4-1-2012

Rāmāyaṇa

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**Recommended Citation**

Sharma, Parth, "Rāmāyaṇa". Senior Theses, Trinity College, Hartford, CT 2012.  
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Rāmāyaṇa

By Parth Sharma

Dedicated to my late Grandmother, Kamla Sharma
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Rāmāyaṇa

Introduction

Vālmiki provides a foundation for Indian society through Rāmāyaṇa. Vālmiki is known as the poet harbinger for Sanskrit literature. He defines the form of Sanskrit poetry because he discovers the first Sholka, first verse, and that’s why he is also referred as Adi Kavi. Vālmiki composed the whole Rāmāyaṇa in 24,000 Sholkas during the time period of 500 BCE-100 BCE. Like many other epics such as Mahābhārata, Rāmāyaṇa also went through the process of editing for publishing, but it is still impossible to provide the correct dates of its composition

Rāmāyaṇa is the tale of the Lord and His consort born as mortal, experiencing human sorrow and following their Dhárma on earth. The epic lays down the basis of karma and Dhárma for human beings through a battle between good (the Dhárma king Rāma) and evil (his protagonist, Rāvaṇa). The text provides guidelines to people to differentiate between right and wrong. Lord Brahma pointed out “as long as mountain stands and river flow, the Rāmāyaṇa will be cherished among men and save them from sin.”

The notion of Dhárma can be seen early in the story. Rāma is, as are the majority of the other characters, bound to follow his dhárma. Following one’s Dhárma is important and necessary to achieve good karma. Karma in Hinduism refers to the actions and deeds of the body and mind that result in the cause and effect in the cycle of Saṃsāra, Mokṣa being the point in the cycle where one reaches salvation and is no longer a part of the cycle. The best way to achieve good karma for the characters in The Rāmāyaṇa is to follow their dhárma, even if doing so leads them to do something that at times conflicts with their
personal desires. Such events create many dharmic conflicts for the characters that can be seen throughout the story, beginning with the following conflict.

**Up to the exile**

The evil king is *Rāvana* whose wicked ambition is to conquer the whole world. This ambition of *Rāvana* has a goal of causing pain and misery to everyone in the world. On the good side is the *Daśaratha* who is a benevolent ruler and under whom a kingdom in North India *Ayodhyā* prospers. The king keeps the true meaning of the word *Ayodhyā* alive that is “not to be subdued”. Very wise people such as Sage *Vasiṣṭha*, who facilitate *Daśaratha* in running his kingdom. However, the biggest concern for *Daśaratha* and the kingdom is that he does not have a son. He calls all the *Ṛṣi’s* to perform rituals so that his wives can bear him a son. On the advice of sage *Vasiṣṭha*, king performs a *Yajña* in order to beget a son. As a result, king is blessed with four sons from his three queens. His eldest son is *Rāma* who is the son of *Kaushalyā*.

When *Rāma* is fifteen, *Rāvana* is at the peak of his powers. His evil relation *Marich* and his mother *Tadaka* together were a big problem for the *Ṛṣis*. They never let the sages pray or perform *Yajña*. Sages getting really frustrated with this act everyday ask Lord *Viṣṇu* to help them so that they can peacefully perform their daily prayers.iii Lord *Viṣṇu* hears the prayers of the Sages and informs them that his reincarnation *Rāma* is the solution to their problem. It is believed that whenever there is a crisis on the earth, Lord *Viṣṇu* arrives from heaven for its salvation. Lord *Viṣṇu* has ten reincarnations and *Rāma* is believed to be his seventh reincarnation.
Dharmic conflict #1: Daśaratha

Dharmic duties of a King as a Kṣatriya:

- To protect, punish and preserve Dhárma in his kingdom
- To protect his subjects against external threats and wage war with rival kingdoms
- Never to back down from a battle
- To rely on his own powers of deduction in the administration of justice
- To properly inflict (punishment) so he will prospers with respect to (these) three (means of happiness); if he is voluptuous, partial, and deceitful he will be destroyed, even through the (unjust) punishment (which he inflicts)iv.

Dharmic duties as a father- to protect his son from any harm and provide him with all his assets after he is gonev.

After speaking with Lord Viṣṇu, Sage Vishwamitra goes to Ayodhyā where he asks King Daśaratha to send his eldest son, Rāma, along with his brother, Lakṣmaṇa, to kill the demons. Daśaratha has special love for Rāma because he was his first-born son. He tries to convince the Sage that his sons are just boys and, instead, offers himself to go and kill the demons. The Sage rejects his offer and tells him that the command from the God is that Rāma and his brother go in the forest, and forbids Daśaratha to say no to such a divine command. This is the first incident in which Daśaratha faces a conflict between his Dhárma as being a king and a father. He has special affection for Rāma and thinks that Rāma is still too young to fight with demons, but at the same time he cannot neglect his duties as a king,
which is to give Sage what he wants. He asks Rāma and Laksmaṇa to go with Sage and do what ever he asks them to do, because this is their dhárma. Even though the king wants to protect his sons by keeping them in the palace, he still sends them to fight demons because he is a dharmic king and not making the correct decision would disrespect the gods and his people.

_Dashratha grew pale hearing these words,

His heart with filial love was stirred._

_He said: “For sons born in old age,

You know not what you say good sage

All sons are dear to me alike,

But Rāma is dearer than my life

As Daśaratha spoke these love filled words,

The sage was with emotion stirred

Vashist advised: “O King think well,

Of call of Dhárma and double dispel!”^vi

_Rāma and Laksmaṇa, under the training of Sage Vishwamitra, successfully kill the demon Tadaka and fulfill their dhárma. During his quest to kill the demons, Rāma finds his “love at first sight”, Sītā, and marries her after winning a swayamvar, a marriage competition. Sītā is the daughter of the king of Mithila. The story behind Sītā’s birth further separated her from other women._
Sitā is believed to be the daughter of the earth because King Janaka finds her in the fields. It is believed that Sitā is sown into the soil through a bead of sweat that falls from King Janaka into a furrow as he is tilling his fields. From this bead of sweat, Sitā grows into an infant and, eventually, the woman who becomes Rāma’s wife.

Though Daśaratha is initially sad about Rāma leaving and going to kill the demons, as soon as he hears about Rāma’s wedding he quickly goes to Mithila to join the celebrations. Ayodhyā prospers under Daśaratha and the four brothers live in harmony with each other.

_Around the fire the couple walked_

_With deep devotion people watched._

_The charming prince and lovely bride,_

_Glorious, blissful, dazzling bright_viii

A day arrives when King Daśaratha warns his family and courtiers about the impending doom that he predicts will befall his kingdom. He also points out that he is getting old and no longer has the power to resist the evil forces. Therefore, he decides to make Rāma his successor so that during the troubled times to come, the kingdom of Ayodhyā can be safe. According to the king, no one is as worthy as Rāma to be the next king because everyone respects Rāma’s strength, his courage and his purity above all others.

This news brings great happiness to everyone in the kingdom because everyone expects the beloved Rāma to be the next king and their wishes were coming true. But this
happiness did not last long. *Manthara*, the servant of *Kaikeyī*, with her evil intentions, successfully convinces *Kaikeyī* that this is a time of great misfortune and King *Daśaratha* has betrayed her trust. She is believed to be the main reason for *Rāma*’s exile. *Manthara* does not want *Rāma* to be the next king and in order to prevent this from happening, she approaches *Kaikeyī* because, as the beloved queen of *Daśaratha*, she will be able to change the decision to make *Rāma* king. *Manthara* is also aware of the promise *Daśaratha* makes to *Kaikeyī*. *Kaikeyī* tries to stop *Manthara* from further accusing the king of betrayal because *Kaikeyī* herself believes that his decision is right and that he is just following his *Dhárma*, but *Manthara* tells *Kaikeyī* that if *Rāma* becomes the king he will not spare *Bhārata*’s life. She continues by saying this is because no king would like having a threat to his crown and, as a result, *Rāma* will have *Bhārata* killed to secure his position. *Kaikeyī* tries her best to resist, but this thought creates a fear in her heart. *Manthara* successfully convinces *Kaikeyī* that *Daśaratha* is deceiving her and is planning a conspiracy against her son, *Bhārata*. Influenced by *Manthara*’s words, *Kaikeyī* forces King *Daśaratha* to follow his promise that he makes to her in the battlefield when she saves his life. She uses one of her wishes to send *Rāma* to the jungle for fourteen years and the other to assign the crown to her own son. *Daśaratha* has no choice but to obey and the family is stricken with sorrow.

