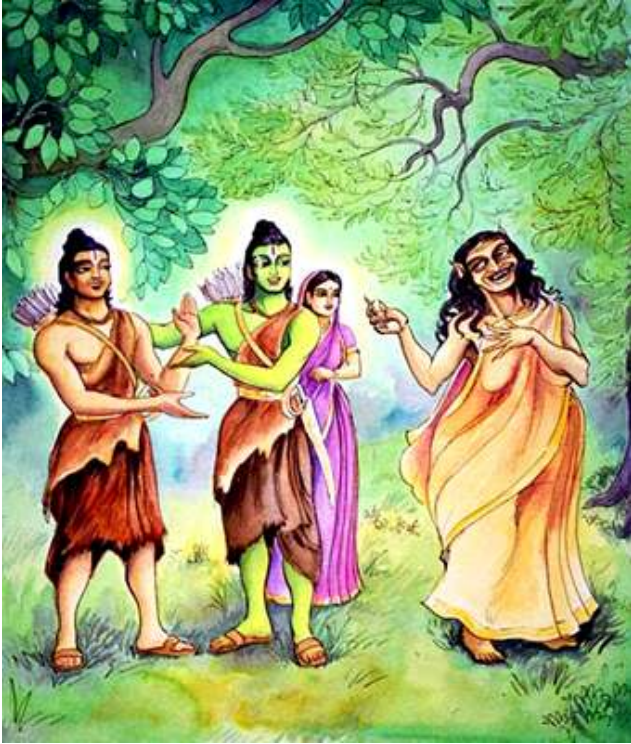


# DASHAVATAR – RAMA AVATAR (Ramayan – Part 7)



Remember what happened in the last lesson? Bharata tried to bring Rama back to Ayodhya to be crowned Emperor. But would he go? No! After failing to bring Lord Rama to Ayodhya, Bharata took up residence at the village of Nandigram, outside Ayodhya. The golden throne of the King was brought to Nandigram and he placed the Padukas (wooden sandals) of Rama on the throne. He said to his ministers, "The kingdom will be ruled by me as a sacred trust until my brother returns. Until I see his royal feet placed once more on these sandals I will live like an ascetic. If Rama fails to return when his exile is up, I will consider me a failure and I will burn myself in the fire!" In this way, Bharata ruled the kingdom, always feeling himself subordinate to Lord Rama, who remained there in the form of His shoes.

You might think that Rama, Sita, and Lakshmana were unhappy to leave the palace and live in the forest. But this is not true. Even though they did not have luxurious clothes, or comfortable beds, or dainty foods, they were very happy living close to nature. They enjoyed the company of the many Rishis, or holy men, who lived in the forest. They were not attached to luxuries. Only one thing bothered Rama. While living in Chitrakoot, Rama began to notice anxiety in the minds of the Rishis living nearby. He asked them why they were anxious. They said it was because there were Rakshasas living in the nearby forests, and they were getting very nervous about being near them.

You may ask "What are rakshasas?" Rakshasas were demons. They were a separate race from humans. They had all kinds of forms, some like human, some very ugly, some very beautiful. Some were even good, but by nature, most were bad. They even ate humans. This is why the Rishis were getting afraid. The demons could make their lives very difficult, or they might even kill and eat them.

As a Kshatriya, it was Rama and Lakshmana's duty to protect the Rishis from dangerous rakshasas. So now he became very alert about the rakshasas. He promised to protect the rishis in the Dandaka Forest.

On the way to Dandaka forest, Rama took a trip with Sita and Lakshmana to visit the Rishi Atri. Atri was a very great and famous Rishi. His wife Anasuya was also very famous because of her great purity and devotion to her husband. When the sage Atri and Anasuya saw Rama, Lakshmana, and Sita, they were overjoyed. It was like that with Rama. Just seeing Him made everyone very happy. Anasuya met with Sita privately in their hut. She gave Sita the blessing of perpetual youth, she also gave her many celestial garments, and wonderful, inexhaustible cosmetics.

