

EXIT HOW TO MAKE AN EXIT

# STUDY GUIDE

East West Players, EnActe Arts, and Hypokrit Productions

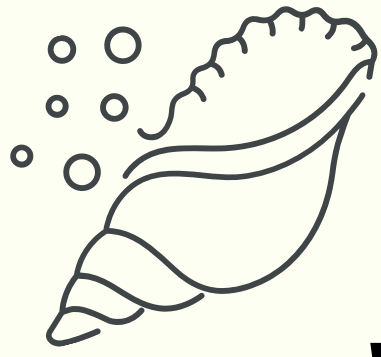
## ***THE SITAYANA***

*(or, How to Make an Exit)*

By: Lavina Jadhvani  
Directed by: Reena Dutt

MAKE AN EXIT HOW TO MAKE AN E





# BEFORE THE SHOW

## WHAT IS THE RAMAYANA?

*The Ramayana* is an epic in the oral tradition, passed down through generations. It was composed in Sanskrit by the sage, **Valmiki**, who taught it to Rama's sons, the twins **Lava and Kush**. From what we know there are **25** Sanskrit versions. Over time, adaptations have been created, some showing that Rama was a **hero**, and others that **he was not**.

**Southern Part of India:** *The Ramavataram*, composed by the Tamil poet Kampan.

**Northern India:** *The Ramacharit Manas*, composed by the Awadhi poet Tulsidas is popular.

Other **variations** exist in Bengala, Malayalam, Telegu, Kannada, and other Indian languages.

## VOCABULARY & LANGUAGE

**Swayamvara:** an ancient Indian practice in which a girl who wishes to marry chooses a husband from a group of eligible suitors.

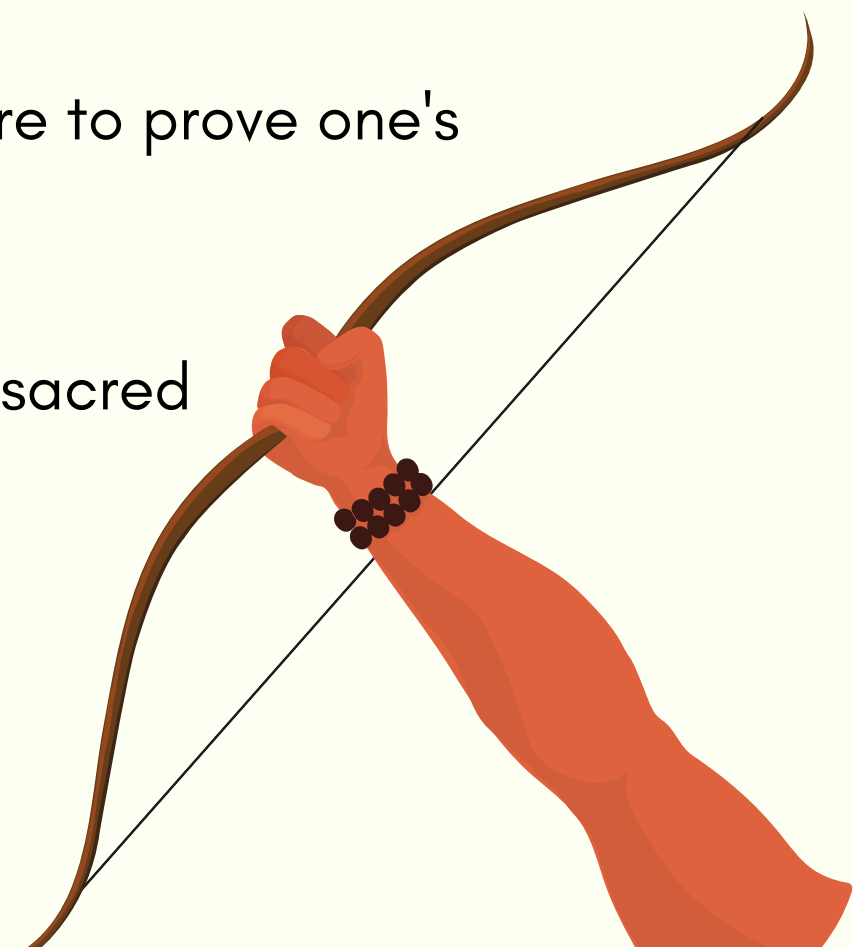
**Rakshasas:** Hindu supernatural beings "Terrifying demons"

