

# इंग्लिश रामायणम्

*'dharma rakṣati rakṣitah'*

*..... dharma protects one who protects dharma*



*'vālmīki-giri-sambhūtā rāma-sāgara-gāminī  
punātu bhuvanān punyā rāmāyaṇa-mahā-nadī'*

“Let the whole world be purified by this great river called *Rāmāyaṇa*, the story of *Śrī Rāma*, which arises from the mountain of *Vālmīki* and joins the ocean *Śrī Rāma*”





## SWAMI DAYANANDA SARASWATI

*kūjantam rāma rāmeti madhuram madhurakṣaram*

*āruhya kavitāsākham vande vālmīkīkokilam*

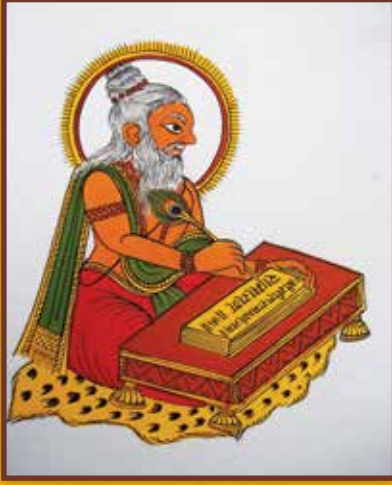
I salute the Kovil that is Valmiki, who goes on saying the most sweet word, 'Rama', perched on the branch of poetry.

Rama is dharma with hands and legs. While Krishna is *ānanda*, Rama is dharma, leading to *ānanda*. In classical dance, Rama is always presented as one who is standing straight, while Krishna is presented in *tribhāṅga*. All through the *Rāmāyaṇa*, Rama talks of dharma, lives dharma, breathes dharma. Dharma embodied is Rama.

*Swami Dayananda Saraswati*  
4-11-14

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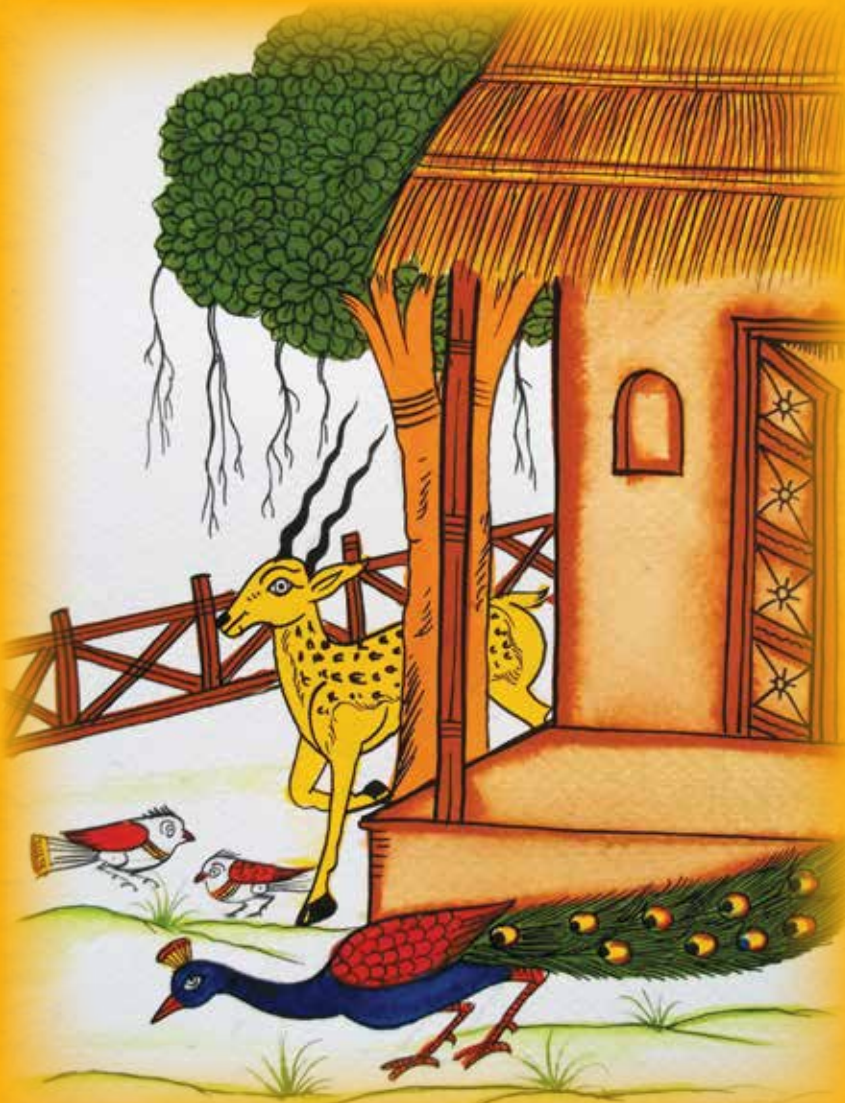
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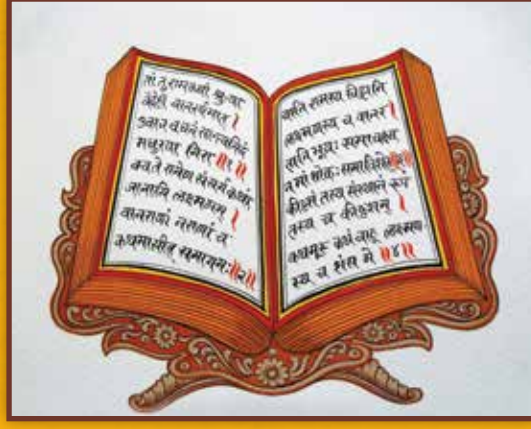
## ādikavi

‘vālmīkermunisīṁhasya kavītā-vanacāriṇaḥ |  
śṛṇvan rāmakathā-nādaṁ konayāti parām gatim ||’

“Who will not attain the ultimate happiness by hearing the story  
of Śrī Rāma written by Sage Vālmīki”



Just as the *vedas* came from the breath of the Lord, *Rāmāyaṇa* came from the *vāk* of Vālmīki. It is an epic as eternal as the *vedas*. We cannot think of *Rāmāyaṇa* apart from Vālmīki. He is revered as the *ādikavi*, the first poet, for he uttered the first *Sanskrit śloka* which set the base and defined the form of *Sanskrit* poetry. He has composed this epic poem to the highest standard of perfection. His poetry is an exposition of all values. In *Rāmāyaṇa* the *ādikāvya*, Vālmīki the *ādikavi* highlights the concept of *dharma puruṣārtha*. We first bow to the great sage *ādikavi Vālmīki* and thank him for this priceless treasure.



## ādikāvyaṃ

*'kuru rāmakathāṃ puṇyāṃ ślokābaddhāṃ manoramāṃ yāvat sthāsyanti girayaḥ saritāśca mahītale tāvad rāmāyaṇa kathā lokesu pracariṣyati ||'*

“Write the sacred poem *Rāmāyaṇa* in beautiful verse which steals the heart.

As long as the mountains remain and the rivers flow,  
so long will the *Rāmāyaṇa* remain in all the worlds”

These oft quoted words are *Brahma*'s prediction while asking *Vālmiki* to write about the life of *Śrī Rāma*, *Rāmakathā*. These words themselves reflect the greatness of the epic. *Rāmāyaṇa* is known as the *ādikāvya*, the first poem, as it is the first work of poetry that depicts all the topics and characteristics expected of a great work of art.

*Rāmāyaṇa* has been a *dharma śāstra* for mankind. Children or elders, villagers or wise men, the critical or credulous - all have gained inspiration, knowledge and entertainment. *Rāmāyaṇa*, the pathway to *dharma* of righteous living, has been able to inspire great thoughts in simple language. Performing our duties according to scriptural injunctions is easily taught through the lives and situations of various characters of *Rāmāyaṇa*. A harmonious living in the pursuit of the four *puruṣārthas*, goals (*dharma*, righteous duty; *artha*, material prosperity; *kāma*, legitimate pleasures and desires, *mokṣa*, spiritual liberation) without any conflict, is highlighted in this epic.

Every aspect of Indian culture has been enriched and ennobled by the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Indian languages, literature, art, architecture, music, dance, paintings, devotion have all been profoundly influenced by the *Rāmāyaṇa*. The *Rāmāyaṇa*'s influence has been tremendous not only in India but also in south-east Asia. There are several retellings and adaptations of the *Rāmāyaṇa* in many languages including folk versions. Among the most famous later versions we have, are *Tulasidas*'s – '*Rāmcharitmānas*' in Hindi and *Kamban*'s – '*Śrī Rāma avatāram*' in Tamizh.

“The *Rāmāyaṇa* is a talisman of every believing Hindu. Keeping it at home itself augurs prosperity and wards off evil. To many, it is an unfailing guide in life's fair and foul weather. It gives strength in one's conviction, counsel in their confusion, solace in their distress, courage in their failure and hope in spite of disappointment.”

**In India the *Rāmāyaṇa* is a living tradition, a living faith.**

## Daśaratha

*Daśaratha* the glorious king of *Ayodhyā*, descendant of *Ikṣvāku* dynasty, son of *Aja* and *Indumatī*, was the father of *Śrī Rāma*. The people of *Ayodhyā* enjoyed the rule of *Daśaratha* because he was a kind, strong and just king. His strength was in his sense of justice and *dharma*. His weakness lay in his lack of objectivity when it came to his loved ones. His disproportionate sense of generosity made him give promises that he found difficult to fulfill. The boons he granted to his favourite queen *Kaikeyī* when she bravely supported him during an earlier war, resulted in far-reaching consequences.



*Daśaratha* was very attached to his eldest son, *Śrī Rāma* and he said that no man was dearer to him than *Śrī Rāma*. So much was his affection for *Śrī Rāma* that he swore by him to his favourite queen *Kaikeyī*, “I swear by that *Rāma*, the *Rāghava*, who is invincible and sustains my life. So what you desire in your mind, please tell me, I swear by that *Rāma* whom if I don’t see even for a moment, I will lose my life.” This is the irony! *Daśaratha* dies from the pain of separation from his son *Śrī Rāma* (*Daśaratha* is a victim of a curse for unknowingly killing the young *Śravaṇakumāra*, the only son of an old blind couple). *Śrī Rāma* helps his father keep his promise so that *Daśaratha*’s word to *Kaikeyī* would not be falsified.



**When one’s word is given, it is important to make every effort to keep the promise.**



## Śrī Rāma

‘rāmo vīgrahavān dharmah’

“Rāma is the embodiment of *dharma*”

Śrī Rāma *avatāra* is *dharma avatāra*. Śrī Rāma is known as *dharma puruṣa*. His actions, words and thoughts reflect the strength of his commitment to *dharma*. He is the ideal son, ideal husband, ideal brother, ideal friend, ideal student and ideal king. Through the story of his life we can emulate him and evolve ourselves.

*Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* begins -

‘*tapaḥ svādhyāya nirataṁ tapasvī vāgvidhān varam |  
naradaṁ paripapraccha vālmīki munipuṅgavam ||*’

“Sage *Vālmīki* asks *Nārada* the great *mahaṛṣi*, who was always in *tapas* and had the knowledge of the three worlds and who had mastered all the *vedas*”.

### *Vālmīki uvāca*

*Vālmīki* asked, “Oh Sage, I am curious to know who in this world and present age is the greatest among humans? Who is valiant, a knower of *dharma*, a man of gratitude, who is truthful, a keeper of promises, a man of good conduct and is capable, has self control, is knowledgeable, one who always thinks of the welfare of all beings, who has conquered his anger, is handsome, brilliant and who even the *devas* fear when he displays his fury (against the *adharmic*) in war. I believe that only you are capable of telling me about a man with all these qualities”.

### *Nārada uvāca*

Sage *Nārada* smilingly replied, “Rare indeed is a person endowed with so many qualities enumerated by you. There is one such man born in the *Ikṣvāku* race, who is well known as *Śrī Rāma*. He is the one who has his mind under control, who is valiant, effulgent, courageous, intelligent, just, truthful, ever concerned with the welfare of his people, protector of *dharma*, beloved, soft spoken and generous. In depth, he is like the ocean; in courage, like *Himavān*; in valour, like *Viṣṇu*; in appearance, beautiful like the moon; in

patience, like the earth; in charity, like *Kubera*; in truth, he is like *Dharmarāja* – he is *dharma* personified.....”