*If I delude you with false things,*

*May God destroy me for my sins.*

*If Rāma tomorrow throne ascends,*

*Your days of glory soon shall end.*
\textbf{Dharmic conflict #2: Daśaratha}

- **Dhárma as a Father**- to protect his son from any harms and provides him with all his assets after he is gone.

- **Dhárma as a Husband**- to fulfill the promises made to his wife and to protect his wife’s life and integrity.

Kaikeyī asks for the throne for Bhārata and banishment for Rāma so that her son does not face any problems from Rāma. This incident again tests Daśaratha for his kingship. He faces a conflict in his Dhárma as a father, and a husband. Daśaratha offers his entire wealth in place of those two promises, but Kaikeyī is determined to do what she thinks is necessary to save her son. These wishes take the life out of Daśaratha because of his love for Rāma. If he refuses to fulfill his promise, his promise as a husband is questioned as well as his love for Kaikeyī. As a father, he feels terrible for punishing Rāma for something he has not done, but he is bound by his promise. He regretfully asks Rāma to leave the kingdom and live the life of a Sadhu in the jungle for fourteen years.

Daśaratha decides to follow his Dhárma as a husband instead of a king by banishing his son from the kingdom. Rāma follows the order without questioning the king, accepting that this is his fate.

\begin{quote}
"Mother blest is the son indeed, \\
Who parents words with joy does heed; \\
Who serves them just as they desire, \\
Such son to God’s Bliss does aspire."
\end{quote}
The exile of Rāma reminds Daśaratha of causing the accidental death of Ṛṣi’s son and in turn is cursed by the Ṛṣi and his wife. The curse dictates that he will suffer the same pain of loosing his son. Losing Rāma weakens his health and he eventually dies of a heart attack.

**Dharmic conflict #3: Rāma**

- **Dhárma of Rāma as a son**- to take care of the family on behalf of his fatherxii.
- **Dhárma of Rāma as a prince**- to follow the orders of the king.

Not only Daśaratha, but Rāma also faces the conflicts between his Dhárma as a son and as a prince. He faces a dharmaic conflict as a son because if he goes to the jungle, he makes everyone in the family unhappy, especially his father, and at the same time, he fails to fulfill his duties as the eldest son. But if he does not go into the jungle, he not only fails as prince who does not obey his king’s command, but also disrespects his father’s honor. By not following the command, he would insult his father’s kingship and cause others to doubt it.

Rāma follows his Dhárma as a prince and obeys the order of the king to go to the forest and live in exile for fourteen years. According to the laws of Manu, it is a prime duty of the eldest son to take care of the family on behalf of his father and for Rāma to keep his father’s honor alive is more important to him than his duties as the oldest son.

**Dharmic conflict #4: Sītā**
• **Dhárma of Sītā as a wife**—to look after *Rāma* through thick and thin, and also assist *Rāma* in his spiritual journey\^{xiii}.

• **Lessons learned from the parents**—to do everything her husband wish her to do\^{xiv}.

This particular incident brings out the conflicts of Dhárma not only for the king and the prince but also for Sītā. The king’s order does not reach everyone in the palace immediately. Sītā’s love manifests itself as anger when she finds out about *Rāma’s* exile and that *Rāma* makes all the preparations to go the forest alone. She finds herself stuck in the middle of her duties as a wife and the lessons taught to her by her parents. Before going to the jungle, *Rāma* asks his wife to stay at the palace and take care of his family. This turns into a conflict for Sītā as she starts debating whether she should follow her husband’s wish or her parent’s lessons. According to Sītā, the most important thing for a wife is to be with her husband regardless of the situation. She goes to *Rāma* and questions his Dhárma. She tells him that this is not what her parents taught her. Her Dhárma is to be with her husband in good or bad times. She believes that a husband’s duty is his wife’s too.\^{xv} *Rāma* tries to convince her to stay but, in the end, *Rāma* is persuaded and agrees to bring Sītā to the forest with him.

*Without husband, all such ties,*

*Hotter then sun’s rays burns wives.*

*Body, home, e’en life on earth,*

*Away from husband have no worth*\^{xvi}.
**Dharmic conflict #5: Lakṣmaṇa**

- **Dhárma of as a younger brother** - to respect and protect his elder brother Rāma and his wife Sītā
- **Dhárma as a son** - being the eldest son in the family, it is Rāma’s duty to take care of the family on behalf of his father.

This decision of the king makes Lakṣmaṇa very angry as he questions the king’s decision. He cannot believe that the king is punishing Rāma for something he has not done. He also thinks that this is the wrong Dhárma on his father’s part because he is making his decision based on what his wife said and not by using his senses. He thinks that the whole world is going to laugh at this senseless decision made by the king that is to send the oldest son to the jungle and give the throne to his younger son. This decision by Daśaratha not only upset Lakṣmaṇa, but the whole family.

Lakṣmaṇa faces a conflict as a son and as a brother, but he decides to fulfill his Dhárma as a brother and follows Rāma to the jungle because of his true devotion for Rāma and his belief that he and Rāma share the same soul as brothers so their fate should also be the same. Sumitra tells Lakṣmaṇa that to follow Rāma to the forest is the Dhárma of his race and that she is very proud of her son.

* Nurtured in your love since life’s dawn,
* Can Sumera be lifted by a swan?
* I’ve sought not love of father, mother,
* I’ve only cared for your love, brother*
In the exile

In this section of the paper we notice how Rāma, Sītā, and Lakṣmaṇa face the hardships of the forest and at the same time follow their Dhárma. In the forest, Rāma, Sītā, and Lakṣmaṇa face many Dharmic challenges. While some challenges are small and easy to solve, some are not so easy, and in order to make the right choice, they sometimes make a mistake. In the forest they make decisions that are based on Dhárma rather than for their own benefit. The decision made by them in these situations show that they are true followers of dhárma.

As Rāma leaves for the forest, everyone gathers in the street to have one last look at his face. Rāma asks the charioteer to go faster and faster but the crowd keeps saying slower and slower. Sumantra manages to take them out of the crowded street and away from the mourning crowd into the jungle. Before leaving the kingdom, Rāma requests the people of Ayodhyā to accept Bhārata as their true king and give him full respect.

In the jungle they spend their first night in the region of Guha. Guha feels delighted to have Rāma as his guest and offers him a place to spend his exile in his region. Rāma, showing his excellence, greets Guha but refuses the offer because he does not want to stray from his dharmic path. He nobly explains to Guha that he is bound by his vows and that they have come down to dwell in forest and not to enjoy life as guests. They spend the night in the region and leave the next morning.