Rama, Lakshmana, and Sita thus spent the next ten years of their exile wandering from ashram to ashram within the Dandaka forest. During this time, they killed many rakshasas that were troubling the Rishis. Rama, Lakshmana and Sita travelled far south to visit the great Rishi Agastya. He was very famous and a very powerful saint who could accomplish anything. The sage asked Rama to stay and live with him for the rest of his exile. But Rama said he was more than happy to stay in Agastya's ashram, but He promised protection to the Rishis in Dandaka, so that He must return to Dandaka Forest. The sage took great pleasure in giving Rama a bow of Lord Vishnu, two inexhaustible quivers presented by Indra, an infallible arrow given by Lord Brahma, and a sword to destroy rakshasas. When Rama asked Agastya to suggest a place for His residence, the Rishi thought for awhile and then recommended Panchavati, near the Godavari River.

While on the way to Panchavati, they came upon Jatayu, the gigantic king of the vultures. Thinking him to be a Rakshasa, Rama inquired about his identity in an angry tone. Jatayu replied in a mild tone that he was a good friend of His father, and also said, "My dear Rama, I would like to offer my self as Your sincere servant. There are many fierce Rakshasas living in this forest, and so whenever You and Lakshmana leave Your cottage, I will watch over Sita." The prince was pleased and accepted Jatayu's

offer with gratitude. Jatayu then accompanied Rama, Sita, and Lakshmana to Panchavati, keeping a watchful eye all the while. On Rama's request, Lakshmana constructed a beautiful aashram (cottage) there. In the aashram at Panchavati, Rama and Sita started living happily, lovingly served by Lakshmana.

Gradually, winter set in. One morning, after Rama and Lakshmana returned to the ashram after bathing in the river, they began conversing with one another as they prepared to perform their morning religious duties. Suddenly, a Rakshasi (Rakshasa woman) came there, and when she saw Rama, her heart became infatuated with love for Him. She was filled with uncontrollable desire for Rama when she saw the god-like beauty of Rama. By contrast, the Rakshasi had an extremely ugly face, protruding belly, deformed eyes, and copper-colored hair. But she had the magic power to assume any lovely form at will.

The Rakshasi approached Rama and said, "Who are you, dressed like an ascetic but accompanied by a woman and carrying warlike weapons and arrows? What purpose did you come to this forest that belongs to the Rakshasas?" In reply, Rama briefly narrated the events leading up to His exile and asked the Rakshasi to identify herself. She identified herself as Shurpanakha, the sister of Ravana, the King of the Rakshasas, and also sister to Kumbhakarna, Vibhishana, Khara, and Dushana. She said that Khara and Dushana were lords of this region, but that she was not subject to their control, and free to do whatever she liked. She also said that all the creatures in the forest were terrified of her.

"To tell you quite frankly, Rama, I have become overpowered by love for you, and so I have made up my mind to have you as my husband. Give up your ugly and deformed wife! She is not worthy of such a great hero like you!" As Shurpanakha looked at Him with love-intoxicated eyes, Rama heartily laughed and jokingly replied, "I am a married man, and I am sure that a young, beautiful girl like you could not tolerate living with a co-wife. But, my brother, who is an even greater hero than myself, is without a wife, and so I suggest that you marry him."

Shurpanakha took Rama's words seriously. Leaving Him aside she turned to Lakshmana, and said, "My dear handsome hero, you appear to be more powerful and attractive than your brother. Come, make me your wife." Lakshmana smilingly replied, "O beautiful woman, you should know that I am simply a servant of my elder brother. If you marry me, then you will become no better than Rama's maid servant. You would be much better off becoming Rama's second wife. Do not mind Sita. Soon Rama will prefer you to her as you have such a lovely face."

Shurpanakha was too simple-minded to understand that Rama and Lakshmana were joking. Once again she turned to Rama and said, "You are too attached to your wife Sita. She is the one that stands between you and me. I shall finish her off this instant. I cannot live without you. Once I have put her out of the way, you and I shall live together happily." After saying this, Shurpanakha rushed towards Sita, but Rama intervened just in time to save Sita. He thought the farce had gone too far and shouted to Lakshmana to take care of this monster and teach her a lesson.

Receiving Rama's order, Lakshmana drew his sword and quickly sliced off Shurpanakha's nose and ears. Shurpanakha uttered loudly in pain. While bleeding profusely, she ran to the adjoining forest, called Janasthana, to seek retaliation from her Rakshasa brothers, Khara and Dushana.