**Agni Pariksha:** a trial by fire to prove one's loyalty/chastity

**Phera:** to circle something sacred

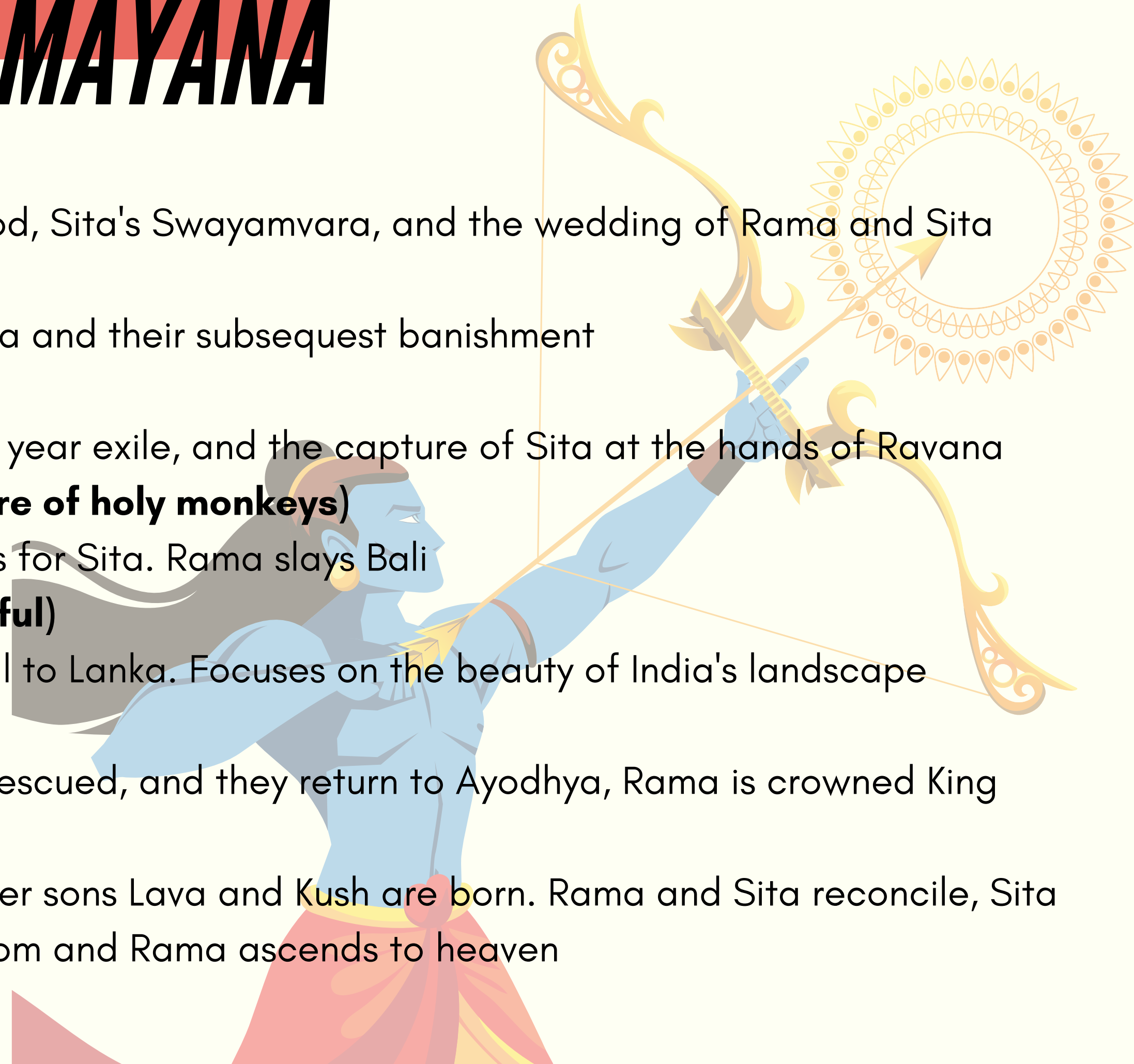
**Didi:** Elder Sister

**Beti:** Daughter



# 7 VOLUMES OF THE RAMAYANA

- 1. Bala Kanda (The book of childhood)**
  - The telling of Rama's birth and childhood, Sita's Swayamvara, and the wedding of Rama and Sita
- 2. Ayodhya Kanda (The book of Ayodhya)**
  - The arrival of Rama and Sita to Ayodhya and their subsequent banishment
- 3. Aranya Kanda (The book of the forest)**
  - The telling of Rama and Sita's fourteen year exile, and the capture of Sita at the hands of Ravana
- 4. Kishkinda Kanda (The book of the empire of holy monkeys)**
  - Rama resides in Kishkinda and searches for Sita. Rama slays Bali
- 5. Sundara Kanda (The book of the Beautiful)**
  - The telling of Rama's journey and arrival to Lanka. Focuses on the beauty of India's landscape
- 6. Yudda Kanda (The book of war)**
  - Ravana is defeated by Rama, Sita is rescued, and they return to Ayodhya, Rama is crowned King
- 7. Uttara Kanda (The book beyond)**
  - Sita is banished again from Ayodhya, her sons Lava and Kush are born. Rama and Sita reconcile, Sita returns to the earth where she came from and Rama ascends to heaven



# SYNOPSIS

*The Sitayana (Or How To Make An Exit)* is a modern retelling of the Hindu epic *The Ramayana* through its primary female protagonist, Sita. The play begins with Sita telling the audience of her father, King Janaka's intentions to wed her to the right suitor. Many men try and fail to pass King Janaka's test, until Ram comes along and passes with ease. Sita marries Ram, and they venture to Ayodhya to rule. Throughout their marriage Sita gets kidnapped, rescued, banished, tested, and banished again. Audience members will experience with Sita her endurance of devotion, the test of loyalty, and the strength of womanhood.