Right from the beginning of the epic - *Bāla kāṇḍam*, *Vālmīki* establishes

the reason for the *avatāra*, incarnation. ‘*dharma saṁsthāpana, duṣṭa nīgraha, śiṣṭa paripālana*’, establishing of *dharma*, vanquishing the wicked, protecting the good was the primary cause of *Śrī Rāmāvatara*. *Śrī Rāma* went through many trials and yet remained steadfast. He fearlessly rode the path of achieving the highest good for all. His life teaches us to strive to stay righteous, always.

*Śrī Rāma* is the only one who lived and became a *mārgadarśaka* of *dharma*.



## **pitṛ vākya paripālanam, to uphold the words of father**



*Daśaratha* had given two boons to *Kaikeyī*. Just before *Śrī Rāma*'s coronation, she asked him for her two boons. She said, "I want *Rāma* to be sent to the forest and *Bharata* to be crowned king". A shocked *Daśaratha* could not go back on his word. He told *Śrī Rāma*, "It is I who have given my word to *Kaikeyī*, but you have the right to refuse." *Śrī Rāma* declined and went to the forest in order to uphold the words of his father - *pitṛ vākya paripālanam*.

## **samacittaḥ, equanimous**

*Samatvam* is the state of mind that does not swing between elation and depression but remains in equilibrium regardless of the situation - joyful or sorrowful. *Śrī Rāma* was a *samacittaḥ*, one who had equanimity. *Tulsidas* describes this beautifully-

*prasannatām yo na gatābhiṣekataḥ  
tadā na mamle vanavāsā duḥkhataḥ  
mukhāmbujaśrī raghunandanasya me  
sadāstu sā maṅgala-mañjula-pradhā ||*

"He whose appearance did not change when he was told of the *paṭṭābhiṣeka* or when he was told of *vanavāsa*;

that beautiful, peaceful appearance of *Raghunandana*, may it bring auspiciousness always to all"

## **suci, pure**

*Vālmīki* described *Śrī Rāma* at a number of places as 'suci', a person with a pure mind, free from *rāga-dveṣa*, likes and dislikes. *Śrī Rāma* never swerved from the path of *dharma* because *śaucam*, purity was his intrinsic quality. It also helped him to achieve greater heights at times of *dharmasaṅkaṭam*.

## **vaśī, gaining mastery**

*dama* is controlling the sense organs and *śama* is controlling the mind. *Śrī Rāma* possessed both these virtues; hence he was called 'vaśī'. The expression 'vaśī', also suggests that he could keep the entire world under control. So a person who can control his senses can elevate himself.

## **arindamaḥ, conqueror**

He had vanquished all the external enemies who did not follow *dharma*. He was known as 'arindamaḥ' as he had conquered both external and internal enemies. The internal enemies, are *kāma*, lust or binding desire; *krodha*, anger; *lobha*, greed; *moha*, ignorance; *mada*, pride; *mātsarya*, jealousy. *Kāma* and *krodha* are the cause for all the other *āsurīsaṃpat*, demonic qualities.

The scene when he convinces *Kaikeyī* illustrates that *Śrī Rāma* was free from *kāma*-



*‘nāham arthaparo devī lokamāvasatuṃ utsahe |  
viddhimām ṛṣibhistulyaṃ vimalaṃ dharmam āsthitam ||’*  
“Oh *devī!* I do not desire(kingship) for material gains,  
greed for wealth; know me, to be like the sages, always  
established in *dharmā*.”

*Vālmīki* describes *Śrī Rāma* as one who used *krodha*,  
anger whenever needed and dropped that anger like  
a sword or an arrow, once the need was over. *Śrī*  
*Rāma* had no personal enmity or anger for anybody.  
There is no instance where *Śrī Rāma* lost his  
equanimity and spoke in anger. Hence he is known as  
*‘jītakrodhaḥ’*.

### **tapas, austerity**

*tapas* is a *dharmā* to be observed by all. It means  
austerity, contemplation and performing duty with  
devotion. Austerity itself is three-fold, of the body,  
speech and mind. *Śrī Rāma* had all three in full  
measure.

He always performed the duties as his *dharmā* and  
never failed to observe the necessary austerities at  
every stage in life - whether in the kingdom in a palace  
or in the forest in a hermitage.

### **sthiraçittaḥ, steadfast**

*Śrī Rāma* was known for being *sthiraçitta*, stable  
minded. He was resolute and firmly declined the offer  
of the kingdom by *Bharata*. His firm determination  
was appreciated by the sages who were present.  
Nobody and no circumstance (such as his father’s  
demise) could change his mind about the fourteen  
year exile. He followed this virtue throughout  
his life.

### **kṛpālu, compassionate**

*Śrī Rāma* was compassionate towards all beings and  
always comforted people in distress. When the war  
was about to begin, he sent *Aṅgada* to *Rāvaṇa* for  
reconciliation, as *Śrī Rāma* felt sad that a sin committed  
by one man would annihilate the whole race.

*Śrī Rāma* showed compassion even towards *Rāvaṇa*,  
who was helpless in the battle field without a chariot;  
he did not take advantage of the situation. He was  
known as *‘ripūṇām api vatsalaḥ’*, one who shows  
mercy even to the enemy.

On another occasion, when *Vibhīṣaṇa* was reluctant  
to perform the cremation rites for *Rāvaṇa*, *Śrī Rāma*  
disapproved saying that, ‘hostility should cease with  
death’. *Vālmīki* described *Śrī Rāma* as *‘na ca avamānatā  
bhūtānām’* – “He never insulted any being.”

### **kṛtajñatā, gratitude**

*‘katañcit upakāreṇa kṛtenaikēnābhituṣyati’*

“Feeling gratified for a single good act casually done  
for him”



*kṛtajñatā*, gratitude was natural to *Śrī Rāma*. He  
remembered every little act of kindness and did not  
harbour any hurt. His agony for *Jaṭāyu* who was killed  
while trying to save *Sītā*, was greater than the agony  
he felt for the abduction of *Sītā*. He said “*Jaṭāyu*  
is worthy of adoration and honour in the same way as  
our father.” He duly performed the cremation rites and  
gave oblations like a son to a father.

When he brought back the *cūḍāmaṇī* from *Sītā*,  
*Hanūmān* dispelled *Śrī Rāma*’s sorrow and brought  
hope and happiness to the desperate husband. *Śrī*

Rāma's heart was filled with gratitude and he spoke of his inability to repay Hanūmān. As he was not in a position to do anything else, Śrī Rāma gave Hanūmān a fond embrace.

### mitratā, friendly



The value and importance of *mitratvam*, friendship is brought out very well in *Rāmāyaṇa*. Once Śrī Rāma extended his hand in friendship, it was forever. To him all beings were equal in friendship – *Guha* the fisherman chieftain, *Sugrīva* the king of

*vānaras* and *Vibhīṣaṇa* the brother of *Rāvaṇa*.

### śaraṇāgata rakṣaka, protector of one who seeks refuge

'*akiñcanaḥ ananyaśaraṇaḥ śaraṇamaham prapadye*' – "Accepting you as the refuge, I have no identity of my own," is the essence of *śaraṇāgati*. *Śaraṇāgati* is the *utkrṣṭa tattvam* of *Rāmāyaṇa*. Śrī Rāma is known as '*śaraṇāgata rakṣaka*'— protector of the one who seeks refuge in him.



This has been brought forth in the most famous verse in *Vibhīṣaṇa śaraṇāgati* in the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*, when Śrī Rāma said –

'*sakṛdaiva prapannāya tavāsmi iti ca yācate |  
abhayaṁ sarva bhūtebhyo dadāmyetat vrataṁ mama ||*'

"This is my vow that whoever comes to me seeking refuge I shall give them protection"

Throughout *Rāmāyaṇa*, we see Śrī Rāma giving refuge to different characters - *Ahalyā*, *Guha*, *Virādha*, *Jaṭāyu*, *Śabarī*, *Sugrīva*, *Vibhīṣaṇa*.



Śrī Rāma even goes to the extent of saying – '*yadi vā rāvaṇaḥ svayam*'. "Even if it be *Rāvaṇa* himself." *Bharata* describes Śrī Rāma as '*apāpa darśana*', "One who removes our sins by his vision and gives us refuge."

### vinaya sampannaḥ, personification of humility

Even though Śrī Rāma was noble in every way and possessed all the great qualities and virtues, he was never arrogant or proud. On the contrary he was an embodiment of humility, *vinaya*. Oft repeated lines in the *Rāmāyaṇa* are, '*ātmanam mānuṣam manye, rāmaṁ daśarathātmajam*,' "I consider myself as an ordinary human, the son of *Daśaratha*."

### dharmajñāḥ, knower of dharma

Śrī Rāma's commitment to *dharma* began as a young boy, when he was in the company of Sage *Viśvāmitra*.

Śrī Rāma was *dharmajñā*, a person who knew *dharma* and a *dharmacārin*, a person who practiced *dharma*



throughout. He is known as *satya dharma parāyanaḥ*, maintaining both truth and righteousness. Śrī Rāma declined when *Daśaratha* expressed the wish that Śrī Rāma should defy him, not go away on exile but rule the country. Again, after his father's death, when *Bharata*, *Vasiṣṭha* and even *Kaikeyī* requested him to rule the kingdom, he said emphatically that, "No one will hereafter follow me if I violate the promise that I made."

After *Vāli*'s fight with *Sugrīva*, when *Vāli* was vanquished, he accused Śrī Rāma of killing him. Śrī Rāma replied, "I never fought a battle with you, I punished you for having abducted your brother's wife and this is the correct thing for a representative of the king to do." *Vāli* understood Śrī Rāma's stand and sought his forgiveness.

Śrī Rāma was righteous even in warfare. During the battle with *Rāvaṇa*, when the ten headed *rākṣasa* was rendered helpless without his chariot and great bow, Śrī Rāma suspended the battle. He complimented *Rāvaṇa* for his valour and asked him to return the next day, fully rested, with a new chariot and bow. The famous saying from *Kamban*, '*indru poi nālai vā*' aptly describes this. Śrī Rāma was a true hero and chose not to take advantage of his adversary's handicaps.

Śrī Rāma had an exalted sense of duty as a king. The welfare of the citizens was his prime concern. His own standard in personal life was exemplary and beyond doubt. It did not matter to him if in the process he or his near and dear ones suffered. This quality of Śrī Rāma should inspire people in public life and who are holding responsible positions, to emulate him and his principles.

After the war Śrī Rāma undertook a compelling test of creating a situation which made *Sītā* choose to enter the fire, *agni praveśam*, to prove her purity. When *Agni*, the God of Fire brought back *Sītā* and wanted Śrī Rāma to accept her saying that she is pure, Śrī Rāma said, "I myself had no doubt about *Sītā*, but kept quiet, so that all the three worlds accepted her purity." Again when the topic arose in his own kingdom, Śrī Rāma was forced to send *Sītā* away to the forest. This was a *dharmasaṅkaṭam* and Śrī Rāma was compelled to give *patidharma* a back seat. His *rājadharmā*, *dharma* as a king took precedence.

On all these occasions he had clearly expounded the subject of truth and righteousness that indicated his understanding of his actions and the consequences that he was prepared to accept. He had abiding faith in *dharma*. Śrī Rāma's life teaches us what *dharma* is. To appreciate and learn the meaning of his life, a corresponding sensitivity and careful understanding of *dharma* is required.

**Śrī Rāma was a mārgadarśaka who brought before humanity the righteous path to follow.**



## Sītā

*‘idaṁ rāmāyaṇaṁ kṛtsnaṁ sītāyāscaritraṁ mahat’*

“This *Rāmāyaṇa*, composed by me, talks of the glory of *Sītā*,” said *Vālmīki*

*Vālmīki* had a soft corner for *Sītā*, the girl who had spent many years in his *āśrama*. Her children *Lava* and *Kuśa* were born there when she was under his care. He knew how she had grown from the innocent young princess to a strong, courageous woman of great patience and compassion.

The divine sage *Nārada* while narrating the story to *Vālmīki*, summed up briefly about *Sītā*, stating: ‘*deva māyena nirmītā*,’ manifestation of divine potency; ‘*sarva lakṣaṇa saṁpannā*,’ endowed with all auspicious marks on her person; *sucismita-bhaṣinī*, one who speaks pleasantly with clarity. She had exquisite beauty, charm, chastity, a deep understanding of *dharma*, supreme devotion to her husband, infinite capacity to endure hardships and a sound practical mind. She was tactful and had a high sense of dignity and self-respect.

