

Ramayana

Ramayana was originally written by a sage Valmiki in the Sanskrit language and later on it was translated into other languages in different versions. The main story of the Ramayana is about Lord Rama. In short the Ramayana is about Rama who was born in a royal family and was supposed to be the king, but because of his step- mother, he was forced to exile from his kingdom for fourteen years. During this period his consort Sita was kidnapped by a demon called Ravan, who was the king of Lanka. Rama with the help of his brother, Lakshman, and an army of monkeys under the leadership of Hanuman, rescued Sita.

But the Ramayana isn't only about Lord Rama and his attempt to rescue his consort Sita. Ramayana is also about devotion, loyalty, family roles and respect to elders. The Ramayana does not begin with the life of Rama, but actually with the people on earth who suffer from the demon named Ravan. Ravan is a cruel king who terrorizes the people of earth, especially the religious people and prevents them from performing religious rituals. But Ravan is also a great devotee of the three Gods who rule the universe, Brahma; the creator, Vishnu; the preserver and Shiva; the destroyer and therefore has their blessings and assurance that they as Gods will not hurt him. But the people of the earth, who suffer from Ravan, go up to heaven to visit the Gods and ask for their help. The Gods decide that Lord Vishnu will incarnate as a human being on earth and destroy Ravan. They find out that king of Kosala named Dasrath who has three wives is childless and longing for heir. So Lord Vishnu incarnates as his older son.

The king's first wife Kausalya gives birth to Rama. His second wife gives birth to Lakshman and Shatrugan and his third wife Kaykeyi gives birth to Bharat. The four brothers are sent for education in an ashram. The four brothers were very close to each other even though they were stepbrothers. They return to their kingdom after completing education.

Rama gets married to Sita. Sita is an adopted daughter of another king. In order to win her hand, the contestant had to bend a bow, which belonged to Lord Shiva. Many could not even lift this bow. When Rama arrived he did not only bend this bow but also broke it and so got Sita's hand.

King Dasrath intended to inherit his kingdom to his eldest son, Rama. But Bharat's nanny gets jealous and goes to Bharat's mother and begins to incite her about what might happen of her if Rama becomes the king. Incited, Bharat's mother goes to the king and demands from him the two boons he had promised her sometime earlier in life. She demands to send Rama to exile in the forest for fourteen years and make her son Bharat the heir of the kingdom. King Dasrath who is in great dilemma and pain, eventually bows to her demands.

Rama accepts his father's decision without any argument, but the other brothers including Bharat get furious. Lakshman decides to join his brother in exile and so giving an example of brotherly loyalty. Bharat inherits the throne but after his father's death goes to Rama and tries to convince him to return. Bharat tell Rama that because he is the eldest son of the king he is the rightful heir of the throne but Rama refuses and claims that

father boons should be respected. Bharat agrees to remain the ruler of the kingdom until Rama's return from exile and as a symbol to prove that the throne belongs to Rama he takes Rama's slippers and puts them on the throne.

The forest in which Rama arrived with his wife Sita and his brother was full of demons. A female demon, Surpanakha fall in love with Rama and she tries to seduce him. Rama being a loyal husband refuses to her flirts, so she tries to kill Sita. At this point Lakshman takes his sword and cuts the demon's nose. She goes to her brother, Ravan, and tells him of the disgrace that happened to her. Ravan decides to avenge this humiliation by kidnapping Rama's wife Sita. He even notices that she is very beautiful and desires her.

Ravan plans ways to far away Rama and Lakshman from Sita so that he can kidnap her. One day Sita sees a very beautiful deer and desires it. She urges Rama to get it so Rama goes deep into the forest to get it. As time passes and Rama does not return, Sita starts to get worried. After some time she hears a cry which she thinks is Rama's cry so she begs Lakshman to find Rama. Lakshman aware of the fact that something bad might happen to Sita, refuses to leave Sita alone. But Sita compels Lakshman to find Rama. Lakshman agrees but draws a line in front of their hut and begs his sister- in- law not to pass this line because it might be dangerous and sets off to search Rama.