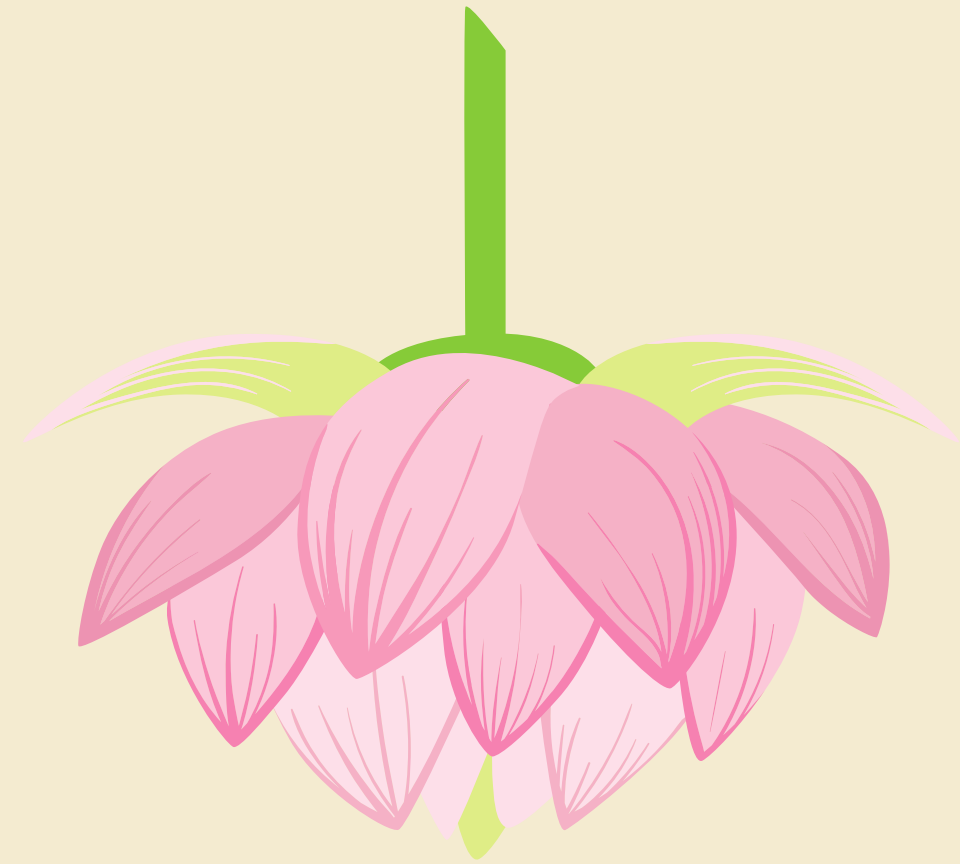
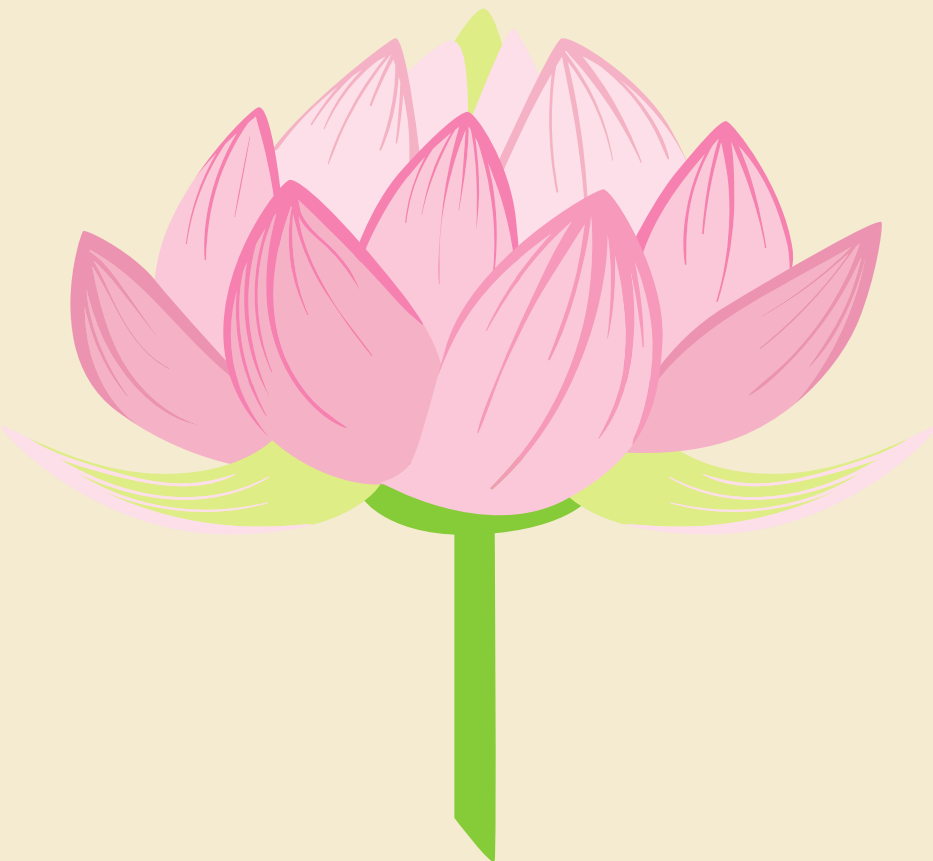
# THEMES

- Marriage
- Motherhood
- Devotion
- Friendship
- Trust
- Duty/Responsibility
- Sacrifice
- Forgiveness

