

Ramayan – Part 8



As you remember from last lesson, Shurpanakha got furious with her rejection and attacked Sita in order to devour her. Lakshmana swiftly intervened, and cut off her nose with his dagger. Shurpanakha then ran away crying in pain, to seek retaliation from her Rakshasa brothers, Khara and Dushana, and then to Ravana. Ravana made a master plan to abduct Sita, and went to see Maricha for his help.

Ravana embraced Maricha, being pleased that he was going to help him. Then the two mounted upon the Pushpaka Vimana and departed for Panchavati. After getting down from the air plane, Maricha transformed himself into a wonderful golden deer with numerous jewel-like silver spots, and began to playfully prance back and forth in front of Rama's cottage. Sita was attracted towards the golden deer and requested Rama to get the golden deer for her. Lakshmana warned that the golden deer may be a demon in disguise. Rama and Lakshmana were both suspicious of the deer. But Sita insisted they must catch it for her.

Rama started to chase the deer, away from their hermitage. He hurriedly instructed Lakshmana to look after Sita and ran after the deer. After some time, Rama tired of the pursuit, and shot an arrow. It pierced the deer. As Maricha fell to the ground, he assumed his real form as a Rakshasa. Then remembering Ravana's instructions, Maricha imitated Rama's voice and called out in great distress, "Oh Sita! Oh Lakshmana!" as if Rama was in distress. Maricha gave up his life and Rama became very dejected upon hearing these words, wondering, "What will Sita and Lakshmana think?" He immediately began to rush back to His cottage.

Sita was deceived by hearing Maricha's last words, and thought that Rama must have been calling for help. Becoming panicky with fear, Sita asked Lakshmana to run and rescue Rama. Lakshmana was hesitant. He was confident that Rama is invincible and the voice was only a fake. He tried to convince Sita but she insisted. She went wild on him and demanded he go. Finally Lakshmana agreed. Before his departure, with the tip of his arrow he drew a magic circle around the cottage and asked her not to cross the line. "As long as you stay within the circle you will be safe with the grace of God" said Lakshmana and hurriedly left in search of Rama.

Ravana was watching all that was happening and eagerly waiting for the opportunity from a hiding place near by. He was glad that his plan worked. As soon as he found Sita alone, he disguised himself as a hermit and came near Sita's cottage. He stood beyond the protection line of Lakshmana, and asked for alms. Sita came out with a bowl full of edibles to offer to the holy man, while staying within the protection line drawn by Lakshmana. The hermit asked her to come near and offer. Sita was unwilling to cross the line when Ravana pretended to leave the place without alms. As Sita did not want to annoy the sage, she crossed the line to offer the alms.

Ravana did not lose the opportunity. He quickly reached out with his left hand and grabbed Sita by the hair, and declared, "I am Ravana, the king of Rakshasas. Come with me and be my queen." Sita struggled and tried her best to wriggle out of his grasp. She screamed, "Rama! Rama! Save me! As if summoned, Ravana's golden chariot air plane came close by, and he mounted the chariot with Sita. Very soon Ravana's chariot left the ground and flew over the clouds on its way to Lanka, his island fortress. Wailing like one injured or mad, Sita called out to Rama again and again for help.

Sita suddenly spotted her friend the vulture Jatayu, who was perched upon a tree, sleeping, and so she cried out, "Jatayu, please tell Rama, this rakshasa is carrying me away by force." Jatayu awakened upon hearing Sita's calls, flew behind the chariot, tried to reason with the rakshasa king, and finally challenged Ravana for a fight. Ravana had hardly expected an obstacle from this direction. He struck Jatayu with

many weapons, and the giant vulture wounded Ravana with his sharp talons, and beak. Jatayu warded off the onslaught of arrows with his wings and then managed to break the Rakshasa's bow with his feet. Having gained this advantage, Jatayu next cut off Ravana's armor and then killed the mules that were yoked to his chariot. The heroic jatayu proceeded to smash Ravana's chariot to pieces while simultaneously striking off the driver's head with his beak. As a result, Ravana fell to the ground, while tightly holding Sita in his arms.