Both the Rakshasa brothers got red with anger and marched their full army towards Panchavati to pacify their sister's sorrow. As the Rakshasas approached, Rama asked his brother to take Sita to a mountain cave and watch over her carefully while he fought the Rakshasa army. Khara's army surrounded Rama,

showering their clubs, spears, swords, axes, and arrows on him. Rama proceeded to release thousands of arrows at the Rakshasas, cutting to pieces their bows, flags, shields, armor, and bodily limbs. Innumerable Rakshasas fell down dead in no time. Dushana rushed at Rama in a great anger, but got killed in no time by Rama's powerful divine arrows. Khara then rallied the few surviving Rakshasas and fearfully attacked Rama. A great battle was fought between Rama and Khara, and finally Rama laid Khara dead with a blazing arrow piercing his chest, making him burst into flames.

The demigods were overjoyed to witness Rama's victory and showered flowers from the heavens. There were no bounds for the Rishis joy, as all of them could now live in peace in the Dandaka forest.

Shurpanakha was terror stricken after witnessing the great slaughter of Rakshasas and her two brothers Khara and Dushana. She immediately flew to Lanka to seek her brother Ravana's protection. Ravana was outraged to see her sister mutilated. Shurpanakha described all that had happened. Then she described the beauty of Sita, and said that Sita resembles the goddess of fortune. After hearing that Sita is the most beautiful woman in the world, Ravana became fully determined to abduct Sita. Also, he was convinced that Rama loved Sita very much, and could not live without her. He thought that by abducting Sita, he could punish Rama and take revenge for his sister's humiliation and his brothers' death.

Ravana made a plan and went to see Maricha in his flying machine, called the Pushpaka Vimana. Maricha, who was dressed like a rishi and engaged in performing austerities, received Ravana very respectfully, and then enquired about his visit. Ravana revealed that he could not get any peace of mind after hearing of Rama's slaughter of the Rakshasas at Janasthana. He wanted to kidnap Sita. Maricha had the power of changing himself into any form. Ravana wanted his help in distracting Rama so Ravana could abduct Sita.

Maricha was very afraid of Rama. He still could not get over the experience he had when Rama shot an arrow that hurled him far into the sea. This had happened in Vishwamitra's hermitage. Maricha tried to persuade Ravana to stay away from Rama, saying Rama was death to him, but Ravana was determined.

After listening very patiently, Ravana replied, "Maricha!" I didn't ask for your advice, but only for your help in kidnapping Sita. You have only two choices. Help me to carry out my plan or I will kill you." Maricha preferred to die at Rama's hand than be killed by Ravana. So he agreed to help Ravana in the abduction of Sita.

### **Questions:**

Did Bharata want to be King?

Did Bharata sit in a big throne room on the throne while Rama was gone?

What are rakshasas? Are they bad? Why?

Who were the Rishis? Why do you think they lived in the forest?

What is a Kshatriya? What is their duty?

Who were Atri and Anasuya? What did Anasuya give Sita?

Who was Agastya? What did he give Rama?

Was Shurpanakha a demoness? What do we call a woman demon? Was she pretty? Could she be if she wanted to be? What did Lakshmana do to her? Why?

## Achyutashtakam

**Achyutam Keshavam Rama Narayanam  
Krishna Damodaram Vasudevam Hari  
Shri Dharam Madhavam Gopika Vallabham  
Janaki Nayakam Ramachandram Bhaje (1)**