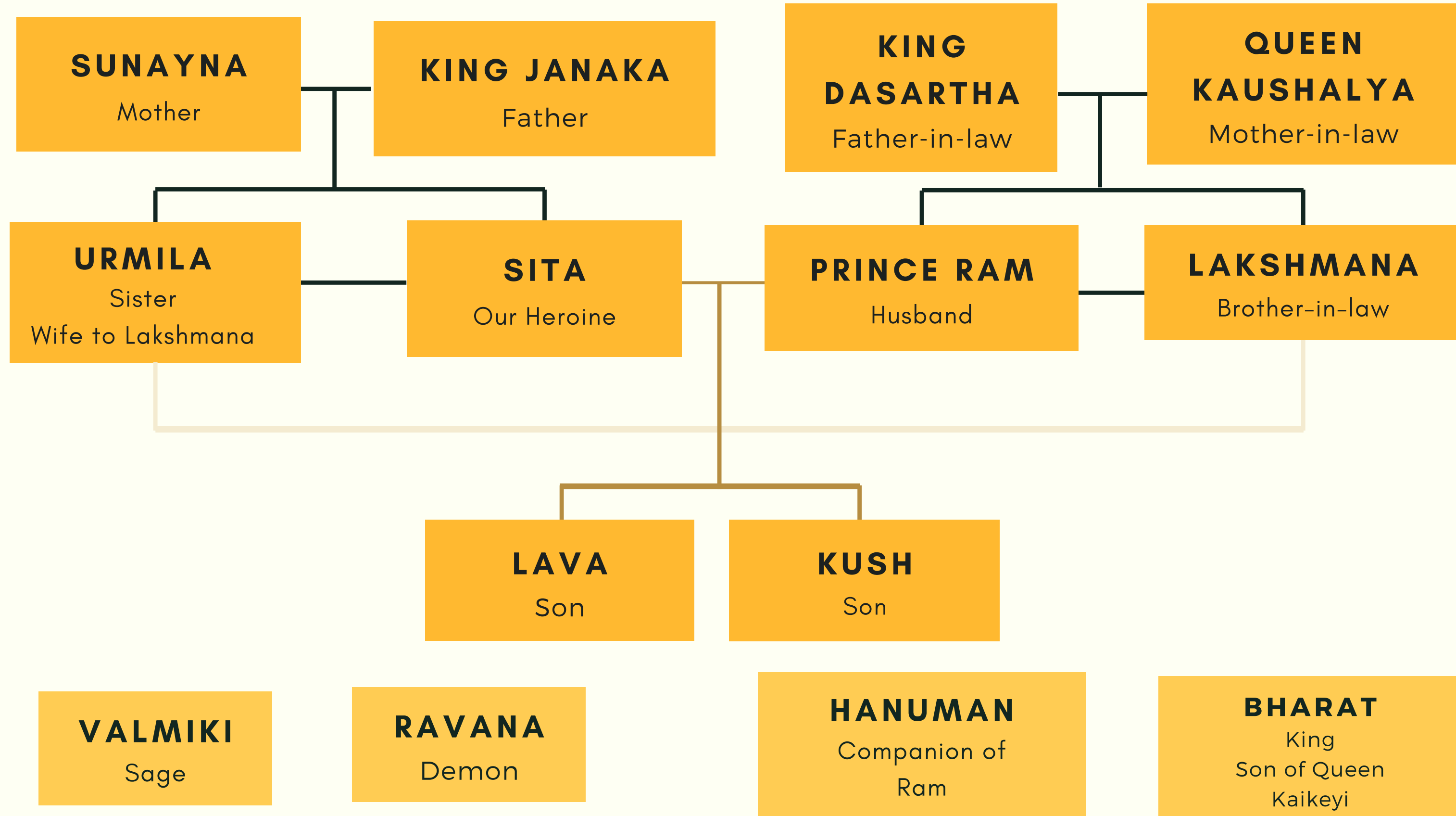




***DURING THE SHOW***



# FAMILY TREE



# MAP OF EVENTS

## #1 - Mithilia

Sita is found and adopted by King Janaka; Ram breaks the bow and wins Sita's hand in marriage.