They cross the river Ganga and find themselves alone for the first time in the forest. Rāma asks Lakṣmaṇa to stand guard and walk in front so that he can clear the way for Sītā and protect her from any trouble.
In the meanwhile, Daśaratha’s condition starts to get worse and he tells Kaushalyā about the sin he commits while playing a sport in the past. He sleeps after telling the story but he does not wake up the next morning. This news of his death comes as a shock to the whole kingdom and its subjects are overcome with grief. When Bhārata finds out about what has happened in the kingdom during his absence, he rushes back to Ayodhyā. He asks his mother why she causes such injustice to befall Rāma. Kaikeyī tries to convince Bhārata that he should not mourn what has happened, but instead should follow his Dhárma as the new king of Ayodhyā. Instead, Bhārata tells Kaikeyī that he is no longer her son and she is no longer his mother. Bhārata could not handle such injustice to his elder brother and goes to the forest to give Rāma the sad news and ask for his forgiveness. As soon as Rāma hears about this father he becomes angry with himself and blames himself for his father’s death. Bhārata asks Rāma to take what belongs to him by birth, but Rāma refuses the offer and commands Bhārata to follow the order of the king, as it is his Dhárma. Bhārata decides that his Dhárma is to follow Rāma’s command as well. He agrees to accept the kingdom on one condition: that he will only rule until Rāma returns back to Ayodhyā after he fulfills his Dhárma.

**Dharmic duties: Kṣatriya**

I. He should protect the people

II. Always exert himself for the destruction of robbers and wicked people

III. He should put forth his powers in battle xviii.
Rāma, Sītā, and Lakṣmanā start to live in the forest of Panchavati where they build a small hut for themselves. All of the animals in the forest help them by bringing things that will help them build shelter. Ten years pass and, during this time, Rāma, Sītā, and Lakṣmanā visit different sages and continue to live in the forest.

These ten years are referred to as Aranya Kanda, the “Forest Section”, also known as the time of misfortune for Sītā. Rāma is chosen to protect all of the Sages and destroy all of the demons. Sītā softly questions Rāma as to why he is the one who should protect the sages and not the king. She tells Rāma that it is the Dhārma of a king and not of the one who is engaged in penance. She mentions the three sins to Rāma and tells him that she does not worry about the first two because she have complete faith in him, but what worries her is the third sin: violence. Rāma, a Dhārma follower, respects Sītā’s concern and explains to her that even though he is living the life of an ascetic, it is his Dhārma to follow his duties as a Kṣatriya. He further explains that the duties of a Kṣatriya are for everyone who belongs to the cast and not just for the king alone.

In the meanwhile, the chief minister of Lanka tells Rāvaṇa that all sages are coming back to the forest with a new confidence in them because a boy name Rāma is eradicating all of the demons from the forest. After discovering the heroic work of Rāma, and to test his loyalty, Rāvaṇa’s sister, Shurpankha, visits Rāma as a beautiful lady in disguise. Shurpankha commands Rāma to marry her but Rāma, the follower of dhārma, gently asks her to leave him and ask his brother to marry her, as he is already married to Sītā. Shurpankha becomes enraged when Rāma rejects her so she tries to kill Sītā. Lakṣmanā in order to save Sītā throws a dagger at Shurpankha and cuts her nose. Lakṣmanā attacks Rāvaṇa’s sister because it was his Dhārma to protect Sītā from any danger.
None have I yet found who is fit for me,
All over the world I have been to see
So though I am lovely, I'm single still,
But seeing you now, wed you I will!"

Insulted by Lakshaman to Rāma then she went,
Assuming her real form, Sita to torment.
Seeing Sita frightened by her terrible form,
Rāma motioned to Lakshaman to demoness warn

Dharmic conflict #6: Lakṣmaṇa

- **Dhārma as a brother**- to respect and protect his elder brother Rāma
- **Going against the actual truth**

Shurpankha goes back to Lanka and tries to stimulate Rāvaṇa by telling him about Sītā’s beauty so that she may have her revenge on Rāma. They do not face any big dharmic conflicts for ten years in the forest, but when Rāvaṇa tries to kidnap Sītā, Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā must both make decisions based on Dhārma.

In order to kidnap Sītā, Rāvaṇa makes a plan with his uncle Marich. Marich takes a form of a golden deer and successfully catches Sītā’s attention. At Sītā’s request, Rāma tries to catch the deer and commands Lakṣmaṇa to protect Sītā. While attempting to catch the deer, Rāma strays far from the hut. As soon as he catches the deer, he realizes that it is a demon purposely luring him away from Sītā. In the meanwhile, Ravava hides behind a
tree and waits for Rāma and Lākṣmaṇa to leave. The demon imitates Rāma’s voice and calls for help. Hearing the voice of Rāma, seemingly in pain, Sītā asks Lākṣmaṇa to leave at once and help his brother. He follows her command and leaves in search for Rāma. As soon as Lākṣmaṇa leaves, Rāvaṇa appears, disguised as a Sage, and kidnaps Sītā, taking her back to his palace in Lanka.

At first Lākṣmaṇa refuses to leave Sītā alone, but upon hearing the cruel words from Sītā that he does not care about his brother’s life, he agrees to go and help Rāma. Lākṣmaṇa in the story is the one who is always hasty and quick, and Rāma is calm and patient in making decisions. On this particular occasion, however, the brothers switch their roles. Lākṣmaṇa is suspicious from the start. He also warns Rāma and Sītā that the animal is not a golden stag but a demon in disguise. But, rather than argue, he follows his brother’s command as his Dhārma and stays by Sītā to protect her. This could be seen as a small dharmic conflict that Lākṣmaṇa has to face. Even though he knows he is right, he still decides to obey his brother’s order to protect Sītā.

Dharmic conflict #7 and #8: Lākṣmaṇa and Sītā

Lākṣmaṇa

- Dhārma as a younger brother- to protect Rāma and his wife Sītā.

- Going against the actual truth

Sītā

- Dhārma of a wife- it is the duty of a wife to control her thoughts, speech and deeds in order to gain highest renown and place near her husband in the next worldxxi.

- Dhārma as a sister- to listen to the orders of the elder brother
Lakṣmaṇa soon faces another dharmic conflict when the demon calls for help in Rāma’s voice. This time the conflict comes from Sītā’s side as she commands him to go and help his brother. He tries to convince Sītā that this is just a trick and brother Rāma is all right, but when Sītā starts to curse him for being heartless, he decides to go in search of his brother. All this time Lakṣmaṇa is aware of what is happening, but he also cannot overlook his duties as a brother. His decision is based on Dhárma and not on his own wish. He knows that following Sītā’s command could result in great misfortune but he still does not argue and does what his Dhárma expects from him.

When Sita spoke some bitter words,
With pain Lakshman’s faithful heart stirred.
Leaving alone in god’s care,
To seek Rāma in the woods he fared.

Sītā also faces a dharmic conflict. Before leaving to help Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa makes a line around the hut to protect Sītā. He tells Sītā that as long as she is behind the line she is safe. Sītā finds herself in the conflict when Rāvaṇa comes as a Sage and asks for charity. When Sītā refuses to cross the line, he threatens her by saying that misfortune will befall her if she does not feed the hungry sage. Like Lakṣmaṇa, she did not know if something bad would happen if she crosses the line. At that time, she just does not want to upset the sage because she is already worrying about her husband. Rāvaṇa’s plan to kidnap Sītā is
perfect because he utilizes dharmic conflicts to his advantage, anticipating what each character will do.

*When Sita was by herself left,*

*Rāvaṇa in form of saint came dressed.*

*The demon who kept gods in fear,*

*Awake, hungry, lest he appear*.

**Followers of Dhārma**

When Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa return and cannot find Sītā anywhere, Rāma becomes angry and starts to lose his patience. Once again, Lakṣmaṇa must help Rāma control his anger and they decided to look for Sītā everywhere.

On their mission to find Sītā, Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa were still performing their duties as a Kṣatriya. They release a heavenly body from his curse by killing his demon form. The heavenly body advises them to find Sugrīva, the king of the Vānara, or monkeys. Both the brothers start to find Sugrīva in the forest and during their search they come in contact with his minister name Hanumān.