When it is quiet dark a sage comes to the hut begging for food. Sita hears the begging of the sage and brings some food for the sage and so passes the line Lakshman had marked. When she gets closer to the sage she finds out that the sage is actually Ravan in disguise. Ravan kidnaps Sita and takes her to his kingdom Lanka. And so this basic plot of the Gods to have Rama to fight with Ravan takes place. On his way to Lanka, Sita struggles with him a lot, a vulture, who resides near Rama's hut, hears her cries and fights with Ravan. Ravan injures that vulture seriously. When Rama and Lakshman return, the vulture who is dying tells them that Ravan kidnapped Sita. Rama and Lakshman decide to find out Sita.

Rama and Lakshman need an army to find and fight Ravan and they get this help from the monkeys. The king of monkeys who was exiled by his brother gets Rama's help to fight and slain his brother. After regaining his throne the monkey king assigns one of his commanders, Hanuman to serve Rama in his assignment to find Sita. After some time the monkeys come across another vulture who tells them that Ravan has kidnapped Sita and taken her to his island kingdom, Lanka.

Hanuman who is capable of flying gets to Lanka after fighting some dangers in the way. He finds Sita in the garden guarded by female demons, in a depressed mood. He proves to her that he is Rama's messenger and offers to carry her back. But to vindicate her honor she prefers that Rama himself should rescue her. Hanuman promises that Rama will come and rescue her.

Hanuman decides to check the capability of Ravan's security forces. He begins to destroy the garden, provoking the security guard and hurting them. Eventually he is captured and brought to Ravan. Hanuman tells Ravan that he is Rama's messenger and demands from him to free Sita or else he will die. Ravan gets furious and at first intended to kill Hanuman, but because Hanuman is a messenger he decides only to punish him by burning his tail. Hanuman flies back to Rama not before setting fire to Ravan's city with his burning tail and extinguishes his tail in the sea.

After Hanuman's return, Rama plans his way to reach Ravan's island. Rama and his advisers plan a land bridge to Lanka. The monkeys bring tree and rocks from the forests and build the land bridge to Lanka. After arriving in Lanka they send a peaceful messenger to Ravan, but Ravan refuses. So a war begins in which both sides lose many forces. Even Rama and Lakshman get hurt. The monkeys also began to get weak because Ravan's forces use biological weapons, which weaken their senses. So a medical expert in Rama's forces claims that to neutralize this a special herb is required which exists in a far away mountain, named Mahodaya.

Hanuman flies to that mountain and finds out that the mountain is full of different herbs, so he brings the whole mountain to Lanka. Slowly the forces get back to their senses.

Eventually after many battles Ravan faces Rama and after two continuous days of battles Rama kills Ravan and visits Sita. But the Ramayana does not end here. The fact that Sita lived in another man's palace causes some rumors about her chastity. She is obliged to take a fire test in which she sits in a fire but comes out unharmed and therefore is purified from charges.

In the original version of the Ramayana, after Rama and Sita return to Ayodhya, the capital of Kosala the rumors about Sita's adultery in Ravan's captivity continue and therefore the people disrespect her. So Rama, who is now the king, decides to banish Sita from his kingdom. In the forests she meets a sage named Valmiki, who later on wrote the Ramayana. In Valmiki's ashram Sita gives birth to two twins of Rama, Lav and Kush. These two children learn from Valmiki to sing the Ramayana as a poem and they go everywhere and start telling everyone the Ramayana, meaning Rama's story. They even arrive into Rama's court and tell him his story and so Rama recognizes his sons. He brings back his wife Sita who decides to prove her loyalty to Rama by asking Mother Earth to swallow her if she was loyal to Rama and so Mother Earth to testify her loyalty, opens up and swallows her and Sita disappears into earth. Later on Rama himself jumped in the river to end his life, followed by many.

©[Aharon Daniel](#)

<http://adaniel.tripod.com/ramayana.htm>