



Rama and Sita

Long ago, in a kingdom called Ayodhya, there lived a king called Dashratha, who had four sons by three different wives: Rama (who was the eldest), Lakshman and Satrugna (who were twins), and Bharat (the youngest).

It was a time for rejoicing in Ayodhya. Rama had married a beautiful princess called Sita and now, at last, King Dashratha could hand over the throne to his son.

But the mother of Dashratha's youngest son, Bharat, was jealous: she wanted the throne for her own son.

The king had once promised to grant her a wish, and now she saw her chance. She told the king that she wanted Rama to be sent away for fourteen years and her own son, Bharat, to be placed on the throne.

What was the king to do? He had made a promise, so reluctantly he banished Rama to the forest, with his new wife, Sita, and his brother Lakshman.

For some while they lived a simple, peaceful life in the forest. But one day, everything changed.

Ravana - the demon king. He had twenty arms and ten terrible heads. He spotted Sita and was so entranced by her that he decided she should belong to him. And using his magic, he created a beautiful golden deer as a trap.

When Sita saw the deer, she begged Rama to catch it for her. But first he placed Sita in a magic circle, to keep her safe from any danger.

As soon as Sita was alone, Ravana put the rest of his plan into action. He turned himself into an old man and tricked Sita into stepping out of the magic circle. Then Ravana grabbed her and swept her into his chariot, pulled by winged demons. They flew high into the sky, towards Ravana's island home of Lanka.

Despite her fear Sita thought quickly and she dropped her jewellery, piece by piece, over the side of the chariot to leave a trail on the ground below.

Back in the forest, Rama soon realised he'd been tricked and frantically he ran back to where he had left Sita, but it was too late.

Then he spotted the jewellery on the ground - and thought how clever his wife was - and he followed it until the trail ended. Now what should he do?



As Rama sank to the ground in despair - Hanuman, the monkey king himself!

Hanuman took Rama to the monkey city, where he called together the monkey army and their friends, the great bears, all ready to search for Sita.

Hanuman was not only the monkey king: he possessed special powers - he could fly! So, naturally, it was he who found Sita, imprisoned on Ravana's island, and received from her a pearl to take to back to Rama.

So Rama, Lakshman and Hanuman prepared for battle. But Sita was on an island - how were they to cross the sea to save her?

Hanuman had a plan and told the monkey army to work together to build a bridge out of the rocks, grass and sand that lay on the edge of the shore.

Then Hanuman's animal army poured across the bridge and the fighting began.

The battle was long and terrible, but, at last, Rama spotted the demon king.

Rama pulled out the bow that he carried on his back and with it a single arrow. It had been a gift from the gods, and as Rama took aim, he chanted a prayer that the arrow would meet its target. It shot out of the bow with a blinding flash and the demon king fell to the ground, dead.

The whole world rejoiced. Not only was the evil Ravana defeated but, their exile over, Rama and Sita could return home.

To celebrate the people of Ayodhya lit small lamps and placed them in the windows of their houses to guide Rama and Sita home.

There seemed to be more flickering lights than stars in the sky and, with Rama now king, Ayodhya could once more be at peace.