*Who are you sires, sky blue and fair,*

*Like warriors in the forest fare?*

*Treading rough ground with your feet,*
What do you in the forest seek?xxiv

Hanumān is the son of Añjanā and Kesari and is believed to be an avatar of Lord Śiva. Hanumān is worshipped as the symbol of strength and devotion. He is considered as one of the dearest devotees of Rāma. It is believed in the Hindu tradition that Lord Śiva and Lord Viṣṇu use thoughts of each other to better concentrate while performing yoga and looking after the world. As a result, when Lord Viṣṇu arrives on earth in the form of Rāma, Lord Śiva also comes to earth as Hanumān.

Rāma and Lakṣmana explain their misfortune to the king of the Vānara. Sugrīva also tells Rāma of his misfortune and together they take an oath to help each other in regaining what they have lost.

Deep love pervaded in their heart,

Rāma’s story Lakshman did impart.

With tear filled eyes Sugrīva then said:

“Lord! News of Sita we shall getxxv.

Rāma agrees to help Sugrīva to regain his kingdom and his wife from his brother Vaali. Sugrīva explains to Rāma why he and Vaali are enemies. Vaali is Sugrīva’s elder brother who keeps his wife in the palace and refuses to give her back to Sugrīva. A long time ago, Vaali fights an intense battle against a demon name Dundudhi. The battle lasts for years and as the battle is taking place inside a cave, Sugrīva and his men were waiting outside to see the result. After waiting for a long time, Sugrīva thinks that his brother is
dead because he could not hear any noise from the cave. When Vaali comes out and
notices that his brother has left and has taken the kingdom, he gets very upset and wishes
to kill his brother for tricking him.

I waited there for thirty days,
Then streams of blood gushed from the cave,
‘Now he will kill me next’ I thought,
In fear I closed cave’s mouth with rock.
Bali returned, the demon killed,
Seeing me he was with fury filled.
He struck me though I cried for life,
He took from me my wealth and wife\textsuperscript{xxvi}.

As Rāma pledged, he agrees to kill Vaali. The first attempt to kill Vaali is
unsuccessful because both the brothers look very much alike and Rāma did not want to
kill the wrong person by mistake. This makes Sugrīva very angry because he went to fight
his brother trusting Rāma. Rāma explains to him why he could not keep his promise. On
the second attempt, Rāma successfully kills Vaali and gives Sugrīva what he desires.
Sugrīva then sends out his force in all four directions to look for Sītā. While the forces
were looking for Sītā, Rāvaṇa asks Sītā to forget about Rāma and asks her to marry him.
Sītā tries to explain to Rāvaṇa that he has already committed enough Adhārma by
kidnapping her and requests him not to violate Dhārma any further.
The forces search for many days but they could not find any clues of Sītā’s whereabouts until Hanumān finds a secret way to the ocean through a mountain. At the shore, the brother of Jatāyū helps the forces by guiding them in the right direction towards Lanka.

Hanumān, with his magical powers, flies across the ocean to rescue Sītā, but Sītā refuses to come back with him because she wants freedom for everyone and not just for herself. Sītā is initially scared, as she thinks that this is one of the tricks of Rāvana, but when Hanumān shows Sītā the ring Rāma gives to her, she believes Hanumān and asks him about his Lord Rāma. Before leaving the palace, Hanumān starts bullying the soldiers of Rāvana. He purposely allows himself to be arrested in order to meet Rāvana and tells him that what he has done is a big Adhārma. Adhārma, individual disharmony with nature of things, is opposite of Dhārma. He tries to talk some sense into Rāvana by telling him that he can still prevent another violation of Dhārma if he agrees to return Sītā to Rāma along with the other slaves and beg forgiveness for his actions.

**Truth Act #1- Hanumān**

Truth act in Sanskrit is known as Satyakriyā. Pious person to invoke the power of truth and make miraculous events happen performs Satyakriyā in the ancient times. Hanumān goes through similar act when Ravana captures him and tries to punish him.

Rāvana, instead of listening to the noble suggestion, asks his guards to kill Hanumān but his brother stops him on the grounds that it against the rules to kill a messenger. Rāvana instead lights Hanumān’s tail on fire. Hanumān prays to the fire god and requests
him to protect him if his devotion to Rāma is true. This plan backfires because Hanumān, with his tail, burns most of Lanka before he takes the message back to lord Rāma.

Hanumān returns to Rāma and tells him that the only way he can get Sītā back is by defeating Rāvaṇa. Rāma decides that war should be fought in order to free this world from the suffering Rāvaṇa is causing and restore peace to the world. In the meanwhile, Rāvaṇa’s brother, Vibhīshaṇa, begs Rāvaṇa to return Sītā back and make peace with Rāma. He suggests that he should not underestimate Rāma’s power and that there is a reason why he has been able to defeat all his demons around the world. This makes Rāvaṇa very angry and he asks his brother to leave the palace. Vibhīshaṇa decides to leave Lanka and make peace with Rāma.

The army comes to a stand when they reach the shore because the army is too big and they don’t have enough boats to carry the whole army across the ocean. After listening to the problem Vibhīshaṇa suggests that Rāma pray to the sea God and ask for his help in order to cross the ocean. Rāma heeds Vibhīshaṇa’s advice and prays to the sea God for seven day and nights. On the dawn of the eighth morning the sea God appears. Rāma asks the God to allow him to cross the ocean so that he and his army can go to Lanka and defeat the evil king Rāvaṇa. The sea God tries to explain to Rāma that he is bound by the rules of nature. If he gives the way, then he will break the law and that can result in much harm to the life under water. Instead of saying no, the sea God suggests that Rāma inscribe his name on the rocks and make a bridge from those rocks.

Vibhīshaṇaa bowed to the Lord’s Feet,

By His devotion Rāma was pleased.
He hearkened to his humble prayer,
And clasped him in His loving care\textsuperscript{xxvii}.

**The War between Dhárma and Adhárma**

After getting such advice from the sea God, Rāma and his army start to build a bridge that will take them to Lanka. They successfully complete the bridge and, as promised by the sea God, all the stones and rocks float on the heart of the ocean. The stones not only stay on the water but also give the sea creatures an opportunity to take blessings, because all of the stones and rocks have Rāma’s name written on them.

Soon the news of Rāma reaching the shore of Lanka reaches Rāvaṇa. He immediately calls his ministers to discuss the strategies of war. Rāvaṇa’s Commander in chief, Prahasta, advises him not to worry about such petty things. He tells Rāvaṇa of his accomplishments and that there is no need to call this meeting just because a handful of men and monkeys are at the border of Lanka. However, Rāvaṇa’s father, Vishrava, warns him to return Sītā back to Rāma because Rāma and his army is no ordinary army. He implies that many will die if they go to war, and not just on Rāma’s side.

Rāma gathers his army and tells them that he has been waiting for this opportunity to destroy Rāvaṇa. Even now, when his dreams are about to come true, he still wants to give Rāvaṇa one last chance to return Sītā and the other prisoners and seek peace under his rule. This surprises the whole army because they could not believe that even after all the Adhárma Rāvaṇa has committed, Rāma still wants to forgive Rāvaṇa.

Rāma calls Vaali’s son, Angad, and asks him to be his messenger and convey this message to Rāvaṇa. Rāvaṇa tries to kill Angad, showing that he does not care for the offer
and that all he wants his war. Rāvaṇa’s message disappoints Rāma. Rāma tells his army that with the first ray of sun the war will begin and thanks his army for supporting him in the fight of good versus evil.

The next morning the battle starts between Dhárma king Rāma and evil king Rāvaṇa. Sugrīva’s army equally matches Rāvaṇa’s army, which is known for destroying its enemies easily and in a short time. This equal match-up creates some tension in Rāvaṇa’s court. Vishrava tries once again to put sense into his son’s mind, but gets shut down by Prahstha who suggests to send Kumbhakarṇa’s sons, Kumbha and Nikumbha, to maintain pressure on the enemy while the tired soldiers get some rest. The first day of battle favors Rāvaṇa due to the courageous fight put up by Kumbhakarṇa’s sons.