*Sītā* was the beloved daughter of *Janaka*, who found her while ploughing the earth. Hence the name *Sītā*. She was the precious child of her parents and brought up in the splendour of the palace in *Mithilā*. It is said that in her childhood she was playing and casually picked up the *Śivadhanuṣ*. Seeing this, her stunned father decided that his daughter would be given in marriage to the man who could string the mighty bow of *Śiva*.

After her marriage with *Śrī Rāma*, the young princess was the beloved of all in *Ayodhyā*. *Kausalyā* says that she took care of *Sītā* just as eyelashes take care of the eyes. Both in *Mithilā* and *Ayodhyā*, *Sītā* was pampered and she enjoyed all the luxuries of life. However, she was equally at ease in the forest when she accompanied *Śrī Rāma* on exile.

### **dr̥tiḥ, conviction**

When *Sītā* was eagerly waiting to hear of *Śrī Rāma*’s coronation, he conveyed the shocking news of his exile. However, *Sītā* was not concerned about the loss of the kingdom, luxurious lifestyle or exile. Her only desire was to accompany *Śrī Rāma* to the forest. *Śrī Rāma* discouraged her; spoke of all the dangers and hardships of the forest and refused to take his beloved young wife and put her through travails of forest life.

She argued forcefully that a wife’s place was only with her husband at all times. She praised the beauty of the forest and said she had longed for forest life since her childhood and also added that astrologers had already predicted that she would spend some time in the forest. When *Śrī Rāma* was unrelenting, she taunted him that her father would have said, “He was a woman in a man’s garb.” She knew that a brave man hates to be called a coward and used that as a weapon to get her way. Finally *Śrī Rāma* had to yield. Thus through love, anger, sadness and obstinacy she convinced *Śrī Rāma*. This shows *Sītā*’s strong mind, independent thinking and her ability to articulate the reasoning behind her decision from different stand points.

She enjoyed her forest life as her love for nature made her happy. The deer, the swans, the lake, the flowers, the trees were all her friends, she loved them and cared for them.

### **sahadharmacāriṇī, wife**

While performing the wedding ritual of *pāṇigrahaṇam*, *Janaka* told *Śrī Rāma* ‘*iyam sītā mama sutā*



*sahadharmacarī tava pratīccha cainam bhadrām te pāṇim grīṇhīśva paṇinā*’, “Here is my daughter *Sītā* who will follow you in the path of *dharma*. I give her hand in yours.” *Sītā* kept up this promise throughout her life. She also had a very good knowledge and understanding of *dharma* and uncompromisingly adhered to her *svadharmā*. *Vālmīki* describes her as *dharmajñā*, *dharmacāriṇī*. Due to her sensitive appreciation of *dharma*, she never stopped *Śrī Rāma* from performing his duties and *dharma*. Both *Śrī Rāma* and *Sītā* adhered to the upkeep of *dharma* at all times. Her *pātivratyam*, the devout attitude towards her husband is frequently cited as an example for women to inspire them to maintain an unswerving commitment to marriage.

*Sītā*’s love for *Śrī Rāma* was unbound, an end in itself (*paramātmā*). As she tells *Anasuyā*, wife of sage *Atri*, that he was her whole life, her *prāṇa*, even though she knew that *dharma* came before any other consideration for *Śrī Rāma*.

She was so singularly focused in her love for *Śrī Rāma* that when she was distressed at the time of the golden deer episode, she spoke harsh words to *Lakṣmaṇa*. She was reflective and apologetic as well and repented this action of hers while talking to *Hanūmān* in the *Aśoka vanam*.

### ***kāruṇyam*, compassion**

*Sītā* was an embodiment of compassion and a very gentle person. In the *Daṇḍaka* forest, when *Śrī Rāma* promised the sages that he would destroy all the *rākṣasas* in the world, *Sītā* reminded him that it would not be appropriate if he killed innocent *rākṣasas*.

Again on another occasion, following the successful battle in which *Rāvaṇa* was killed, *Hanūmān* requested

her permission to slay the *rākṣasīs* surrounding her. He said that they have been responsible for giving untold misery to her when she was held captive under *Rāvaṇa*. However, *Sītā* very sternly replied that this attitude was unbecoming of any noble soul. She tells *Hanūmān* that there is no one in this world who has not committed mistakes. These *rākṣasīs* were women following orders and therefore should not be harmed. This is another sign of her nobility in forgiving those who had consistently tortured her in the *Aśoka vanam*.

### **Resoluteness and strength of character**



When *Rāvaṇa* abducted *Sītā*, he tried to win her by all possible means - wooing her, belittling *Śrī Rāma*, subjecting her to mental torture, threatening to take away her life if she did not yield and with other vainglorious promises. She had to endure this torture for ten long months and on each occasion she resolutely rejected *Rāvaṇa*’s advances.

*Sītā* considered *Rāvaṇa* unworthy of being addressed directly and she always placed a blade of grass as a boundary between herself and *Rāvaṇa*. *Sītā*’s crushing retorts to *Rāvaṇa*, at a time when she must have been extremely desolate, tells us about her moral strength, courage and conviction even in the face of impending calamity. *Rāvaṇa* was no ordinary mortal. *Sītā* standing up to him gives us an indication of her *kṣatriya* blood. She also gives *Rāvaṇa* a lesson or two in good conduct and suggests that he asks the pardon of *Śrī Rāma*. She says that *Śrī Rāma* is - *śaraṇāgata vatsala*, one who forgives those who surrender to him and tells *Rāvaṇa*, surely her Lord would pardon him.

## Presence of mind



When *Rāvaṇa* was carrying her to *Laṅkā* in the *puspaka vimānam*, *Sītā* saw some monkeys on a hill top. Hoping that they would convey the news of her abduction, *Sītā* dropped some jewels wrapped in a piece of cloth without *Rāvaṇa*'s knowledge. *Sītā* possessed great calm and composure, analytical thinking and presence of mind even during times of distress.

## satyam



*Sītā* followed the path of truth and righteousness along with her husband, *Śrī Rāma*. When the *rākṣasas* set *Hanūmān*'s tail ablaze and *Sītā* heard about it, she immediately prayed to the God of fire, *Agni* not to show his wrath on *Hanūmān*. *Hanūmān* felt the fire from all sides but it did not burn him and appeared as if even red hot flames had a cold touch to it. Such was the power of *Sītā*'s belief in truth and her prayers!

## Dignity

*Sītā* was very honourable and unfailingly upheld *Śrī Rāma*'s honour too. When *Hanūmān* saw the most

pitiable state in which *Sītā* was kept as *Rāvaṇa*'s captive, he was very anxious to relieve her of her agony. He offered to carry her swiftly on his back to *Śrī Rāma* at *Kiṣkindhā*. She refused to escape with *Hanūmān* and said that *Śrī Rāma* should get the credit for releasing her from captivity. She emphasizes the fact that *Śrī Rāma* must defeat *Rāvaṇa* in battle and then release and take her away from *Laṅkā*. She was firm in her belief that only then would *Śrī Rāma*'s honour be fully vindicated. *Hanūmān* was awe struck by her resoluteness as he felt that any other mortal would have seized this opportunity to gain freedom from a vicious captor. *Sītā* was no ordinary mortal and her response to situations reflected her divinity.

## Purity

When *Sītā* decided to take the trial by fire, she displayed remarkable courage. She asked *Lakṣmaṇa* to light the pyre and entered it. *Agni*, God of fire, came out of the burning pyre holding *Sītā* in his arms and presented her to *Śrī Rāma* saying, "Oh *Śrī Rāma*, this *Videhanandinī*, in words, thought and sight has always been yours." *Śrī Rāma* replied, "I know that *Sītā* is blemishless. I kept quiet when she was entering the fire, to make her purity known to all the three worlds. She is not different from me, just like the sunlight is (not different) from the sun."

*Sītā* is protected by her own strength of virtues.



*Sītā*'s story is for all times, reminding us of the moral strength and law of *dharma* that sustains and preserves the earth.

**Sage *Nārada* describes *Sītā* as – ‘*nārīṇām uttamā*’, “jewel among women.”**



## Bharata

‘na sarve bhrātarastāta bhavanti bharatopamāḥ’

“Not all brothers are like *Bharata*”

As virtuous as *Śrī Rāma* is, so is *Bharata* etched in our minds for the nobility of his *tyaga*. *Bharata*, one of the most noble characters in *Rāmāyaṇa*, was a man of great strength and perseverance. He was an ideal brother because of his love and respect for *Śrī Rāma*, his attitude of self-sacrifice and his disinterest in the kingdom.

### *Bharata's śoka*

When *Bharata* returned from his grandfather's house, he was struck with *śoka*, grief and anger by the situation in *Ayodhyā*. His father's death and brother's exile enraged him. He blamed himself when he realised that his mother's cruel and unfair action was the cause for the tumultuous happening in the happy sylvan kingdom of *Ayodhyā*.

### Resolve

However much Sage *Vasiṣṭha* and other ministers pleaded, appealed and advised *Bharata*, he refused to be the king and insisted on bringing back *Śrī Rāma* from the forest. He was firm in his resolve. *Bharata* took his entire army to plead with *Śrī Rāma* to return to rule *Ayodhyā*. *Bharata* was very much like *Śrī Rāma* in his temperament. He was offered the kingship but he refused steadfastly.

### *pādukā paṭṭābhisekam*

One of the most poignant scenes in the *Ayodhyā kāṇḍam* of *Rāmāyaṇa* is the meeting of the brothers



when both brothers stood their ground. *Śrī Rāma* was for *pitṛ vakya paripālanam*, keeping up his father's words. *Bharata* was adamant in not accepting *Śrī Rāma's* argument. Both were backed on their sides by *dharma*. Finally *Śrī Rāma* won. *Bharata* adhered to the dictum - ‘*jyeṣṭha brāthā pitṛ samah*,’ “Eldest brother is equal to the father.” *Bharata* went back to *Ayodhyā* but on one condition. He took back the ‘*pādukās*’ of *Śrī Rāma* with full royal honours to place on the throne.

*Bharata* considered himself to be an emissary of *Śrī Rāma* and followed his elder brother's advice of ‘*rājya paripālanam*’ implicitly. He ruled the kingdom sitting in front of the *pādukās*. That was the beginning of *Rāmarājya*. The *pādukās* of the Lord took care of the *yogakṣema* of the world - ‘*ete hi sarvalokasya yogakṣemaṁ vidhāsyataḥ*’.

The *pādukās* remind us of the quality of a devotee of such nobility as *Bharata*. The reverence shown to





the 'pādukās' is the standard set by *Bharata* as a role model. The 'pādukās' have been eulogised by great sages, *ācāryas* and poets. It has inspired thousand verses of beautiful poetry, the '*Pādukā Sahasram*' by *Vedanta Desikar*.

### *tyāga*

*Bharata* lived fourteen years in *Nandigrama* leading the same ascetic lifestyle of *Śrī Rāma*'s in the forest. He had matted hair and wore bark clothing just like *Śrī Rāma*. This is how *Hanūmān* saw him when *Śrī Rāma* sent him to *Ayodhyā*.

*Śrī Rāma* thought that time might have brought about a change in the intention of *Bharata* to retain the kingship. Moreover *Śrī Rāma* never coveted the worldly trappings. When *Hanūmān* went to *Nandigrama*, he saw *Bharata* anxiously waiting for *Śrī Rāma*'s arrival with misery and eagerness writ large on his face. *Bharata*'s devotion and sacrifice moved everyone to tears.

*Bhrāṭṛbhakti*, devotion to brother is brought out beautifully in the character of *Bharata*. This extraordinary portrayal of *tyāga* is found nowhere else in history.

***Śrī Rāma* blessed *Bharata* thus – '*adyaprabhṛti lokānām bhaktimārga pradarsakah*',  
 "Hereinafter, you shall serve as a demonstrator of the path of devotion to all the worlds"**





## Lakṣmaṇa

*'bhrātā bhartā ca bandhuśca pitā ca mama rāghavaḥ'*

“brother, master, relative and father to me is Rāghava.”