## #2, 5, 7 - Ayodhya

King Dasharatha rules; Ram and his brothers Bharat, Lakshman, Shatrughna are born, Ram eventually rules after his return from exile.

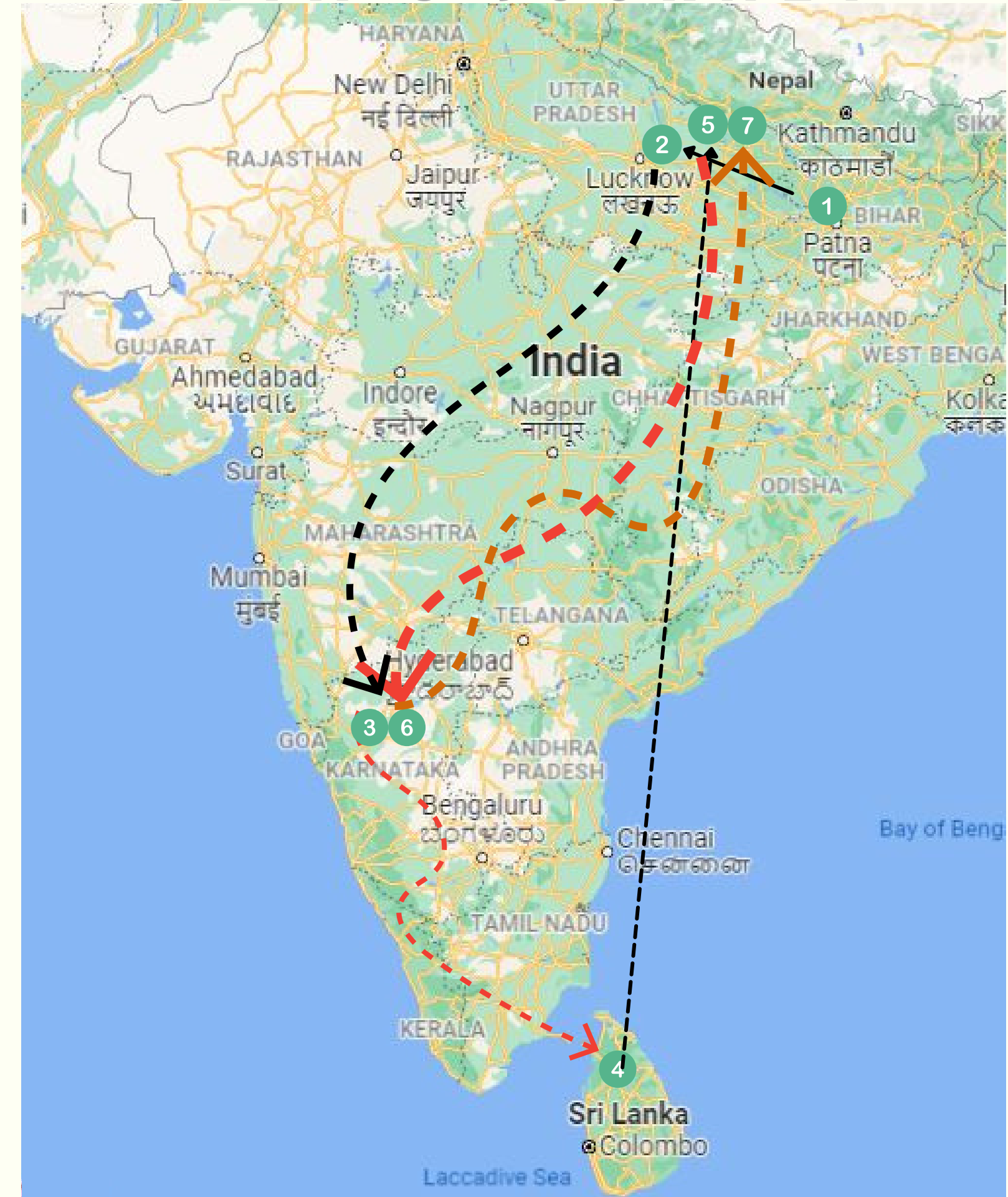
## #3, 6 - Panchavati

Sita, Ram, and Lakshman settle in exile, Sita is captured by Ravana, Sita is exiled here again and her sons Lava and Kush are born. Known today as Dandakaranya.