**Dharmic conflict #9: Rāma**

- **Dhárma as a Kṣatriya**
  
  I. He should protect the people
  
  II. Always exert himself for the destruction of robbers and wicked people
  
  III. He should put forth his powers in battle

- **Qualities of a good human being** - a good human being does not differentiate between himself and others. He treats them equal at every stage of life.

Rāma is truly a Dhárma follower as he strictly follows the rules of the battle and fights only until sunset. After the sun sets, Rāma visits the wounded soldiers and cremates the bodies of the dead soldiers. Rāma not only cremates his soldiers, but
Rāvaṇa’s as well. Lakṣmaṇa questions Rāma about this decision, but Rāma explains to his brother that even though they are the men who fight against them, once dead they belong to death. Lakṣmaṇa tries to convince Rāma that getting carried away with his emotions is not a Kṣatriya’s dhárma. Rāma agrees with his brother but also tries to explain to him that during his journey to Lanka and after the first day of battle, he learns that it is more important to be a good human being then just to be a good Kṣatriya. Rāma chooses his duties as a good human and honors the dead but at the same time follows the Dhármá of a Kṣatriya on the battlefield.

The second day of battle is even fiercer. This time it is not only the armies of both sides but also the generals of both armies engage in the battle. Prahastha himself starts the day by killing many soldiers of Rāma’s army, but the general of the Vānara’s army, Neel, stops his run. They fight an intense battle, but in the end Neel comes out as the winner and defeats the commander in chief of Rāvaṇa’s army.xxxi

On the other side, there is another fierce battle going on between the king of Vānara, Sugrīva, and Kumbhakarṇa’s son Kumbha. At first, it seems as if Kumbha will defeat Sugrīva and will give an upper hand to his army in the battle, but Sugrīva, with his smart tactics, tricks Kumbha and kills him. Hanumān fights a duel with Nikumbha and then the mighty Kumbhakarṇa.xxxii Kumbhakarṇa is Rāvaṇa’s brother and one of the best and bravest warriors of Rāvaṇa’s troops. Kumbhakarṇa normally alternates between sleeping and eating for six months apiece, but after watching all of his brave warriors getting killed by the Vānara’s army, Rāvaṇa orders his men to wake Kumbhakarṇa up from his sleep. If Kumbhakarṇa had slept for the entirety of these last six months he would have become
immortal, but Rāvana’s fear of losing is so strong that he wakes Kumbhakarna before the six-month marker. Rāvana asks him to go in the battle and bring good news for Lanka.

**Dhárma follower in Lanka: Kumbhakarna**

After listening to Rāvana’s worries, Kumbhakarna becomes furious and decides to kill Rāma and Lakṣmana and drink their blood, but soon he remembers why this misfortune is happening to Lanka and his brother. He tells Rāvana that even after being given so many warning he did not listen to them, and, as a result, now he is suffering. He also tells Rāvana that he need not worry because it is his Dhárma to protect his brother from any threat and that Rāma would have to kill Kumbhakarna in order to kill Rāvana.

“You’ve sinned against the Mother fool! Now do you your own victory seek?”

As Kumbhakarna comes to the battlefield, all of the Vānara army tremble with fear, as they have never seen anyone as mighty as Kumbhakarna. Vibhīshaṇa advises Rāma that now is the time for him to go to the battlefield. Kumbhakarna’s first challenge comes from Hanumān, but before Kumbhakarna can do any harm to Hanumān, Rāma steps in and challenges Kumbhakarna. Intense battle starts between Kumbhakarna and Rāma but in the end Rāma kills Kumbhakarna with the weapons that Sage Vishwamitra give to Rāma during his training. As Kumbhakarna dies, he concentrates his heart with Lord Rāma’s devotion and his spirit enters Rāma’s body.

*Touching his feet Vibhīshaṇaa went,*
To Rāma of three worlds adornment.

He said: “Lord! mighty as mountain,

Comes Kumbhakarna, valour’s fountain!”

As Rāvana starts to lose hope, Indrajit, his son, assures his father that he could still turn the result of this battle in Rāvana’s favor. Seeing his son’s confidence, Rāvana feels better, but his worry does not completely dissipate, as Indrajit in the only fine warrior left in his army and if anything happens to him, there will no one left in the army to face Rāma. Indrajit comes to the battlefield with great fury. The war between him and Rāma’s army goes on for three days. On the first day of the battle, he swiftly wipes out the army of Sugreeva. He calls Rāma and Laksmana to come out of their hiding and battle with him so that he can avenge the death of his brothers and uncle Kumbhakarna. Accepting the challenge from Indrajit, Rāma and Laksmana, jump into the battle to stop destructive Indrajit. Indrajit fights fiercely against the sons of Ayodhyā and successfully injures both of the brothers using his most wicked weapon, Nagapash, also known as a trap made of one million snakes. The Garuda, who is the enemy of the serpents and the flying vehicle of Narayana, rescues Rāma and Laksmana from any further harm.

Soon the news of Rāma and Laksmana being alive and rescued by Garuda, reaches Indrajit. He becomes furious and vows to kill one of the brothers that day. He again starts to wipe out the army of Sugrīva. This time Laksmana appears before him and fights an intense battle against him. When Indrajit realizes that Laksmana cannot be won over, he starts to use his supreme magical powers. He combines his skill of sorcery and deceptive warfare. He uses his trick of vanishing and reappearing to catch Laksmana off-guard and
make his weapons deadlier. Using his tricks, he successfully injures Lakṣmaṇa with his weapons and, once again, Lakṣmaṇa falls unconscious on the ground.

Garuda, without wasting any time, commands Hanumān to go and get Sanjivani, a life-restoring herb, from the Dronagiri Mountain. Rāvaṇa, in order to increase the problems for Rāma and his army, orders Kalnemi, a magician, to intercept Hanumān’s path. At first, Kalnemi tries to discourage Rāvaṇa from doing any more Adhárma, but when Rāvaṇa threatens him with destruction from his own hands, he chooses to die by the hands of the messenger of the Lord and thus attain salvation.

Kalnemi, using his magical powers, creates a beautiful garden with pool of water containing lovely flowers. On his way to the mountain, Hanumān decides to stop by the garden and get some rest. Before drinking the water, he approaches Kalnemi, disguised as a Sage, and respectfully seeks his permission to drink water to satisfy this thirst. As he drinks water from the pond, a crocodile attacks him and bites his leg. Hanumān immediately kills the crocodile. The crocodile happens to be a heavenly body whose spirit is cursed to be trapped within the body of a crocodile. The heavenly body warns Hanumān of the Sage by telling him that the Sage is actually a demon. Hanumān kills the demon, Kalnemi, and continues his journey to the mountain.

Hanumān faces another problem as he reaches the mountain. The mountain is full of herbs and he cannot distinguish among all the herbs which one is Sanjivani. Time is running out and in order to avoid any confusion, Hanumān lifts up the whole mountain and carries it back to Lanka. The herb brings Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa back to life along with other severely injured Vaaranas.
When *Indrajit* finds out that *Lakśmaṇa* has survived again, he decides to go and offer sacrifices to his native deity and invoke blessings for invincibility so that he can end this war forever. *Vibhīshaṇa* knows that *Indrajit* will be without weapons because he is aware that during this ritual *Indrajit* will not touch his weapons in order to successfully complete the ritual. Knowing his brother’s plan, *Vibhīshaṇa* alerts Lord *Rāma* and tells him that something should be done to stop *Indrajit* from making those sacrifices otherwise it will be very difficult to defeat him. *Rāma* immediately asks *Lakṣmaṇa* to gather a small troop and go spoil the ritual.