### *bhrātr̥bhakti*, devotion to brother

Lakṣmaṇa was inseparable from Śrī Rāma - ‘*aparah prāṇa iva*’. Śrī Rāma himself explained that Lakṣmaṇa was his own life moving about outside his own self. When Lakṣmaṇa followed Śrī Rāma to the forest, his mother Sumitrā told him, “May you consider Rāma as your father, Sītā as myself and the forest as Ayodhyā. Go now and be happy.” He did much more than just keep up to his mother’s words.

Lakṣmaṇa was very devoted and protective of his beloved brother Śrī Rāma. He said that “Śrī Rāma was everything to him. He did not look beyond Śrī Rāma and his goal was only his brother’s happiness.”

His devotion to Sītā is revealed, when he was requested by Śrī Rāma to identify the jewels of Sītā brought by Sugrīva. Lakṣmaṇa said, “I cannot recognise the armlets or earrings, but I can recognise the anklets, as I used to bow to her feet everyday.”

### *kainkaryam*, servitude

He was called *kainkarya śiromaṇi*, an embodiment of the principle of *kainkarya*, service. Throughout Śrī Rāma’s stay in the forest, Lakṣmaṇa ensured that no harm came to Śrī Rāma and Sītā. Not worried about his own comfort, he would stand ready with a bow and arrow at all times. When Lakṣmaṇa constructed a *parṇaśālā*, cottage for them, Śrī Rāma was so pleased and embraced him and stated, “Lakṣmaṇa, you know



how to do things. Under your protection I feel that my revered father is not dead.” Lakṣmaṇa’s fascination for service to Śrī Rāma is so great, he tells Hanūmān, ‘*guṇaiḥ dāsyamupagataḥ*,’ “I have been compelled by Śrī Rāma’s virtues to serve him.”



### **krodhāvēśam, quick temper**

In the epic, we often come across his volatile temper. He was by nature a natural contrast to Śrī Rāma. When Śrī Rāma was banished, Lakṣmaṇa being unable to accept Śrī Rāma's exile expressed his resentment towards his father and Kaikeyī. His anger at Bharata when he thought Bharata was coming to harm Śrī Rāma, his anger at Sugrīva's delay in setting out to search for Sītā and many other instances illustrate this. Each time Śrī Rāma had to pacify him knowing that Lakṣmaṇa's anger was more to protect him and was an expression of his overwhelming love. Lakṣmaṇa's emotion was anger born out of concern for Śrī Rāma. Lakṣmaṇa was also quick to repent and apologize without any reserve.

### **ājñāpālanam, obedience**

Lakṣmaṇa was an obedient brother. There were times when Lakṣmaṇa had to obey Śrī Rāma's very onerous orders even though his heart was against it. For

instance when he had to leave Sītā in the forest, he does implicitly obey but with a heavy heart. It shows how an obedient brother is also placed in a situation of *dharmasaṅkaṭam*. His love and respect was such that he never questioned Śrī Rāma, knowing that he would never tread the wrong path.

### **shraddhā, implicit faith**

Lakṣmaṇa's faith and devotion to Śrī Rāma was so great that while finally aiming the arrow at *Indrajit*, he invoked Śrī Rāma's qualities of *dharma*, truth and valor and shot the arrow which killed *Indrajit*, the one whose name itself meant unconquerable.

### **bhrātṛ bāndhavyam - Śrī Rāma's love for Lakṣmaṇa**

Śrī Rāma loved Lakṣmaṇa dearly. When Lakṣmaṇa became unconscious in the *yuddham*, Śrī Rāma with agony says, "Seeing my brother fallen in the battle field, what is the use of winning this war? What use of Sītā? What use of my own life?"

**Śrī Rāma says, "...brother equal to Lakṣmaṇa is hard to find."  
This was the bond the brothers shared.**





## Rāvaṇa

*'hr̥ṣṭo dr̥pyati dr̥ptaḥ dharmam atikrāmati'*

“Once a man gets elated, he gets pride. The proud man transgresses *dharmā*”

(*Apasthamba dharma sutra -1-13-4*)

*Rāvaṇa* was the '*pratināyaka*' a contrast to the hero that *Śrī Rāma* embodied. He was a glorious, accomplished *rākṣasa* and a great devotee of Lord *Śiva*. His birth, courage, valour, knowledge, penance, prosperity and reputation were remarkable. *Rāvaṇa* was a powerful and an ideal king. His citizens were happy as he cared for them. His total focus helped him to conquer the three worlds. He sought the power and glory of the highest place in creation. Pride, self-centredness, disrespect for *dharmic* people and disregard for truth and righteousness caused his downfall.

*Laṅkā* ruled by *Rāvaṇa* was a very prosperous and flourishing land and known as *Svarṇapurī*. No other place is described as so splendid and grand as *Laṅkā* was during *Rāvaṇa*'s reign. *Hanūmān*'s first reaction describes the wonder that *Laṅkā* was. He was awestruck by its magnificence and opulence. *Laṅkā* was built by *Viśvakarma*, the celestial architect and protected by no less than the great *Rāvaṇa* with the help of subservient celestials.

### The imposing personality of *Rāvaṇa*

In the *Sundara kāṇḍam*, *Hanūmān* was stunned when he saw *Rāvaṇa*'s personality for the first time. At the same time, *Hanūmān* felt pity that such a powerful person who could have been the protector of all the worlds should have taken to *adharmic* ways.

In the *Yuddha kāṇḍam*, when *Śrī Rāma* stood before *Rāvaṇa*, he was struck by *Rāvaṇa*'s appearance, majesty and brilliance. *Rāvaṇa* had such a personality that commanded and attracted even his enemies. It is

said that when he was the ruler, none dared to even look towards *Laṅkā*, leave alone attack it. No one had the courage to stand up to *Rāvaṇa* .

*Rāvaṇa* was the son of a brahmin sage *Viśravas* and a tribal woman *Kaikaśī*. He obtained many boons by the power of his austere penance from Lord *Śiva*. He was a religious person well versed in the *vedas* and could recite the entire *Sāma veda*. He was blessed with the art of speech and was an exponent of *nādi śāstra*.

*Rāvaṇa* appreciated all the fine arts and was an accomplished *vīṇā* player. However all these great qualities and accomplishments were futile because of his pride, vain glory, arrogance and lust which finally brought about his downfall.

### *Rāvaṇa*'s flaws

If *Śrī Rāma* was the upholder of *dharmā*, *Rāvaṇa* defied *dharmā*. His unparalleled achievements and glory were acquired by divine grace but he failed to respect the divine laws of *dharmā*. His two major obsessions were lust and war that offered conquest. He went to any extent to attain whatever attracted him - by valour, by cunning and sweet speech, by force or disguise.

*Rāvaṇa* was known for his ability to undertake severe penance that resulted in his getting several boons. The penance undertaken by him was only to obtain powers and to conquer the three worlds. These very powers were used for *himsā*, causing injury to others. This kind of penance can never be considered as meritorious.



Though *Rāvaṇa* practiced a deeply religious life, he still possessed demonic qualities, *āsurī saṃpat* (*kāma*, *krodha*, *lobha*, *moha*, *mada*, *mātsarya*). A mere religious life without an understanding of *dharma* is worthless and he illustrates this principle.

When with tremendous grace *Śrī Rāma* allowed *Rāvaṇa* to leave the battlefield, he lamented, “All that intense penance which was practiced by me has become futile and I have been utterly defeated by a mortal.”

It is significant to note the advice given to *Rāvaṇa* by *Hanūmān* earlier, “The fruits of virtue practiced by you have already been attained. Now you have to reap the fruits of unrighteousness in the form of abduction and detention of *Sītā* very soon.”

*Dharma* is a divine law. Nobody can rub against a law without getting rubbed!

### ***Rāvaṇa*'s downfall**

*Rāvaṇa*'s entry in the *Rāmāyaṇa* occurs only in the last year of *Śrī Rāma*'s exile. He came in the guise of a *sannyāsi*, mendicant to *Pañcavaṭi*. Since he was a connoisseur of beauty he found that *Śūrpaṅakhā*'s description of *Sītā* was an understatement -

‘*naivarūpā mayānārī dṛṣṭā pūrvā mahītale*’  
 “Such a beauty has not been seen by me on this earth.”



He had no doubt that his great might and description of his conquests would win over *Sītā*. He tried all methods to lure her and even threatened her. It is interesting to note, that he refrained from using force. Owing to a curse that he had incurred earlier for forcibly enjoying a celestial maiden, if he even touched a woman against her wishes, his head would break into several pieces. Although he suffered many curses, he continued his lustful ways. He tried everything and realized that *Sītā* was stronger and more resolute than he had expected. Hearing his boastful words, *Sītā* ridiculed him and gave him a stern warning, saying, ‘...*tvaṃ punaḥ jambuka*, *siṃhīmām icchasi sudurlabām*,’ “What valour are you talking about? You have come here like a jackal in the absence of a lion, it is impossible to take me who am unattainable.”

### **Wise counsel for *Rāvaṇa***

*Rāvaṇa* was surrounded by people who offered him wise counsel. However, words had no effect on *Rāvaṇa* as fate was working towards his destruction. ‘*vināśa kāle viparīta buddhiḥ*’, “Intellect errs at the time of destruction” was his situation.

After destroying *Aśoka vanam*, *Hanūmān* went to *Laṅkā* and warned *Rāvaṇa* of the impending danger of annihilation and asked him to change his vile ways.

*Rāvaṇa*'s beautiful, pious and righteous wife *Maṇḍodarī* and his younger brother *Vibīṣaṇa* who were both committed to *dharma*, warned him. They repeatedly



requested him to give back *Sītā* and to save not only himself from downfall but also that of his own people and country. Overcome by pride and lust, *Rāvaṇa* did not heed the good advice. Even *Mārīca* the *rākṣasa* advised *Rāvaṇa* at the very outset – ‘*paradārābhimarśāt tu nānyat pāpataram mahat*’, “There is no greater sin than coveting another man’s wife.”

### **daśamukha, ten heads**

*Rāvaṇa* is described as a person with ten heads, indicating a person who is a slave to his *indriyas*, sense organs. Hence his actions were not in accordance with *dharma*. *Rāga-dveṣa*, likes and dislikes were the

deciding factor. He did not care about right and wrong. He was not together as a person and had no clarity in his thinking.



“Ten headed but not level headed!” This was his condition. *Rāvaṇa*’s pride and arrogance did not allow him to seek peace even when he knew at the end of the battle that he could not conquer *Śrī Rāma*. Such a person, however illustrious, represents pride born of *ajñāna*, ignorance and he brings about his own destruction and that of his dynasty too.

*Rāvaṇa* who had terrorized the whole world and who had humbled the planets and celestials, paid gravely for his arrogance and unrighteousness.

***Rāvaṇa*’s wife *Mandodarī* laments after his fall –**

***‘Indriyāni purā jītvā jītaṁ tribhuvanāṁ tvayā |  
smaradbhiriva tadvairamindriyaiveva nirjitaḥ ||’***

**“You first conquered all the three worlds by subduing senses.  
Now you stand vanquished by your senses themselves.....”**



## Hanūmān

*'budhir balaṃ yaśo dhairyaṃ nirbhayatvam arogatā |  
ajāḍyaṃ vakpaṭutvaṃ ca hanumat smaraṇād bhavet ||'*

This beautiful verse describes the extraordinary qualities of *Hanūmān* that we can aspire to gain by praying to him. *Hanūmān* known for his devotion and dedication to *Śrī Rāma* represents strength, fearlessness, wisdom and humility. His strength and prowess are unmatched; yet he sees these glories only as an expression of *Śrī Rāma*'s grace bestowed upon him.

*Hanūmān* has an '*utkr̥ṣṭa sthānam*', highest place given by *Mahākavi Vālmīki*. It is said that *Sundara kāṇḍam* of *Rāmāyaṇa*, where *Hanūmān* is the chief character is a *laghu kāvya*, short poem within *Rāmāyaṇa*, the *mahakāvya*, epic poem. It is one of its kind as instead of the hero and heroine, a third person becomes the hero. Such is his glory. One cannot imagine *Rāmāyaṇa* without *Hanūmān*.

Whenever or wherever we talk of *Śrī Rāma*, *Hanūmān*'s presence is certain-

*'yatra yatra raghunātha kīrtanam tatra tatra kṛta  
mastakāñjalim |  
bhaṣpavāri pari purṇa lochanaiṃ marutiṃ namata  
rākṣasāntakam ||'*

### **vāyuputra, son of the wind God**

*Hanūmān* is the son of *Añjana* and wind God, *Vāyu*. *Hanūmān*'s speed, agility and mobility matches his father's abilities. *Āñjañeya*, as he is also called, flew hundred *yojanas* (around 800 miles) with ease and crossed the mighty ocean to reach *Laṅkā*. It was an extraordinary feat and he managed to overcome all the obstacles on the journey and entered *Laṅkā*.