## #4 - Lanka

Island where Sita is held captive, Ram kills Ravana and rescues Sita. Known today as Sri Lanka.

# SITA'S JOURNEY



# WOMEN OF THE RAMAYANA

Though the story is about an ideal King, every change in the plot line that advances the story is instigated by a woman. Here are some of them.

## Queen Kaikeyi

An Intrepid warrior in her own right, Queen Kaikeyi, senior of most of the four Queens, invokes a boon granted by the King on the battlefield when she saved his life, requesting that her son Bharata ascend the throne and that Rama be banished for 14 years. If she hadn't we may never have had the story of the Ramayana!

## Urmila

The younger sister of Sita, she is the unsung hero who was married to Lakshman, on the same day of Rama and Sita's marriage. She is not highlighted as much, but her sacrifices helped the forefront characters in the successful completion of their journey. While it's not outlined in *The Sitayana*, versions of *The Ramayana* state that she stayed back in Ayodhya and "shared sleep with her husband" – meaning while her husband refused to sleep, she slept for fourteen years until her husband returned. Because of this, he was able to kill Meghnath.

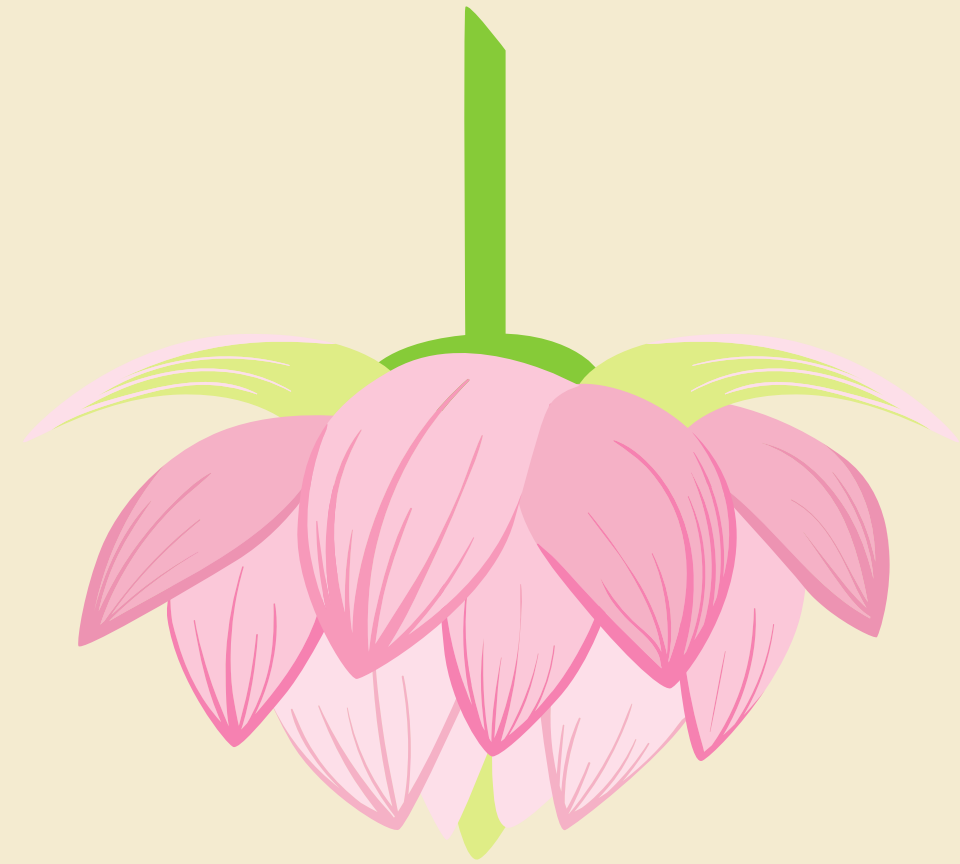
## Shurpanakha

In the Ramayana, she instigated the battle between Rama and Ravana. Across stories, Lakshmana cut off her nose. She is said to have the power of changing her physical form