> *Rāma’s blessings Lakshman humbly took,*
> *With bow and arrow as he stood.*
> *Drawing strength of Rāma’s power in his heart,*
> *He spoke grave words in deep regard:*
> *“If victory I bring not today*
> *Myself devotee I’ll not say*
> *To save him e’en if Shankar came,*
> *I’ll kill the demon, on Rāma’s name.*

Seeking blessings from *Rāma*, *Lakṣmaṇa* attacks *Indrajit* inside the cave and spoils the ritual for becoming invincible. *Indrajit*, fighting with the utensils used in the ritual, somehow manages to get away from the cave. Frustrated with this intrusion, he vows to kill *Vibhīshaṇa* and *Lakṣmaṇa*. Again a fierce battle takes place between *Lakṣmaṇa* and *Indrajit*, and being unable to hurt *Lakṣmaṇa* by fair means, *Indrajit* then uses the three
supreme weapons (*Brahmastra*, *Pashupatastra*, and *Vaishnavastra*) on *Lakṣmaṇa*. But to his dismay, none of the weapons cause any harm to *Lakṣmaṇa*. He soon realizes that *Lakṣmaṇa* is not a normal human being and he disappears, retreating to his palace. Upon his return, he tells *Rāvaṇa* about the strength of *Rāma* and *Lakṣmaṇa*, and proposes to make peace with *Rāma* and protect demon race from vanishing.

*Rāvaṇa*, filled with pride, calls *Indrajīt* a coward for fleeing from the battlefield. This accusation makes *Indrajīt* very upset and he decides to go back on the battlefield, even though he knows that this time he will indeed face death at the hands of *Lakṣmaṇa*. He fights again with *Lakṣmaṇa*, but this time *Lakṣmaṇa* ends his life by using *Aindrastra*.

*Rāvaṇa* sitting alone on his throne looks around and sees that he is the only warrior left in the palace and that all of the other warriors have died at the hands of Lord *Rāma* and *Lakṣmaṇa*. He goes up to the tower and surveys the scene on the battlefield. He notices that the warriors of the demon army are disheartened due to the heavy loss inflicted upon them. He thus decides that the time has come for him to act on his own and do something to bring back the spirit of his army that is known for destroying its enemy quickly.

*Next day as sun on Lanka dawned,*

*Its forts the gallant Vanars stormed.*

*Calling his demons Rāvaṇa warned:*

*“Those in battle feel alarmed,*

*Had better now abstain from strife,*

*Cowards retreat when come to fight!***
On my strength this war I sought,
Foe’s challenge I shall myself meet

_Rāvaṇa_ returns to his chamber to prepare himself for the battle. He takes a ritual bath and performs special prayers to get blessings from Lord Śīva. He summons his chariot. The chariot used by _Rāvaṇa_ is unique and special. His chariot can move with horses or without them. As he is leaving the palace, he says that after this battle, his wife, _Mandodarī_, or _Rāma_’s wife, _Sītā_, will be a widow.

_Devas_ in the heaven notice the determination of _Rāvaṇa_ and decide to support _Rāma_ with whatever they can. They request _Indra_, the god of war, to send down his chariot for _Rāma_’s use. When _Rāma_ sees the chariot he gets very impress but at the same time he also reflects that this might be a trick from the demons. To clear this doubt, _Mithali_, the charioteer, informs _Rāma_ that the gods have send him to protect him against _Rāvaṇa_, who is blessed by the power of _Brahma_ and _Śiva_.

_Rāvaṇa_, filled with anger and rage, starts to attack the _Vānara_. _Rāvaṇa_ is blessed with ten heads and arms, so he takes a bow in each of his ten hands, picks up deadly arrows, and asks his charioteer to drive towards the _Vānara_ army. A fierce battle takes place between the _Vānara_ and _Rāvaṇa_. At first, the _Vānara_ face _Rāvaṇa_ with great courage, but upon seeing the strength of _Rāvaṇa_, they begin to retreat and ask Lord _Rāma_ to help them defeat this powerful warrior.

Then at Vanars bold _Rāvaṇa_ rushed,
His chariot helpless warriors crushed.
The vanars flew back full of fright,
To seek from Rāvaṇa’s wrath respite.

“Save us O Lord!” they cried and wept,

“Like Death Rāvaṇa has Vanars swept.”

When Rāvaṇa saw the vanars run,

In all then bows he arrows strung

Lakṣmaṇa cannot restrain himself after hearing the plea of the Vānara. He challenges Rāvaṇa to fight with him instead of bullying the Vānara. Lakṣmaṇa fights an intense battle against Rāvaṇa. Lakṣmaṇa destroys Rāvaṇa’s chariot and kills his charioteer, but in the end receives a blow from Rāvaṇa’s Brahma missile. Rāvaṇa believes that Rāma’s strength is his brother and that by capturing Lakṣmaṇa, he can make Rāma weak. This plans fails for Rāvaṇa because before he can capture Lakṣmaṇa, Hanumān comes and rescues Lakṣmaṇa.

The next day, Vibhīshaṇa sends some men to Lanka to get more information about Rāvaṇa’s plan. Vibhīshaṇa’s men tell him that Rāvaṇa is performing ritual sacrifices to invoke gods to bless him with victory over Rāma. Vibhīshaṇa quickly informs Rāma about the ritual and requests him to take action immediately in order to ruin the ritual. Rāma sends a small troop with Angad and successfully ruins Rāvaṇa’s prayer.

Rāvaṇa returns to the battle in fury. He again starts to slay the monkeys with rage. Mahodara, one of the members of Rāvaṇa’s council, requests that Rāvaṇa give him the honor of fighting Rāma. Rāvaṇa explains to Mahodara that Rāma is his sole concern and, if
he wants to engage himself in battle, he can fight with Lakṣmaṇa. Anticipating Rāvaṇa’s plan, Rāma asks his charioteer to stand in Mahodara’s path so that he can save Lakṣmaṇa from any further harm. Mahodara, disregarding Rāvaṇa’s suggestion, decides to fight against Rāma. It is a moment of work for Rāma to destroy Mahodara’s pride and life.

Before going on the battlefield, there are many ominous signs, such as neighing horses and owls hooting in a mournful way, but Rāvaṇa, blinded by his pride, ignores these omens and decides to go and fight. Rāvaṇa notices them only for a brief moment and decides that they mean nothing and that Rāma is nothing but a mortal.

While deciding on his next move, Rama looks at the army of Rāvaṇa. He decides that destroying Rāvaṇa’s army and Rāvaṇa watching his men die might change his heart, but the effect was opposite. Rāvaṇa becomes more furious and starts to march towards Rāma and his doom.

Finally the battle between Rāma and Rāvaṇa begins. Rāvaṇa starts the rain of arrows on Rāma and his army and Rāma does the same to Rāvaṇa and his army. While Rāma and Rāvaṇa were fighting, Rāvaṇa looks at the chariot of Rāma and realizes that the chariot belongs to Indra and that the gods are trying to help Rāma to win this battle. Rāvaṇa decides to teach the gods a lesson and multiplies his attack by tenfold. But these attacks seem to have no affect on Rāma. Rāvaṇa decides to change his tactics and orders his charioteer to fly in the air. This tactic does not work for long because Rāma stops his attack by flying next to him. They chase each other around the earth and finally return to Lanka and continue fighting.

Rāvaṇa soon realizes that multiplying his attacks by tenfold is not going help him, so he switches to the use of magic and sorcery. The first weapon he uses is called Māya, a
weapon, which creates illusions and confuses the enemy. This weapon proves some success for Rāvana. Rāma gets confused seeing all of the enemies that he kills in the war come back to life. Mithali saves Rāma from this confusion by telling him that this is just an illusion that Rāvana is creating to confuse him and he should just focus on the battle. To overcome the confusion, Rāma uses a weapon for wisdom: Gñāna. Rāvana uses various supreme weapons to trouble Rāma, but Rāma is always ready with a response.