Later, during the battle, he flew from *Laṅkā* to the *Himālayas* to get the medicinal herb *Saiñjvinī*. The sages described him saying - '*manojavaṃ māruta tulya vegam*', "His speed is not merely that of wind but that of the mind itself."

### **vākpaṭutvam, eloquent in speech**

When *Śrī Rāma* and *Lakṣmaṇa* were searching for *Sītā*, they approached *Sugrīva* to befriend him and to ask for his assistance. They reached mountain *Ṛṣyamukha* where *Sugrīva* was hiding from *Vali*. *Sugrīva* mistook the two brothers to be the spies of his wrathful brother, *Vali*. *Sugrīva*, the king in exile, expressed his fear and concern to his minister *Hanūmān* and sent him to find out who they were. *Hanūmān* met them in the guise of a *brāhmaṇa*. The wise *Hanūmān* was struck by their radiance, gait and divine looks. He then questioned them in clear, meaningful and sweet words while bowing to them with humility.

Śrī Rāma, who was a 'vākyajñā' himself, was very impressed with Hanūmān's eloquent speech. Hanūmān talked about Sugrīva and his plight and also enquired about them. Observing the way he spoke, Śrī Rāma told Lakṣmaṇa that only a person with vast knowledge of all the vedas could speak in this manner - with the right choice of words, proper modulation of voice, careful expressions, appropriate gestures and with sagacity.

### Śrī Rāmadūta, messenger

Śrī Rāma was impressed with all these noble qualities of Hanūmān. So he decided that Hanūmān would be his dūta, the messenger who would help him fulfill his mission of finding Sītā. Thus, besides being Sugrīva's minister and messenger, Hanūmān became the messenger for Śrī Rāma as well.

Hanūmān is known for kāryasiddhi, accomplishing tasks. He did not leave any mission incomplete and Śrī Rāma understood this special quality as soon as he saw Hanūmān.

### ativikyāta, most famous

Hanūmān's power, strength, courage, valour, eloquence, knowledge and wisdom have been beautifully illustrated in the Sundara kāṇḍam for us to appreciate and enjoy. The Sundara kāṇḍam can also be called the Hanumat kāṇḍam. With his skills, he removed the sorrow of Jānakī, mother of the universe and the sorrow of Śrī Rāma, the Lord.

What Hanūmān did is indeed a singular achievement that was possible only by vāyuputra. That is why he is known as ativikyāta, most famous. In the Kamba Rāmāyaṇa, Sītā blesses him thus, 'Indru pol endrum vāzh,' "May you live like today, always."

### Rāmāñjaneya āliṅgam, embrace

Hanūmān brought the cūḍamaṇī, the head ornament from Sītā and told Śrī Rāma, 'dṛṣṭā Sītā,' 'kanden Sītayai,' 'I have seen Sītā.' This statement has become the famous lines from the Rāmāyaṇa as it brought hope and happiness to Śrī Rāma. These precise words indicate Hanūmān's sensitivity and care, his understanding Śrī



Rāma's anxiety and concern about Sītā's safety. Śrī Rāma was very touched and his words were choked with emotion,"You have done a deed that any other would not even imagine." Śrī Rāma felt miserable that he had nothing to give Hanūmān to express his gratitude as 'prati upakāra' and in that situation he fondly embraced Hanūmān –

'idaṁ tu mama dīnasya mano bhūyaḥ prākāśati eṣa sarvasva bhūyastu pariṣvaṅgo hanūmataḥ'

"The embrace of the Lord" - what more could Hanūmān want?

### sacivottamaḥ, foremost among counsellors

Hanūmān was a master of statecraft. He has been described as sacivottamaḥ, foremost of counselors and as ameyātmā, possessing infinite intelligence. His diplomacy helped both Sugrīva and Aṅgada in resolving the kingship of Kiṣkindhā, by making Sugrīva the king and Aṅgada the crown prince. Again, when all others were apprehensive, Hanūmān could gauge the circumstances and intentions of Vibhīṣaṇa who was seeking asylum. He did not see any harm or hidden danger in this situation and recommended accepting Vibhīṣaṇa to Śrī Rāma.

### vinaya, humility

The extraordinary achievements and all impossible tasks were accomplished by Hanūmān with utmost humility and devotion. He invoked the divine and sought the blessings of elders before he commenced any work. There was humility in his speech too.

Though he had the inherent virtue of humility, vinaya, he also had a curse by the sages - that he would be unaware of his powers and strength. That is why he had to be reminded by Jāmbavān that he could leap across to Laṅkā and accomplish Śrī Rāma's mission of finding Sītā.



## brahmacāri



*Hanūmān* is known for the virtue of self-restraint and control of the mind. He is called *nityabrahmacāri*, the eternal bachelor. When he was searching for *Sītā* in the harem of *Rāvaṇa*, for a moment he felt that he was trespassing. Then he consoled himself with the famous line- '*mano hi hetuḥ sarveṣāṃ indriyāṇāṃ pravartane*', "When the mind is in control what is there to worry? I can only search for a lady where ladies are - mind is the cause for all senses to go haywire."

## *Sītā āsvāsanam, winning the confidence of Sītā*

When *Hanūmān* finally discovered the beautiful *Sītā* lost in misery in the *Aśoka vanam*, he felt sympathetic towards her. He contemplated about the appropriate language to use to win her confidence. He considered speaking in *Saṃskṛitam*, the language of the learned. *Hanūmān* was adept in many languages and he was known as a *nava vyākaraṇa paṇḍita*, master of nine grammars. Even his approach and his conduct was very

well thought out and executed with poise. Sitting on the branch of the *śimśupā* tree he narrated the story of *Ayodhyā*, *Daśaratha*, *Śrī Rāma* and his plight of having lost his wife, thus arousing *Sītā*'s curiosity. He came down and convinced her that he was not a *rākṣasa* in disguise. He described *Śrī Rāma*'s appearance and glory and further enhanced her confidence by offering the ring given by *Śrī Rāma*; this made her very happy. Then *Hanūmān* reported the plight of *Śrī Rāma* who loved her and how he was suffering in her absence. He thus consoled *Sītā* and promised to come back with *Śrī Rāma* and took leave of her.

Then he destroyed the *Aśoka vanam*, met *Rāvaṇa* and warned him and burnt *Laṅkā*. Thus after accomplishing all these feats he returned to *Śrī Rāma*.

## sañjīvinī



*Hanūmān* played an important role in the war doing many tasks. We see the marvel in the *Yuddha kāṇḍam* when *Hanūmān* was sent to bring the *sañjīvinī* herb; unable to recognise the plant, he flew back with the whole mountain from the *Himālayas* and saved the lives of *Śrī Rāma* and *Lakṣmaṇa* and many other wounded *vānaras*.

Words cannot describe the innumerable qualities of *Hanūmān*, the ardent devotee of *Śrī Rāma*, who was blessed to be a *Cirañjīvi*.

**Saint Thiagaraja sings on the greatness of *Hanūmān*'s *dāsyā bhakti* thus –**

**'tava dāso'ham tava dāso'ham tava dāso'ham dāsarate.....',**

**"Oh son of *Daśaratha* ! I am ever at your service"**



Bala kändam

## *Bāla kāṇḍam*

King *Daśaratha* of *Ikṣvāku* dynasty ruled the kingdom of *Kośala* from *Ayodhyā*. The people of *Ayodhyā* were prosperous, happy and righteous. The king had everything that he desired except an heir to his throne. He consulted his guru Sage *Vasiṣṭha* and invited Sage *Ṛiṣyaśṛṅga* to perform the *Aśvamedha yajña* where all the *devatas* had assembled. The *devatas* prayed to Lord *Viṣṇu* to protect them from *Rāvaṇa*, the powerful *rākṣasa* king. The Lord assured them that he would be born as King *Daśaratha*'s son to kill *Rāvaṇa*. King *Daśaratha* then performed the *putrakāmeṣṭi yajña* to beget children. Soon his three queens, *Kausalyā*, *Kaikeyī* and *Sumitrā* gave birth to *Śrī Rāma*, *Bharata* and the twins *Lakṣmaṇa* and *Śatrughna* respectively. The four brothers grew up happily and received all the *sanskāras* and education befitting their royal clan.

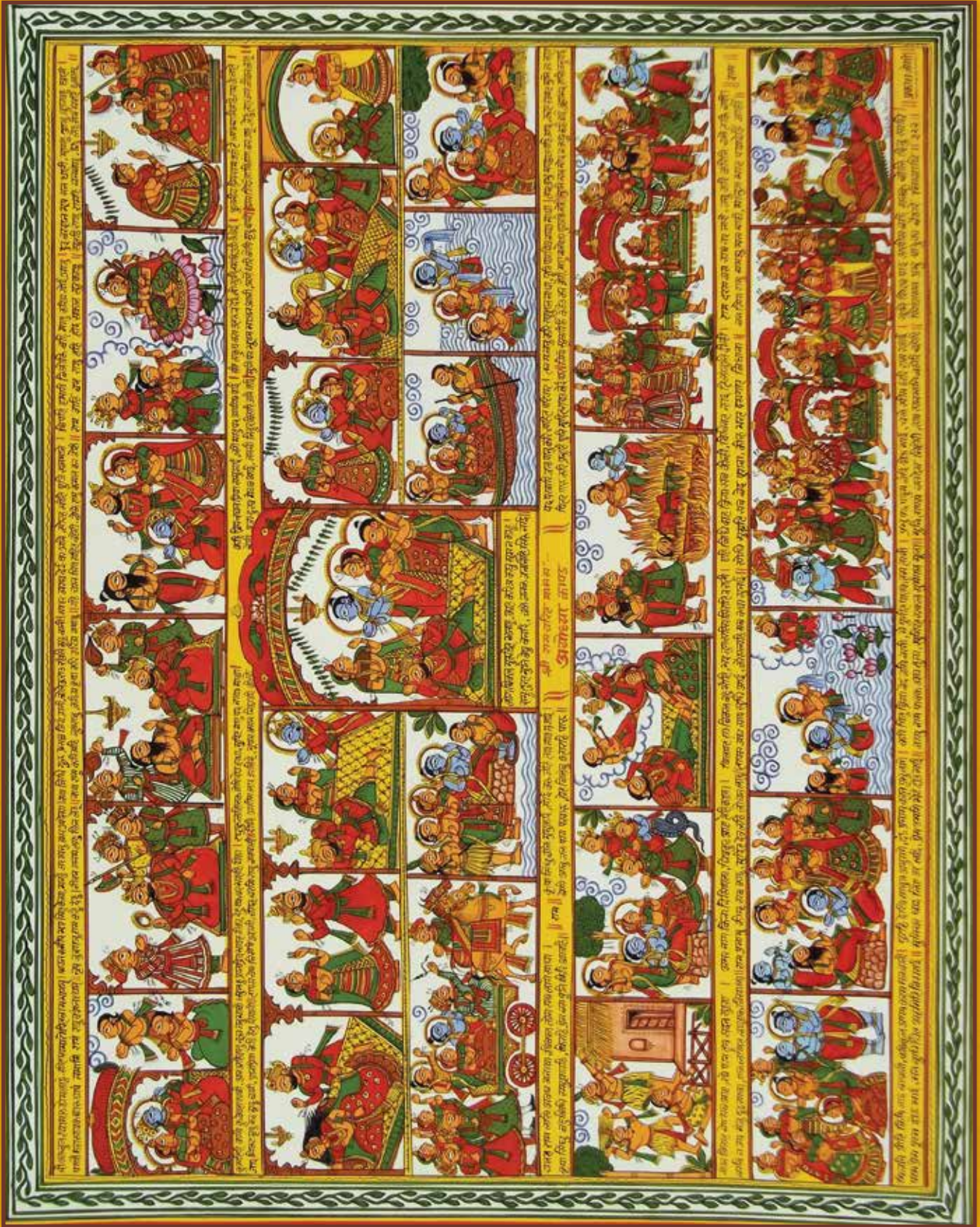
One day Sage *Viśvāmitra* visited King *Daśaratha*'s court. He urged the King to send his favourite son *Śrī Rāma* along with the sage to destroy the two dreadful *rākṣasas*, sons of *Tātakā*, *Subāhu* and *Mārīca*, who were obstructing his *yajña* at *Siddhāśrama*. On *Vasiṣṭha*'s advice, King *Daśaratha* reluctantly sent the princes with Sage *Viśvāmitra*. During their journey Sage *Viśvāmitra* taught them powerful *mantras*, the

incantations of *Bala* and *Atibala*, that would bestow on them extraordinary powers. *Śrī Rāma* also killed the dreadful *rākṣasī*, *Tātakā* before they reached the *āśrama*. At the *āśrama*, *Śrī Rāma* killed *Mārīca* and *Subāhu* and Sage *Viśvāmitra* completed the *yajña*. *Viśvāmitra* then took the princes to meet King *Janaka* at *Mithilā*, the capital of *Vidheha*. King *Janaka* had with him the gift of the mighty *Śivadhanuṣ* that no one has been able to lift. The King *Janaka* had set this as the task to win the hand of his beautiful daughter, *Sītā*.

