me,”* exclaimed Shinta with delight.

Hanuman returned to his normal form and leapt to the top of a building that overlooked a crowded street and screamed;

*"Listen to me, foolish people of Alengka. It is I, Hanuman, messenger of Rama, whose wife your evil king has so shamefully kidnapped. I warn you that the time is near for Rawana to pay for his sins. Long live Prince Rama!"*

When Rawana heard what was happening he bellowed at the top of his voice;

*"I will roast Hanuman alive! He shall not escape Alengka. Grab him!"*

However, Hanuman escaped from the city of Alengka and from the evil King Rawana and returned to the monkey kingdom. Hanuman met up with Rama, and on hearing that Shinta was alive; Rama was so relieved that he cried tears of joy.

Not long after Hanuman returned, Rama, Lesmana, Sugriwa, Hanuman and the whole monkey army set out on their mission to get Shinta back. Soon the army came to a stop because of the rough and dangerous sea.

*"How will we ever get through these pounding waves and jagged rocks?"* asked one of the worried army members.

*"With mutual help, co-operation and determination we can work as a team, we will get through this!"* answered Hanuman confidently.

Hanuman threw a big boulder into the sea and seeing this the whole army also threw massive rocks and stones into the sea. Piles of tree trunks were forced into the seabed and tied together with vines. Slowly but surely, a walkway began to appear.

When the monkey army reached Alengka, after crossing the walkway, the army of Alengka confronted them. A great battle took place and many lives were lost on both sides. When Rawana realized how many of his army had been killed he became angry and left his palace to challenge Rama, face to face.

Rama was quick to meet Rawana's challenge. Rama and Rawana fought and fought. They were both very strong and skillful in the art of battle. Rama knew that he needed help to win, so he prayed to God Wisnu, and soon he became even stronger in spirit and finally killed the evil giant Rawana.

After fourteen years of living in the forest of Dandaka, the banishment was over and there was no longer anything stopping Rama and Shinta from returning to Kosala. When they entered the city of Ayodya, Barata and the people of Kosala warmly welcomed them. Barata immediately returned the crown to Rama and the whole city rejoiced. Since that time, the people of Ayodya and the whole Kingdom of Kosala lived happily ever after.