Soon, Rāvana realizes that he is running out of resources. Realizing that there nothing much Rāvana can do, Rāma decides to kill the demon by cutting his head off. He launches a sharp arrow and cuts off one of his heads. Rāma thinks that the battle is over but what he does not know is that Rāvana has the blessing to have his head replaced if one of his heads is cut off. Rāvana comes back to life and starts to battle against Rāma yet again.

Other Values

- **Rāma duties as a Kṣatriya** is to give equal chance to the enemy and never attack when the enemy is incapable of fighting.

Taking constant blows from Rāma makes Rāvana a little weak and, after some time, he faints. At this time, Mithali, Rāma’s charioteer, whispers to Rāma that this is the right moment to kill the demon. Rāma being a true Kṣatriya refuses to battle against Rāvana, who is unconscious, and decides to battle again when he is back in his consciousness. When Rāvana regains consciousness, he gets angry at his charioteer for bringing him back,
but after listening to the explanation, Rāvaṇa appreciates Rāma’s decision and rejoins the battle.

“It is not fair warfare to attack a man who is in a faint. I will wait. Let him recover.”

After fighting for a long time, Rāma decides to end this struggle by using The Brahмāstra, a weapon that is used when all other weapons fail. Rāma, with his prayers and worship, invokes the weapon to its full strength and sends it in Rāvaṇa’s direction, aiming at his heart. While Rāvaṇa prays for indestructibility of his several heads and arms, he forgets to pray for his weak heart. The Brahмāstra hits him in his heart and ends his life.

After the battle is over, Rāma requests that Mithali return back to Indra and give thanks to him for his help. Rāma thanks everyone in his army for helping him win this battle and restore peace in the world. As Rāma approaches the dead body of Rāvaṇa, he notices a scratch on his back. This makes Rāma feel that this is not a moment of pride for him because he probably attacked Rāvaṇa while he was retreating. To dispel this confusion, Vibhīshaṇa, Rāvaṇa’s brother, explains to Rāma that the scar is from one of the battles Rāvaṇa fights against the divine elephants. This explanation satisfies Rāma and Rāma decides to make Vibhīshaṇa the new king of Lanka.

**After the War-**

*Dharmic conflict #10- Rāma*

- **Rāma as a king**- to maintain the integrity of his wife.
- **Rāma as a husband**: to accept his wife at any stage of life

**Truth Act #2 - Sītā**

*Rāma* sends *Hanumān* to free *Sītā* from prison and bring her to him. *Sītā*, overjoyed, runs to *Rāma* without caring about her appearance, but *Hanumān* tells *Sītā* that the Lord requests to see her dressed and decorated. When *Sītā* arrives and sees *Rāma*, she feels some kind of barrier between her and *Rāma*. *Rāma* tells *Sītā* that his job of freeing her is done and that he has fulfilled his mission. He also tells *Sītā* that it is against the law for a king to accept a wife who stays alone at a stranger’s house. He tells her that she is free to go wherever she wants and he will not impose any restriction on her.

“I leave you free to go where you please and to choose any place to live in. I do not restrict you in any manner.”

*Rāma* faces a conflict as husband and as a king. *Rāma* starts to fight this battle because of *Sītā* and after winning the war he still cannot accept her because his duties as a king prevent him from accepting her as his wife because she stays at stranger’s house. *Rāma*, surrounded by his army, decides to follow his duties as a king and tells *Sītā* to go wherever she pleases.

These words take the life out of *Sītā*, who is waiting to see her husband for such a long time. She tells *Rāma* that him winning this war will not bring an end to their misery and her trials are not done yet. She asks *Lakṣmaṇa* to light a fire at once so that she can
justify her purity. As Rāma watches, she starts to walk on fire. She requests the god of fire to be her witness and prove her purity to her Lord.

“If in action, speech and thought,
My heart has only Rāma sought;
Then fire god as you know my mind,
Make flames like sandal cool and kind.”

After Sītā walks through the flames, the god of fire emerges out and presents Sītā to Rāma with blessings. Satisfied with establishing his wife’s purity in presence of the whole world, Rāma welcomes Sītā back to his arms. Rāma later explains to the people around him that as a husband he believes in Sītā’s purity, but as a king it is his duty to maintain the integrity of his wife and that’s why he asks Sītā to prove herself.

The fourteen years of exile are coming to an end. Gods tell Rāma that on the fifth day of the full moon he will be completing his fourteenth year and that will be the best time for him to go back to Ayodhyā. Vibhīshaṇa offers Pushpak Vimana, Rāvaṇa’s chariot, and asks Rāma to take this chariot so that he can reach home in time. Over in Ayodhyā, Bhārata starts to lose his patience. He decides to sacrifice himself in a fire. Before he can do that, however, Hanumān arrives in Ayodhyā and stops him. Soon after this occurs, Rāma’s Vimana arrives. Rāma’s mothers, including Kaikeyī, are waiting to receive him. It is a happy reunion for the family and all the rituals and customs that were stopped because Rāma leaves start again.
Truth act #3- Sītā

Many texts provide two endings to the story. Some of the texts do not talk about the one more truth act that Sītā faces after their return to Ayodhyā. In the original version of Rāmāyaṇa, the rumors about Sītā’s adultery continue to happen under Rāma’s kingship. As a result, Rāma as the new king decides to banish Sītā from the kingdom. Sītā goes back to the forest where she meets Rṣi Vālmīki. In Vālmīki’s ashram, she gives birth to her two sons Lav and Kush. Vālmīki, who later wrote the Ramayana, teaches Lav and Kush to sing Ramayana in a poem form. Soon Rāma hears about the two young boys who are singing Ramayana to everyone. When Rāma sees them, he quickly recognizes that these two boys are his sons and asks them about their mother. After knowing the whereabouts of Sītā, he decides to bring Sītā back. Sītā again goes through a truth act where she asks mother earth to be her witness and swallow her if she is loyal to Rāma xlvi. Mother Earth to testify her purity swallows Sītā and Sītā disappears foreverxlvi.

Commentary-

Rāmāyaṇa is an epic that describes the foundation of Indian society and customs. From the start one can see the rules and regulations that men and women have to follow in order to maintain the reputation of their family and their relationship with others. It is often seen in Indian tradition that men give more importance to their occupation while women give more importance to their relationship with their husbands.

The paths for the all characters in the Rāmāyaṇa are not easy ones, but especially not for Daśaratha, Rāma, Sītā, and Lakṣmaṇa. These characters face challenges due to their dharmic duties. Each of the characters decide to follow their duties according to their role
in the situation. Daśaratha in his first dharmic conflict, for example, decides to fulfill his duties as a king and not as a father by sending his young sons into the jungle to fight demons. Being a king is an occupation for Daśaratha and by making this decision, he decides to give more importance to the duties related to his occupation.

One of the laws in Hindu society is that the eldest son receives what his father has left for him. According to this presupposition, Rāma should be the next king of Ayodhyā, but in his second dharmic conflict, Daśaratha orders him to go into exile and makes his younger son, Bhārata, the next king of Ayodhyā. On this particular occasion, Daśaratha decides to complete the promise he makes to his wife Kaikeyī and neglects his duties as a king by not giving the kingdom to Rāma. One thing to notice is that in the second dharmic conflict, when Daśaratha orders Rāma to go in the exile, he decides to fulfill his promise and give more importance to his family than to his occupation.

Daśaratha is the only one who gives importance to his occupational dhárma. Rāma also faces dharmic conflict when he decides to fulfill his duties related to his occupation and family. After the order from the king, Rāma decides to fulfill his duties as a prince: to follow the king’s order, and neglects his duties as the eldest son: to take care of the family. Rāma, like his father, also gives more importance to his occupation then to his relationship with his family.