On their way to *Mithilā*, *Śrī Rāma* noticed a beautiful but deserted *āśrama*. He was told by *Viśvāmitra* that it was Sage *Gautama*'s *āśrama*. The sage had cursed his wife *Ahalyā* and *Śrī Rāma* released *Ahalyā* from that curse.

The sage and the princes reached *Mithilā*. *Śrī Rāma* lifted, strung and then broke the *Śivadhanuṣ* at *Janaka*'s court. *Śrī Rāma* married *Sītā*, *Lakṣmaṇa* married her sister, *Urmilā*, *Bharata* and *Śatrughna* married the other two *Mithilā* princesses *Māṇḍavī* and *Śrutakṛtī* respectively in the presence of King *Daśaratha* who had arrived there with his family. They all returned to the rejoicing citizens of *Ayodhyā* and lived happily for many years.

*Śrī Rāma Jaya Rāma Jaya Jaya Rāma*



Ayodhya kaandam

## Ayodhyā kāṇḍam

King *Daśaratha* felt that he was too old to rule the kingdom. So he consulted all the other rulers in his kingdom and expressed his desire to coronate his eldest son *Śrī Rāma*. All of them unanimously approved of prince *Śrī Rāma* because he possessed all the qualities that were befitting of a king. Sage *Vasiṣṭha* was asked to make all arrangements for the coronation. *Daśaratha* informed *Śrī Rāma* about his coronation and gave important advice on ruling the kingdom. There were festivities everywhere.

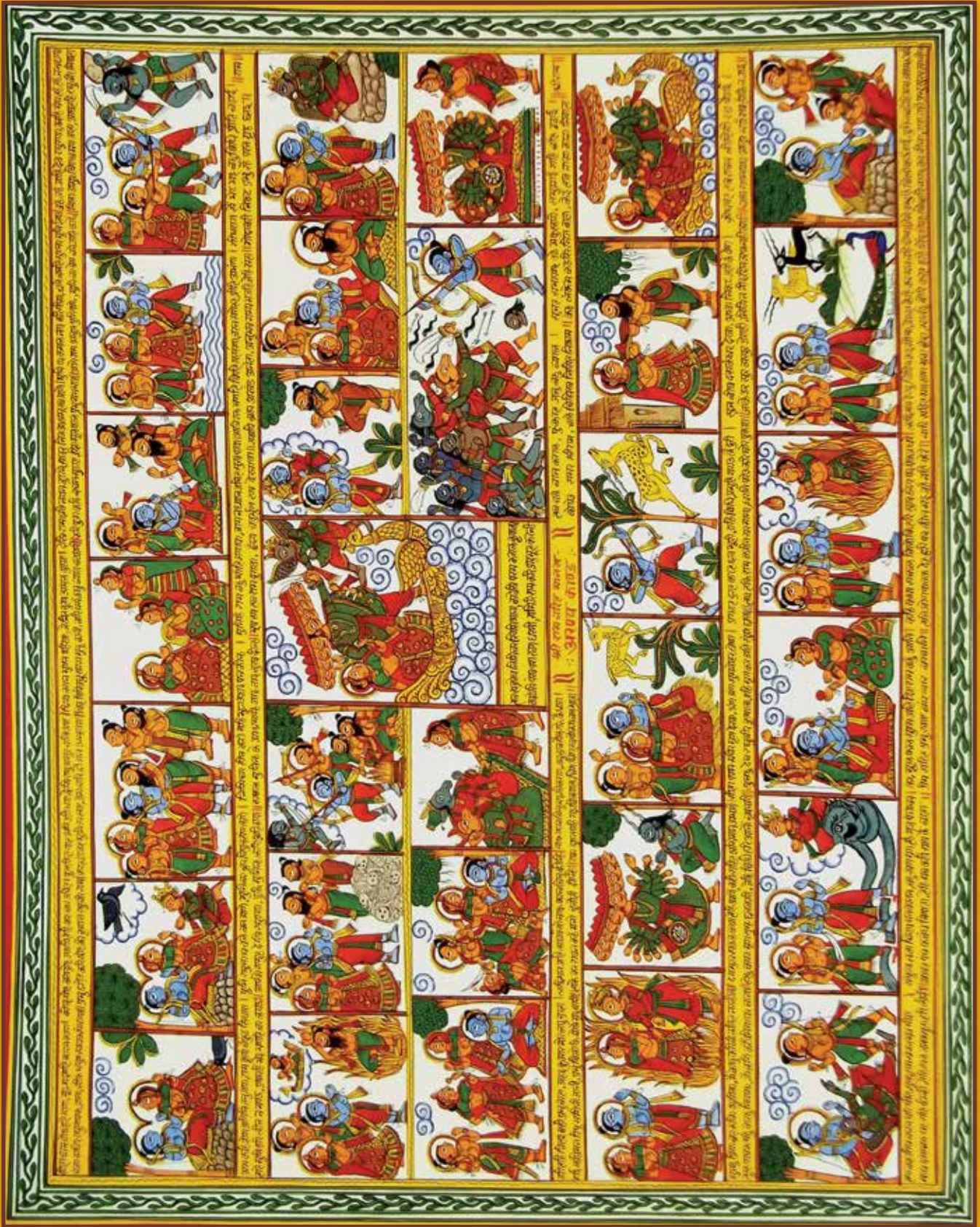
The hunchback *Mantarā* was the maid of queen *Kaikeyī*. The old woman poisoned the queen's mind and urged her to prevent the coronation of *Śrī Rāma*. *Mantarā* convinced *Kaikeyī* that this was a suitable occasion to ask King *Daśaratha* to fulfill the two boons granted to her when she had saved the king's life in battle. Initially *Kaikeyī* disapproved of this wicked idea as she was very fond of *Śrī Rāma*; but with persuasion, her attachment to her son *Bharata* overpowered her. Accordingly, *Kaikeyī* asked for *Śrī Rāma* to be banished for fourteen years and her son *Bharata* to be named heir to the throne. *Daśaratha* had no choice but to keep his promises and agreed reluctantly.

*Śrī Rāma* being the dutiful son left for the forest accompanied by *Lakṣmaṇa*. As a true *pativrata* *Sītā* too insisted on accompanying her Lord *Śrī Rāma*. On reaching the banks of *Gaṅgā* they were received with love and devotion by the tribal chief *Guha*. They proceeded to the *āśrama* of Sage *Bhāradvāja*, who directed them to *Citrakūṭa* hill to set up their abode.

At *Ayodhyā*, King *Daśaratha* died of grief. Sage *Vasiṣṭha* requested *Bharata* to rule the kingdom but he refused. Instead, he resolved to go to the forest and bring back *Śrī Rāma*. *Bharata* met *Śrī Rāma* and pleaded with him to return and occupy the throne. *Śrī Rāma* advised *Bharata* to obey their father's orders and rule *Ayodhyā* but promised to accept the kingdom after he returned from exile. *Bharata* returned with *Śrī Rāma's pādukās* as a sacred symbol of authority and ruled the kingdom from *Nandigrāma*.

*Śrī Rāma*, *Lakṣmaṇa* and *Sītā* left *Citrakūṭa* and moved south into the demon infested dense forest of *Daṇḍaka*.

*Śrī Rāma Jaya Rāma Jaya Jaya Rāma*



Aranya kāṇḍam

## Aranya kāṇḍam

The sages in the *Daṇḍaka* forests welcomed Śrī Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā. They appealed to Śrī Rāma to protect them from the troublesome *rākṣasās*. As they proceeded further, they were confronted by *Virādha*, a demon who was released from a curse by Śrī Rāma's grace. He suggested that Śrī Rāma visit Sage *Śarabhaṅga*. They visited the *āśrama* of Sage *Śarabhaṅga* and Sage *Sutīkṣṇa*. Directed by Sage *Sutīkṣṇa*, Śrī Rāma reached the great Ṛṣi *Agastya*'s hermitage. There he was gifted with the great bow of *Viṣṇu*, two inexhaustible quivers of *Indra* and a divine sword. *Agastya* advised the three royals to spend the remaining time of their exile at *Pañcavaṭī* on the banks of river *Godāvarī*. They built and lived in a hut in *Pañcavaṭī* enjoying the natural beauty around them.

One day, the ugly *rākṣasī* sister of *Rāvaṇa*, *Śūrpaṅakhā*, came to *Pañcavaṭī*. She tried to seduce Śrī Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa but was sent back and forth. An infuriated *Śūrpaṅakhā* attacked Sītā. Directed by Śrī Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa promptly chopped off the tip of her nose and ears with his sword. Bleeding profusely *Śūrpaṅakhā* ran to her brothers *Khara* and *Dūṣana* with her complaint against the two brothers. The two *rākṣasās* proceeded to *Pañcavaṭī* with a huge *rākṣasa* army and waged a battle. They were defeated by Śrī Rāma.

Then *Śūrpaṅakhā* went to *Rāvaṇa* and evoked in him a passion for Sītā. He decided to abduct Sītā. *Rāvaṇa* sought *Mārīca*'s help by asking him to assume the form of a golden deer. *Mārīca* treacherously drew Śrī

*Rāma* and *Lakṣmaṇa* out of the *āśrama* and *Rāvaṇa* succeeded in abducting Sītā. Meanwhile *Mārīca* was killed by Śrī Rāma. *Jaṭāyu* the king of eagles who vowed to protect them in the forest tried to save Sītā when she was carried away by *Rāvaṇa*, but he was fatally wounded by *Rāvaṇa*.

The wailing Sītā dropped her ornaments from the *puñpaka vimānam* on the way. On reaching *Laṅkā*, *Rāvaṇa* kept her captive in the *Aśoka vanam*.

Back in the *Daṇḍaka* forest Śrī Rāma was grief stricken when he found Sītā missing from the *āśrama*. While searching for Sītā in the forest Śrī Rāma found the wounded *Jaṭāyu* who informed them about his inability to save Sītā from *Rāvaṇa*. *Jaṭāyu* passed away and Śrī Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa performed the last rites of the valiant bird.

As they were wandering in the forest the princes came across *Kabandha* an unusual *rākṣasa*. He was released from his curse due to Śrī Rāma's presence. He advised Śrī Rāma to befriend *Sugrīva*, the monkey chieftain of *Kiṣkindha*.

Enroute to *Kiṣkindha*, Śrī Rāma met *Śabarī* a great devotee. She wanted to give the best and tastiest berries to Śrī Rāma. So she tasted them before offering the fruit to Śrī Rāma. Śrī Rāma ate the fruits with great love and then took leave of her. Śrī Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa then proceeded towards Lake *Paiṃpā* on the way to *Ṛṣyamūka* hill where *Sugrīva* lived.

Śrī Rāma Jaya Rāma Jaya Jaya Rāma





## *Kiṣkindhā kāṇḍam*

Śrī Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa arrived at the *Paṇḍā* Lake. *Sugrīva* the monkey chief and his aides noticed the royal brothers and were initially suspicious of them.

*Sugrīva* was *Vāli*'s younger brother. *Vāli* was once engaged in a fierce battle with the demon *Māyāvī* inside a cave. Since *Vāli* did not return for a long time *Sugrīva* thought that *Vāli* was dead and allowed himself to be installed as the king. When *Vāli* returned victorious, he was enraged at the conduct of *Sugrīva* and chased him away on exile. He also forcibly took over *Sugrīva*'s wife *Rumā*.