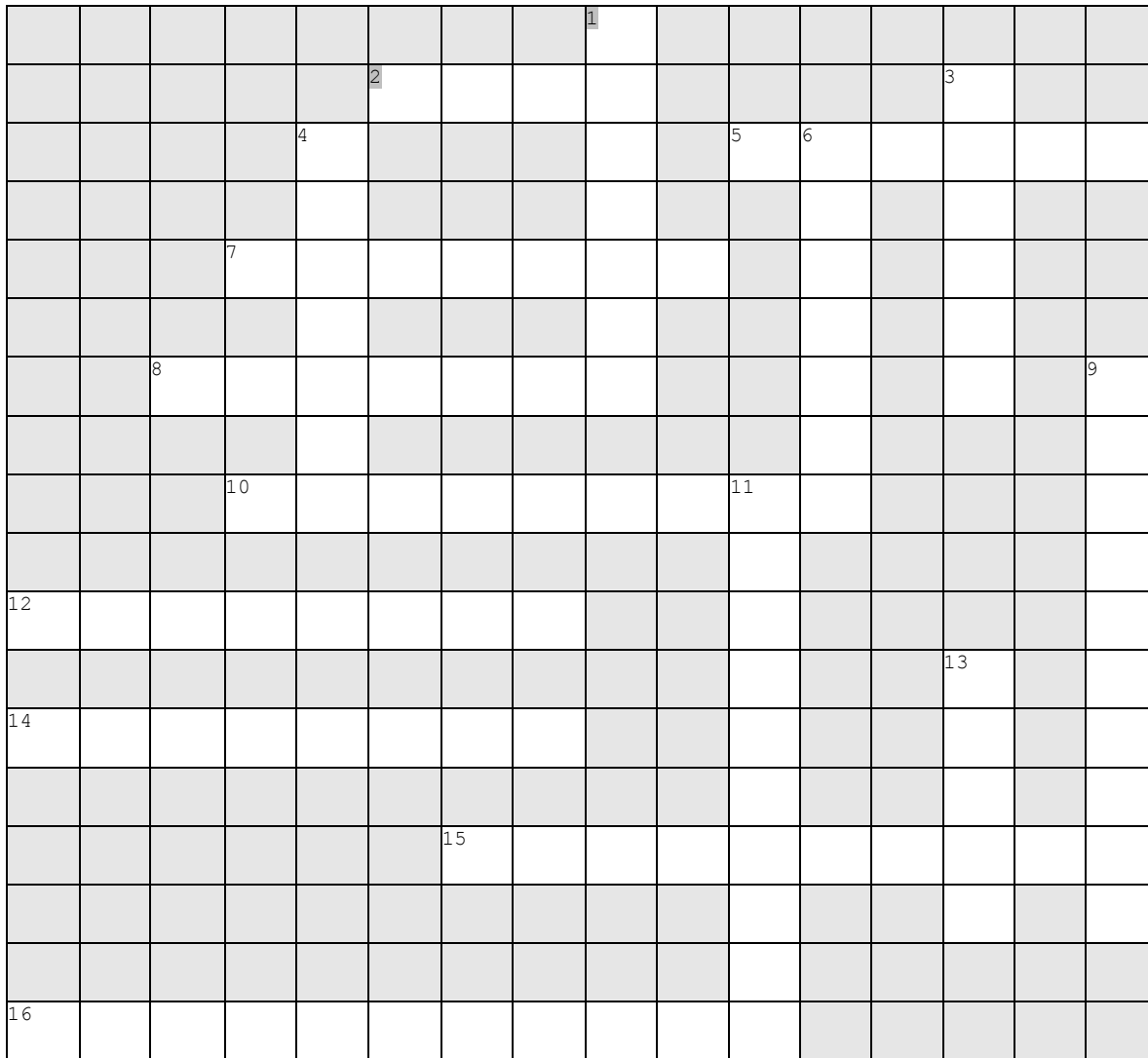
*Meaning: I sing praise of Ramachandra, Who is known as Achyuta (infallible), Keshav, Raam, Narayan, Krishna, Damodara, Vasudeva, Hari, Shridhara (possessing Lakshmi), Madhava, Gopikavallabha (Dearest of Gopika), and Janakinayaka (Lord of Janaki or Sita).*

**Achyutam Keshavam Satyabha Madhavam  
Madhavam Shri Dharam Radhika Radhitam  
Indira Mandiram Chetasa Sundaram  
Devakinandanam Nandajam Sandadhe (2)**

*Meaning: I offer a salute with my hands together to Achyuta, Who is known as Keshav, Who is the consort of Satyabhama (Krishna), Who is known as Madhav and Shridhar, Who is longed-for by Radhika, Who is the temple of Lakshmi (Indira), Who is beautiful by thought, Who is dear to Devaki, and Who is the Dear to all.*

**<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kFpVxy6jNPM>**

# CROSSWORD



## ACROSS

- 2 Rama's wife
- 5 King of Vultures
- 7 Wooden Sandals
- 8 Rishi Atri's wife
- 10 Who chopped Shurpanakha's nose?
- 12 Panchavati is near the river
- 14 Rakshasa woman is called
- 15 Place Rama initially stayed
- 16 The Rakshasi who wants to marry Rama

## DOWN

- 1 The forest where Rama spent most of his exile
- 3 The king of Rakshasas
- 4 Rama's younger brother
- 6 Rama met this Rishi far south
- 9 Lakshmana built an aashram at
- 11 Bharata lived here when Rama was in forest
- 12 Anasuya presented Sita
- 13 Rakshasa means

Coloring Exercise