Ravana once again rose up into the sky by dint of his own prowess, holding Sita in one arm while wielding a sword with the other. Jatayu followed him but by now the old bird was tired and weak. Still he went after him and valiantly pierced him with his beak again and again. Finally, in desperation, Ravana took out his sword and swiftly cut off Jatayu's wings, making him fall to the ground, fatally wounded. Sita shook off Ravana's loosened hold and ran to where Jatayu lay and embraced him as tears came to her eyes. But Ravana quickly went and seized Sita, and rose up into the sky once again, taking her towards Lanka.

Sita was overwhelmed with fear and grief. As she flew over the countryside, she suddenly noticed five monkey chiefs sitting on top of a mountain. Unnoticed by Ravana, she took off her silk upper garment and some jewelry and dropped them in the midst of the monkeys. She hoped this would help Rama find her one day.

After reaching Lanka, the Rakshasa King took Sita into the inner apartments of his palace, and tried to impress her with his fortune. "I am a great King!" he told her. "I have conquered Indra and all the gods! The nine planets are under my control." He took her around the palace, showing her his golden throne room. "I have hundreds of wives, but you will be Queen of them all. Anything you desire will be yours!" he told her. "Why stay with this Rama?" he asked her. "He is just an ascetic wandering around in the forest! Accept me, and anything you want will be yours. I will be your servant always". Rama had a huge ego due to all his wealth and power. He thought he could tempt Sita.

Sita was not listening to anything the ten headed demon Ravana was saying. "Listen Ravana, if you are so great, why did you have to kidnap me? Why didn't you face my husband Rama? I tell you the truth, Rama is like fire for you! His arrows will burn you up as soon as he finds you! I am a married woman and will never look at another man than Rama!"

Sita's words burned Ravana badly. No one had ever abused him so badly. He became very, very angry. But he was so infatuated with her that he did not know what to do. "Alright, woman" he said in an angry tone. "Maybe time will change your mind. Either you will consent to become my wife in the next twelve months, or I will have my cooks cut you and serve you to me for a meal!" he told her. Since rakshasas (demons) ate people, Sita knew his words were true. She prayed Rama would find her before she was eaten by Ravana.

Ravana ordered his attendants to take Sita to the Ashoka grove, which was a beautiful garden filled with trees bearing fruit and flowers. Sita was already thoroughly miserable, and as the deformed Rakshasa women continued to intimidate her, she fainted due to fright.

Meanwhile, Lord Brahma summoned Indra to go and give her some heavenly kheer (sweet pudding) to eat. Indra went to the Ashoka grove along with Nidradevi, the goddess of sleep, to put all Rakshasi guards to sleep. Indra approached Sita in his celestial form, and gave kheer pot to her. As soon as she ate that Prasad, Sita became freed from all bodily pangs (hunger, sleep, etc.).

As you may remember, Sita got in this fix when she asked Rama to chase the golden deer, which was really the demon Maricha in disguise. She then ordered Lakshmana to run after Rama when Maricha made a sound like Rama in distress. Without any protector, Ravana kidnapped her. After killing Maricha, Rama hurried back to His cottage, fearing something was wrong. On the way, Rama met Lakshmana, who was on his way from the cottage to look for Rama. Rama felt distressed the moment He saw Lakshmana. "Why did you leave Sita alone?"

The golden deer was Maricha in disguise." Lakshmana tried to explain the situation when both the brothers suspected foul play and ran towards the cottage. The cottage was empty, as they feared. They thoroughly searched the entire area of Janasthana. Thereafter, while roaming through the forest, suddenly they heard a cry. They ran towards the source and found the wounded bird Jatayu. Rama recognized Jatayu, and took him in his lap. Jatayu narrated how he had fought a huge demon stealing Sita. He gasped his last breath while uttering, "Rama, Rama." Rama and Lakshmana performed Jatayu's funeral ceremony. Then they continued the search for Sita.