*Sugrīva* saw the princes and mistook them to be *Vāli*'s spies. He sent the son of *Vāyu*, *Hanūmān* in disguise to find out the intention of princes. *Lakṣmaṇa* narrated their story and sought *Sugrīva*'s help in finding *Sītā*. *Hanūmān* carried them on his shoulders to *Sugrīva*'s place on the *Riṣyamūka* hill. An alliance was forged between them and Śrī Rāma promised to help *Sugrīva* to kill *Vāli*. *Sugrīva*, in turn promised help in their search for *Sītā*. *Sugrīva* narrated to them about the monkeys spotting a speeding chariot in the skies from which a woman dropped a bundle of ornaments. *Sugrīva* showed them the bundle and *Lakṣmaṇa* identified *Sītā*'s anklets.

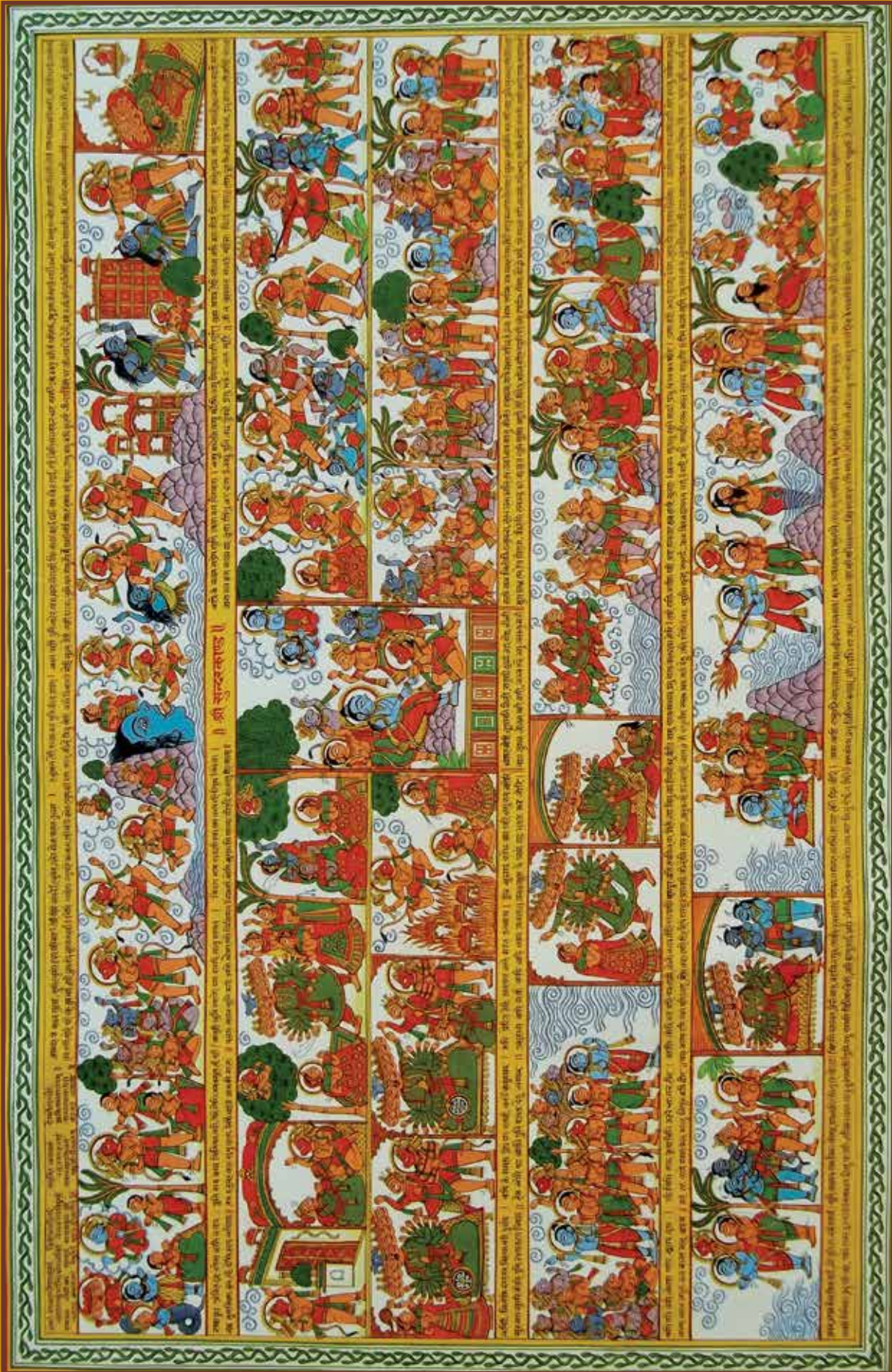
Śrī Rāma then asked *Sugrīva* to challenge *Vāli* to a fight. *Tārā*, *Vāli*'s wife tried to dissuade her husband. *Vāli* had a boon that in combat, he would get half his opponent's power. While *Vāli* was engaged in a hand to hand combat with *Sugrīva*, Śrī Rāma shot *Vāli* from

behind a tree. Śrī Rāma helped *Vāli* to realise his own crimes before he died. *Sugrīva* was then crowned as king and *Vāli*'s son, *Aṅgada* was named the *yuvarājā*, heir to *Kiṣkindhā*. Śrī Rāma instructed *Sugrīva* to initiate efforts to search for *Sītā* at the end of the rainy season.

*Sugrīva* was soon engrossed in merriment and was oblivious of his duties. He was then reminded of his promise to Śrī Rāma by *Hanūmān*. Fearing the wrath of *Lakṣmaṇa*, *Sugrīva* intensified his search and sent armies in all the four directions. Since he had seen the chariot going towards the south, *Sugrīva* sent *Hanūmān* and *Aṅgada* with the south bound army. Śrī Rāma had great confidence in *Hanūmān* and gave his signet ring to be given to *Sītā* for identification.

The search armies sent in the directions of north, east and west were unable to find any lead to *Sītā*. *Hanūmān* and his army chanced upon *Saṃpāti*, the elder brother of *Jaṭāyu*. *Saṃpāti* learned about his brother's death at the hands of *Rāvaṇa*. He told *Hanūmān* about *Sītā*'s captivation in *Laṅkā* the kingdom of *Rāvaṇa* across the Indian Ocean. The monkeys reached the shores of the Indian Ocean. They were depressed at the sight of the vastness of the ocean and felt that it was beyond their capacity to cross it. Then *Jāmbavān* reminded *Hanūmān* of his enormous powers and the mighty monkey was unanimously chosen to cross the ocean. Encouraged and convinced of his capacity, *Hanūmān* prepared for the great leap across the ocean, a leap that was to bring an end to Śrī Rāma's misery.

*Śrī Rāma Jaya Rāma Jaya Jaya Rāma*



Sundara kancham

## Sundara kāṇḍam

*Hanūmān*, after offering salutations to *Vāyu*, his father and *Śrī Rāma*, took a great leap across the ocean towards *Laṅkā*. On the way *Hanūmān* overcame the *rākṣasīs Surasā* and *Siṃhikā* and finally reached the heavily guarded city of *Laṅkā*. *Hanūmān* placed his left foot first on the soil to signal inauspiciousness for *Laṅkā*. He decided to enter the city at night in the form of an ordinary monkey. He was accosted by the guardian of the city, the *rākṣasī Laṅkinī* and felled her with a punch. She, predicting the doom of *Laṅkā* left the city forever.

During his search for *Sītā* inside the city, *Hanūmān* also assessed *Rāvaṇa*'s forces and weapons. He searched everywhere including the royal palace of *Rāvaṇa* where he mistook *Mandodarī* for *Sītā*. Ashamed of his wrong conclusion and not being able to find *Sītā*, *Hanūmān* became despondent. He then reached the *Aśoka vanam*. There, sitting on the branch of a tree *Hanūmān* saw the sorrowful *Sītā* who was heavily guarded by armed *rākṣasīs*.

Just then, surrounded by his entourage, *Rāvaṇa*, entered the *Aśoka vanam* and tried to coax *Sītā* to marry him. She scorned at his futile attempts and asked him to surrender to her Lord, *Śrī Rāma* instead. Agitated *Rāvaṇa* left *Aśoka vanam* warning her of dire consequences if she did not change her mind soon. Disheartened at this *Sītā* decided to end her life. Then the *rākṣasī Trijaṭā* woke up saying that she had dreamt of *Rāvaṇa* entering the abode of *Yama* and *Śrī Rāma* taking back *Sītā*. Considering this as a bad omen, *Trijaṭā* warned her companions to stop harassing *Sītā*.

Deciding that this was the right time to reveal his identity, *Hanūmān* began to narrate the stories of *Śrī Rāma* to uplift *Sītā*'s spirits. *Hanūmān* then came down the tree and stood before her with folded hands. He gave *Sītā* the signet ring. *Sītā* was at once happy and

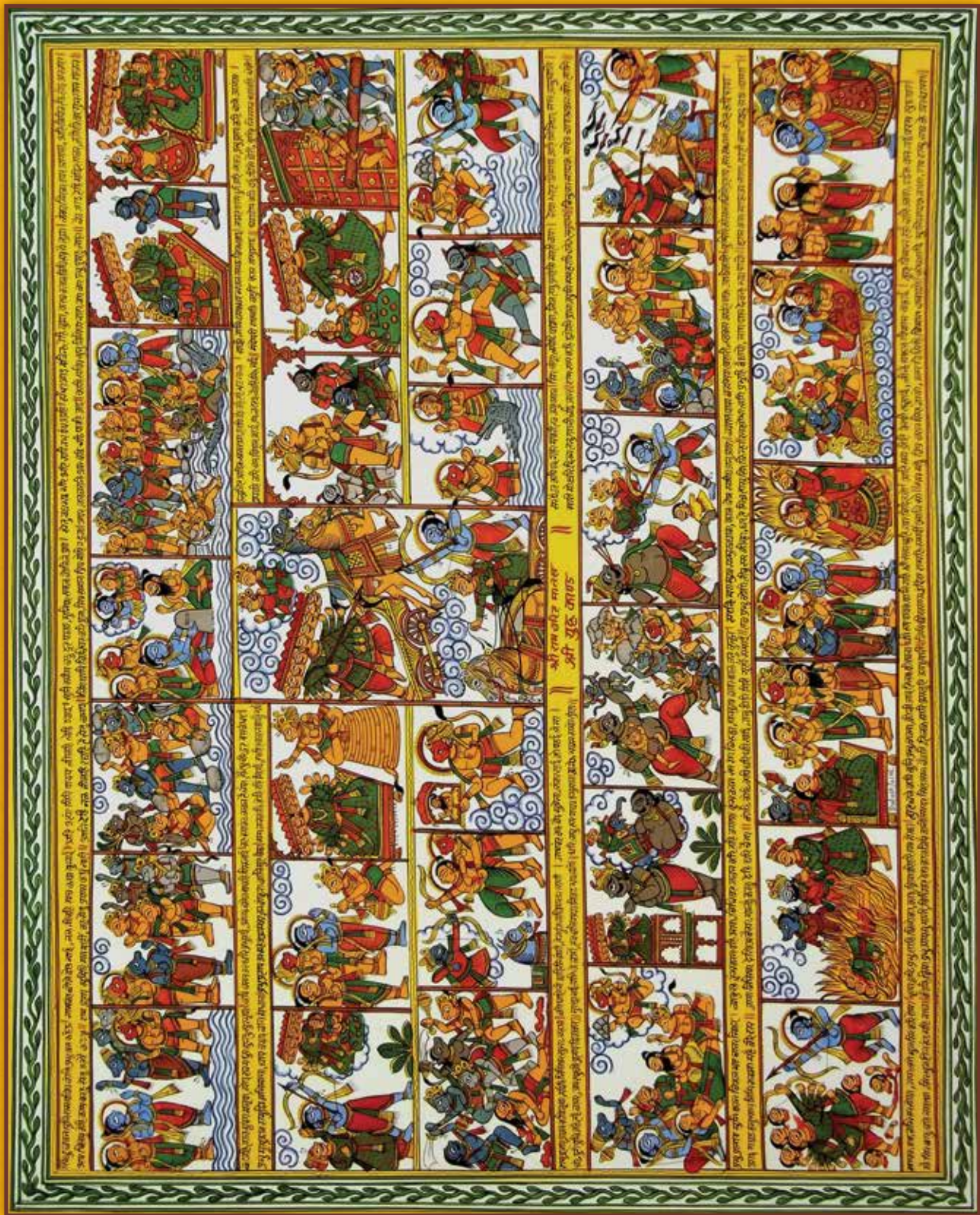
sad to hear about her beloved, *Śrī Rāma*. Seeing her grief *Hanūmān* assumed a gigantic form and offered to take her back to her Lord at once. *Sītā* refused to discredit *Śrī Rāma*'s valour this way and said that *Śrī Rāma* himself must come to avenge the insult of her abduction. On *Hanūmān*'s request *Sītā* gave her crest jewel - *cūdāmaṇī* to take back to *Śrī Rāma* and narrated the *Citrakūṭa* incident as evidence. Taking leave of *Sītā*, *Hanūmān* assumed a huge form and began to destroy the *Aśoka vanam* so that the *rākṣasas* would fight him. During this rampage *Jambumāli*, *Akṣa* and others who had been sent by *Rāvaṇa* to capture the monkey were killed.