However, there are instances in the story where we can see that the importance is being given to the relationship and not the occupation. Sītā, Rāma’s wife, in her first dharmic conflict faces a conflict between her role as a wife and as a queen. Rāma at first asks her to stay back and take care of the family, but she refuses to stay back and decides to go with Rāma. According to her, duties of a wife are important than her occupational
duties as a queen. Throughout the story, Sītā always gives more importance to her relationship with her husband than her occupational duties.

Challenges for these characters do not only come in terms of their duties as a prince or duties in their relationship. In the story, sometimes they face challenges between their dharmic duties and other moral values.

According to the laws of Manu, for a woman to achieve a place next to her husband after death and in the next life, she should always perform good deeds. This law creates a conflict for Sītā. When Rāvaṇa plans to kidnap Sītā and successfully drives Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa away, comes to the hut in the disguise as a sage and asks for charity. Lakṣmaṇa draws a line around the hut, also known as Lakṣmaṇa Rekha, to protect Sītā from any harm. When Rāvaṇa, disguised as a sage, realizes that he cannot cross the line asks Sītā to step out of the line and creates a conflict for Sītā. Sītā faces a conflict between the promise she made to Lakṣmaṇa of not crossing the line and other moral values. Charity is considered as a good deed in Hinduism and by not giving charity to the Sage she risks her spot next to her husband in next life.

At that time Sītā decides to break the promise and gives more importance to the other moral values. Even though she means well, the whole situation turns into a great misfortune because by making that innocent decision she helps Rāvaṇa to achieve success in his plan. We see from this instance that sometimes fulfilling our duties can result in bad things.

During the war between Dhárma and Adhárma, Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa continue to fulfill their duties as a Kṣatriya. However, at one stage Lakṣmaṇa question Rāma’s duties as a Kṣatriya because, Rāma, while cremating the dead bodies of his soldiers Rāma also
decides to cremate the dead bodies of the enemies. To his defense Rāma tells Lakṣmaṇa that he remembers his duties as a Kṣatriya, but at the same time he cannot ignore his duties as a good human being and that’s why he decides to cremate the dead bodies of the enemy.

Many scholars in their book mention Rāvaṇa as the follower of Adhárma. Rāvaṇa did perform some Adhárma by kidnapping Sītā, but many scholars also believe that this is Rāvaṇa’s way of getting Rāma’s attention and reach salvation by dying at his hands. Many believe that he is a greater scholar than Rāma. The reason Rāvaṇa is believed to have ten heads is because he is thorough with the four Vedas and is fully aware of the contents of the six Shastra. In Vālmīki’s Rāmāyaṇa he is portrayed as a fool because even after being so knowledgeable, he cannot keep his senses in control, which results in his death. According to Devdutt Pattanaik, Rāvaṇa is a great Brahman scholar in Indian mythology. The only mistake he did in his life is that he went after a married woman. Different scholars view Rāvaṇa differently and portray him in what they consider correct.

The last dharmic conflict for Rāma brings back the same problem of which role should receive more importance. After defeating Rāvaṇa, Rāma refuses to take Sītā back as his wife because she stayed at another man’s house for a long time. Rāma faces a conflict as a lover and as a husband. As a lover he should accept Sītā regardless of the condition, but instead he decides to follow his duties as a husband that is to set her free and accept her back only if she proves her honor.

Hanumān is true devotee of Lord Rāma. Since his childhood he has been taught to make him totally devoted to Lord Viṣṇu and as a result he devotes himself in the service of Lord Rāma because Lord Rāma is believed to be an avatar of Lord Viṣṇu. When the time
came for Rāma and his companions to go heaven, Hanumān requests to stay on earth as long as people honor Rāma’s name.

Even after having different version to it, Rāmāyaṇa continues to be seen as the foundation of Indian society. However, there are many instances where dharmic duties are challenged but it still continues to teach people to be truthful and be loyal to their dhárma.
End Notes

ii C. Rajagopalachari
iii Some texts believe that it was the monkeys who ask the Lord for help
iv The Laws of Manu edited by Max Muller: pages 216-252, 1886
v http://www.sacred-texts.com/hin/manu/manu07.htm
vi Goswami Tulsidas, 1972: Page- 37
vii Goswami Tulsidas 1972: Page- 66
viii Rajagopalachari version of Rāmāyaṇa mentions that the promise was made at the time of
the wedding and not on the battlefield
ix Goswami Tulsidas 1972: Page- 79
x The Laws of Manu edited by Max Muller: Pages 327-344, 1886
xi Goswami Tulsidas 1972: Page- 87
xiii To respect and protect his elder brother Rāma
xiv Rāmāyaṇa: The Legend of Prince Rāma, Rāma Mohan
xv According to laws of Manu, the Dhárma of a wife is to never leave her husband alone in
good or bad times
xvi Goswami Tulsidas 1972: Page- 93
xvii Goswami Tulsidas 1972: Page- 97
xviii http://www.sacred-texts.com/hin/manu/manu07.htm
xix Goswami Tulsidas 1972: Page- 175
xx According to the text, Rāvaṇa’s sister goes back to the forest with the finest soldiers of
Lanka to seek revenge
xxi The Laws of Manu edited by Max Muller: Pages 327-344, 1886
xxii Goswami Tulsidas 1972: Page- 184
xxiii Goswami Tulsidas 1972: Page- 184
xxiv Goswami Tulsidas 1972: Page- 199
xxv Goswami Tulsidas 1972: Page- 201
xxvi Goswami Tulsidas 1972: Page- 202
xxvii Goswami Tulsidas 1972: Page- 240
xxviii http://www.sacred-texts.com/hin/manu/manu07.htm
xxix http://www.buzzle.com/articles/list-of-human-qualities.html
xxx According to Rajagopalachari, Rāvaṇa’s army continued to fight even after the sunset
xxxi According to Rajagopalachari, Neela fought an battle with Prastha
xxsii According to Rajagopalachari, Hanumān also fought with Jaambumaali
xxsiii Goswami Tulsidas 1972: Page- 279
xxsiv Goswami Tulsidas 1972: Page- 281
xxsv According to the movie, Indrajiť only harms Lakṣmana with his darts, but he also breaks
the confidence of Rāma by his magic, where he shows that he killed Sītā
xxsvi Goswami Tulsidas, 1972: Page- 285
Glossary

Vālmiki- Author of Ramayana
Sholka- Rhymed poetic verse or phrase
Mahābhārata- one of the two major epics of India, other than Ramayana
Dhárma- Duties that each individual must follow
Karma- the total effect of person’s actions
Brahma- creator of the world in Hinduism
Saṁsāra- cycle of life, death, rebirth, in Hinduism
Mokṣa- freedom from the cycle of Samsara
Ṛṣi- a divine sage or poet in Hinduism
Yajña- a ritual performed to impress the gods
Viṣṇu- one of the prime Hindu gods
Swayamvar- a practice in ancient India to choose a life partner
Panchavati- place where Rama spend his 14 years of exile, very religious in India
Kṣatriya- one of the four castes in the Indian society
Vānara- the Sanskrit name for the monkeys
Śiva- Important Hindu deity, also known as the Destroyer
Adhárma- actions that do not match up with the laws
Jatāyū- a demi-god in the form of vulture
Satyakriyā- the power of Truth
Narayana- another name for Viṣṇu
Brahmastra- deadliest weapon that has no counter attack
Pashupatastra- the most destructible weapon of Śiva
Vaishnavastra- personal weapon of god Viṣṇu
Aindrastra- personal weapon of Indra
Māya- Illusion
Rekha- line
Vedas- large book of Sanskrit texts in ancient India
Shastra- sacred writings in Hinduism
Sadhu- also known as the person who renunciates all the worldly desires
Work Cited