Passing out of the Dandaka forest, Rama and Lakshmana traveled toward the south. On their way, the two princes were suddenly caught by the ferocious demon Kabandha. This Rakshasa was as big as a mountain without head. He had only one eye which was placed in his chest. His mouth was in his great belly and he had two enormous long arms, enabling him to easily catch large animals to eat. Both brothers were bewildered and did not know what to do. Then Rama advised Lakshmana, "You cut one hand, and I will cut the other hand!" And so they did. Once Kabandha's arms were severed, he became helpless. Kabandha explained that he used to be a celestial musician, a Gandharva. He did some bad things and Indra, King of the gods, cursed him to take the monster form they saw him in now. On Kabandha's request, they put him on a funeral fire so he would die. From the flames arose a lovely being which entered a celestial chariot and ascended to heaven.

Before leaving, the celestial form said, "Rama, you should go and make friends with Sugriva, the monkey king, who has been exiled by his brother Vali." He also needs a benefactor. He is now living along with four other Vanaras on Rishyamukha Mountain, which is located near Lake Pampa." Following Kabandha's directions, they departed, and on the second day they arrived at Lake Pampa. There they visited the hermitage of an old pious woman, Shabari. She was waiting for Rama for a long time before she could give up her body. When Rama and Lakshmana made their appearance, Shabari's dream was fulfilled. She washed their feet, and offered them nuts and fruits she collected for them. Then she took Rama's blessings and departed for the heaven.

The meetings with this saintly woman, and drinking the waters of Lake Pampa gave strength of mind to the princes. After a long walk, Rama and Lakshmana reached Rishyamukha Hill. Remember the five monkeys Sita had seen and thrown her garment and some jewelry to? Those same five monkeys lived there. Their chief was Sugriva. They were not really monkeys, but a now extinct race of beings called Vanaras. Vanaras were semi-divine beings that looked like monkeys.

From a distance, Sugriva could see Rama and Lakshmana approaching. Suspecting that they wanted to do them harm, Sugriva became afraid. Hanuman said he would go and talk to the two warriors and find out if they intended harm or not. Hanuman could change his form at will. Disguised as an ascetic, Hanuman came to Rama and Lakshmana. The brothers told Hanuman their intention to meet Sugriva because they wanted him to help them find Sita. Hanuman was impressed by their courteous behavior and removed his garb. He carried the princes on his shoulder to Sugriva. Hanuman introduced the brothers to Sugriva and narrated their story.

Questions:

- What was the place where Rama and Sita and Lakshmana lived in the forest?
- Whose nose did Lakshmana cut off? Why?
- What was the name of Ravana's airplane?
- Why did Ravana want to abduct Sita?
- Who was Maricha? Why was he afraid of Rama?
- Why did Rama chase the golden deer?
- Why did Lakshmana abandon Sita?
- Who tried to rescue Sita?
- Where is Ravana's home? What is a rakshasa woman?
- Did Ravana have a big ego?
- How long did Ravana give Sita to live if she did not accept him?
- Who was Kabandha? How did he help Rama and Lakshmana?
- What types of being were Sugriva and Hanuman?
- What did they look like?
- Who was Shabari?

Achyutashtakam

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

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

**Vishnave Jishnave Sankhine Chakrine
Rukmini raagine Janaki janaye
Vallavi vallabha yarchita yatmane
Kamsavi dhvansine Vansine Te Namah (3)**

Meaning: Salutations for Vishnu, Who conquers everyone, Who holds a conch-shell and a discus, Who is the affectionate of Rukmini (Krishna), Who is the consort of Janaki (Raam), Who is the Dear to cowherdresses, Who is offered [in sacrifices], Who is the Atman, Who is the destroyer of Kansa, and Who plays the flute (Krishna).

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

Jumble Words – All words are from this lesson

I T F N A

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D A W R

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G P S N A

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M D R F E O

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B R A G

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A F E M L

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S S I T N I

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E E I D V C E

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Coloring Exercise