Furious, *Rāvaṇa* sent his invincible son *Indrajit* who bound *Hanūmān* with the *Brahmāstra*. *Hanūmān* quietly allowed himself to be dragged to *Rāvaṇa*'s court so that he could pass on *Śrī Rāma*'s message. *Hanūmān* apprised *Rāvaṇa* of the strength of *Śrī Rāma*; warned him of the consequences of his wrong actions and advised *Rāvaṇa* to restore *Sītā* and surrender to *Śrī Rāma*.

Provoked, *Rāvaṇa* ordered *Hanūmān*'s execution. However *Vibīṣaṇa* reminded *Rāvaṇa* that kings were prohibited to kill envoys from other kingdoms. *Rāvaṇa* reluctantly agreed to this and instead ordered *Hanūmān*'s tail to be set on fire and to parade him through the city. *Hanūmān* and his flaming tail rapidly set fire to all the mansions in *Laṅkā* to teach *Rāvaṇa* a lesson. He spared *Vibīṣaṇa*'s dwelling as this brother of *Rāvaṇa* advocated temperance in this matter.

*Hanūmān* made a last stop to ensure *Sītā*'s safety. *Hanūmān* then thundered back to *Kiṣkindha* to *Śrī Rāma* to report the discovery of *Sītā*. He elaborately narrated all the episodes to *Śrī Rāma*. *Hanūmān* handed over *Sītā*'s crest jewel to *Śrī Rāma*. A visibly delighted *Śrī Rāma* embraced *Hanūmān* with gratitude and love.

Śrī Rāma Jaya Rāma Jaya Jaya Rāma



Yuddha kāṇḍam

## Yuddha kāṇḍam

Śrī Rāma was now anxious to cross the ocean and reach *Laṅkā*. At *Laṅkā*, shaken by the havoc caused by a mere monkey, *Rāvaṇa* summoned his council of ministers who assured him that the ten-headed king was invincible and urged him to fight against Śrī Rāma. *Rāvaṇa*'s brother *Vibīṣaṇa* warned him of Śrī Rāma's prowess and asked that *Sītā* be returned to her husband without delay. However, he was rebuked and insulted by *Rāvaṇa* and his courtiers. So *Vibīṣaṇa* took leave of *Rāvaṇa* and sought refuge in Śrī Rāma. Śrī Rāma accepted him lovingly. On *Vibīṣaṇa*'s advice Śrī Rāma prayed to the deity of the ocean and built a bridge across the ocean and reached *Laṅkā*.

*Rāvaṇa* received this information and in order to win *Sītā*'s affection quickly produced an illusory head of Śrī Rāma saying that her Lord had been killed. *Sītā* was grief-stricken but the magical head of Śrī Rāma vanished after sometime.

Both sides prepared for the war. Śrī Rāma sent crown prince *Aṅgada* as a messenger of peace to *Rāvaṇa* with a final request to surrender *Sītā* which was refused. Śrī Rāma then declared war.

The battle between Śrī Rāma and *Rāvaṇa*'s forces raged fiercely for several days. The advantage swayed from one side to another. Many of *Rāvaṇa*'s mighty warriors like *Dhūmrākṣa*, *Vajradamṣṭra*, *Akaṁpana* and *Prahasta* were killed. Śrī Rāma broke *Rāvaṇa*'s chariot and told him to return better equipped the next day. *Rāvaṇa* then decided to wake up his brother *Kumbhakarṇa* who slept for six months at a stretch

because of a curse. *Kumbhakarṇa* created havoc among the monkey army but finally he too was killed.

*Indrajit*, *Rāvaṇa*'s son used his *Brahmāstra* and rendered Śrī Rāma and *Lakṣmaṇa* unconscious. *Hanūmān* could not find a particular herb for treating Śrī Rāma and *Lakṣmaṇa*. So he brought back an entire hill from the *Himālayas* on which the herb grew. The royal brothers regained consciousness. *Lakṣmaṇa* killed *Indrajit*. On the eighth day of the war, a great battle ensued between Śrī Rāma and *Rāvaṇa*. They despatched powerful *astras* at each other. Śrī Rāma was briefly disheartened when Sage *Agastya* gave the *Ādityahṛdaya mantropadeśa* to Śrī Rāma that rejuvenated his energies. Finally Śrī Rāma sent his *Brahmāstra* and killed *Rāvaṇa*. *Vibīṣaṇa* performed the last rites of *Rāvaṇa*; he was then crowned the king of *Laṅkā*.

Śrī Rāma then sent for *Sītā*. When he saw *Sītā*, Śrī Rāma addressed her harshly. He said that he would not be able to take her back since she had lived under *Rāvaṇa*'s custody for a year. Hearing such cruel words *Sītā* decided to enter the altar of fire but came out unscathed. Śrī Rāma then explained to *Sītā* that he had been totally confident about her purity but the fire ordeal was necessary to satisfy public opinion. Śrī Rāma and *Sītā* were united. They travelled in the *puṣpaka vimānam* back to *Ayodhyā* where Śrī Rāma's long delayed coronation took place. Śrī Rāma ruled the kingdom for over ten thousand years.

There was justice everywhere. It was an ideal kingdom ruled by an ideal king, Śrī Rāma.

Śrī Rāma Jaya Rāma Jaya Jaya Rāma



## Rāmarājya

Several thousand years have passed and people still remember the reign of Śrī Rāma as an ideal one. The expression and idea of Rāmarājya is held sacred in Bhārat. Rāmarājya denotes the reign of King Rāma and stands for good administration, material prosperity and the moral and spiritual well being of a nation. For the people of Ayodhyā, Rāmarājya was like *bhūloka vaikuṅṭam*, heaven on earth. It was Mahatma Gandhiji's fond wish to establish Rāmarājya after the freedom struggle in modern India. He said that Rāmarājya is the kingdom of God on earth.

### *bhūlokavaikuṅṭam*

Vālmīki describes Rāmarājya at the end of the *paṭṭābhiṣeka sarga*, No. 128 the last *sarga* of the *Yuddha kāṇḍam* in the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇam*. The poet says that there was peace and prosperity everywhere.

All the citizens were happy and content. There were no untimely deaths, free from all diseases and grief, people lived up to their full life span. The seasons never failed, the land yielded crops in abundance and the trees blossomed perennially with flowers and fruits. The winds were always pleasant and there were no devastating floods or cyclones. Trade flourished and there was plenty and more importantly equity. As there was no one in the land who was needy, there was no need to give charity. There were no thefts anywhere and there were no signs of internal or external trouble. In Rāmarājya, Vālmīki concludes, the idea of *bhūloka vaikuṅṭam* was a reality.

### Śrī Rāma an ideal ruler

Śrī Rāma possessed all the qualities that are prerequisites for an ideal ruler - *balam*, strength; *dhṛti*,





courage; *sthairyam*, stability and firmness in resolve; *vīryam*, prowess; *pratāpa*, valour; *dayā*, compassion; *samatvam*, equanimity; and *śauryam*, heroism. Being an apostle of human virtues - *Śrī Rāma the Maryāda Purushottama*, inspired all his subjects to be virtuous, noble and truthful.

*Śrī Rāma* was well-versed in the lofty principles of *rājyaśāstra*. He was guided by the wise advice of his *Guru*, the great sage *Vasiṣṭha*. The sages were learned, spiritual and wise men who advised the kings, but were not personally involved in the administration. They were dispassionate, humane, very objective and mentors who gave sagacious counsel and guidance.

*Śrī Rāma* dedicated himself to ruling the country. He was a beloved king, a benefactor of his subjects. He was always concerned about the welfare of the citizens, assiduous about protecting them and keeping them

happy. He considered it as the worst curse if he were to fail in his paramount duty as a king. It is interesting to note what *Veda Vyāsa* said, '*rājā kālasya kāraṇam*' (MB 12-69-79). 'The King is responsible for the time,' implying that a ruler is responsible either for the good or the bad condition of the nation at a particular time or period.

*Śrī Rāma's* love for his country and countrymen is described by *Vālmīki*, when *Śrī Rama* tells *Lakṣmaṇa* in *Laṅkā* -

'*jananī janma bhūmiśca svargādapi garīyasī....*'  
 "Mother and the motherland are superior, even to heaven."

### **The administration in *Rāmarājya***

The ministers were men of integrity and capability, unequalled in bravery. They had sound knowledge



in all the required disciplines, were alert and always available to attend to the affairs of the king and the kingdom. The success of a king depended on the wise advice of his Council of Ministers.

The treasury was in very trustworthy and capable hands. Income was above expenditure and the system of taxation was not a burden on the people. Law and order was well established, as honesty and *dharma* formed the basis of all action. Justice was equitable. There was no fear of *adharma* and people lived a peaceful life.

Monuments and places of worship were protected. The environment was given particular attention; water resources were regularly cleaned and maintained and agricultural needs were diligently attended to.

Scholars were respected and rewarded. In a society where there was peace and plenty, art and culture flourished. All the departments of administration and governance were well managed and grievances of the people were promptly addressed with due concern. Every policy of the kingdom was dedicated to public welfare and people's service.

### ***People in Rāmarājya***

During *Rāmarājya*, all sections of people were treated with dignity, irrespective of their profession. Liberty, equality and fraternity were adhered to. Hence people of the kingdom were all happy and contented in the



pursuit of their own duty that was aimed at for their own good and the good of the society as a whole. It was a culture where emphasis was on individual duties rather than individual rights. When each person carries out his or her individual duties, the rights of every person in a society are guaranteed. This was a beautiful concept. There was external and internal harmony - all were in harmony with themselves, with the natural laws and hence the forces of nature showered their blessings.

*Rāmarājya* is an everlasting ideal. It denotes a harmonious pursuit of the four goals – *dharma*, righteous duty; *artha*, material prosperity; *kāma*, legitimate pleasures and desires; and *mokṣa*, spiritual liberation. *Rāmarājya* is as appropriate for the jet, nuclear and astronaut ages as it was for a world of bows, arrows and horse carriages.

**May Śrī Rāma's blessings be with all of us**

***'sarve bhavantu sukhinaḥ | sarve santu nirāmayāḥ |  
sarve bhadraṇi paśyantū | mā kaścīd duḥkha bhāg bhavet ||'***

**“May all be happy. May all be free from disease.  
May all enjoy prosperity. May none experience sorrow.”**

## *Phalaśruti*

*āyusyam ārogya-karam yaśasyam  
saubhrātrukaṁ buddhi-karam śubam ca |  
śrotavyam etān niyamena  
sadbhirākhyānam ojas-karam riddhikāmaiḥ ||*

“The reading and listening of *Rāmāyaṇa* and following its tenets bestow long life, good health, fame, good brothers and sisters, intellect, auspiciousness and fulfills all desires”



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Material for this brochure was culled by the Kalavardhini Study Group.

Additional inputs and guidance have been given by

1. Smt. Gita Sundararajan
2. Swamini Swatmabodhananda Saraswati
3. Smt. Padmini Natarajan
4. Smt. Shobana Kumar

**Phad Paintings of The *Rāmāyaṇa* by Sri Prakash Joshi, Bhilwara, Rajasthan**

### KALAVARDHINI STUDY GROUP

Anita Kumaran • Arundathi Shanmugam • Deepam Ravindran • Jayashree Mandradiar  
Latha Ramabadran • Mamta Bhatt • Nilima Rao • Parvathi Palaniappan • Rajini Subba Reddy  
Rupa Srikanth • Shailaja Gupta • Valli M Ramaswami