***"...ok there was this one time when a jealous demon lady tried to attack me-- but the boys handled it right away. My Ram defended me while Lakshman threw his knife at her with remarkable accuracy - it sliced off her nose, and she instantly disappeared."***



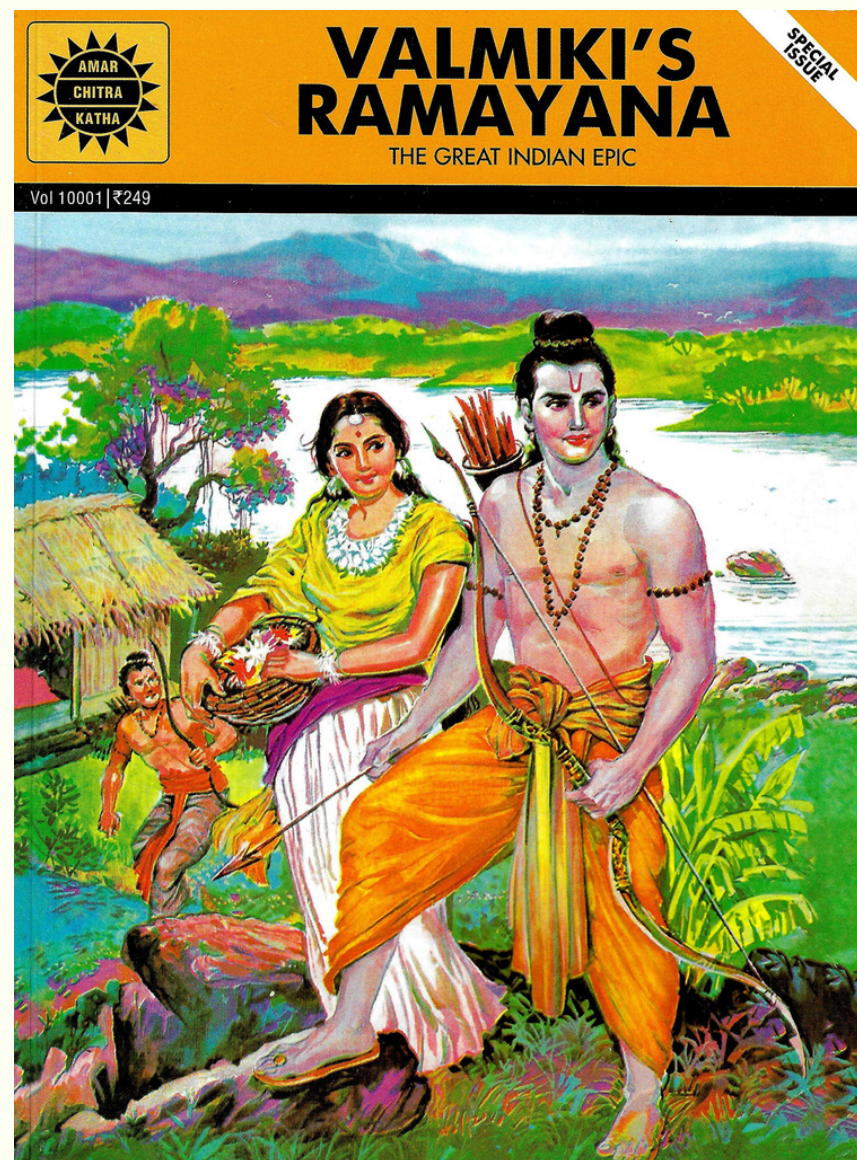
***AFTER THE SHOW***



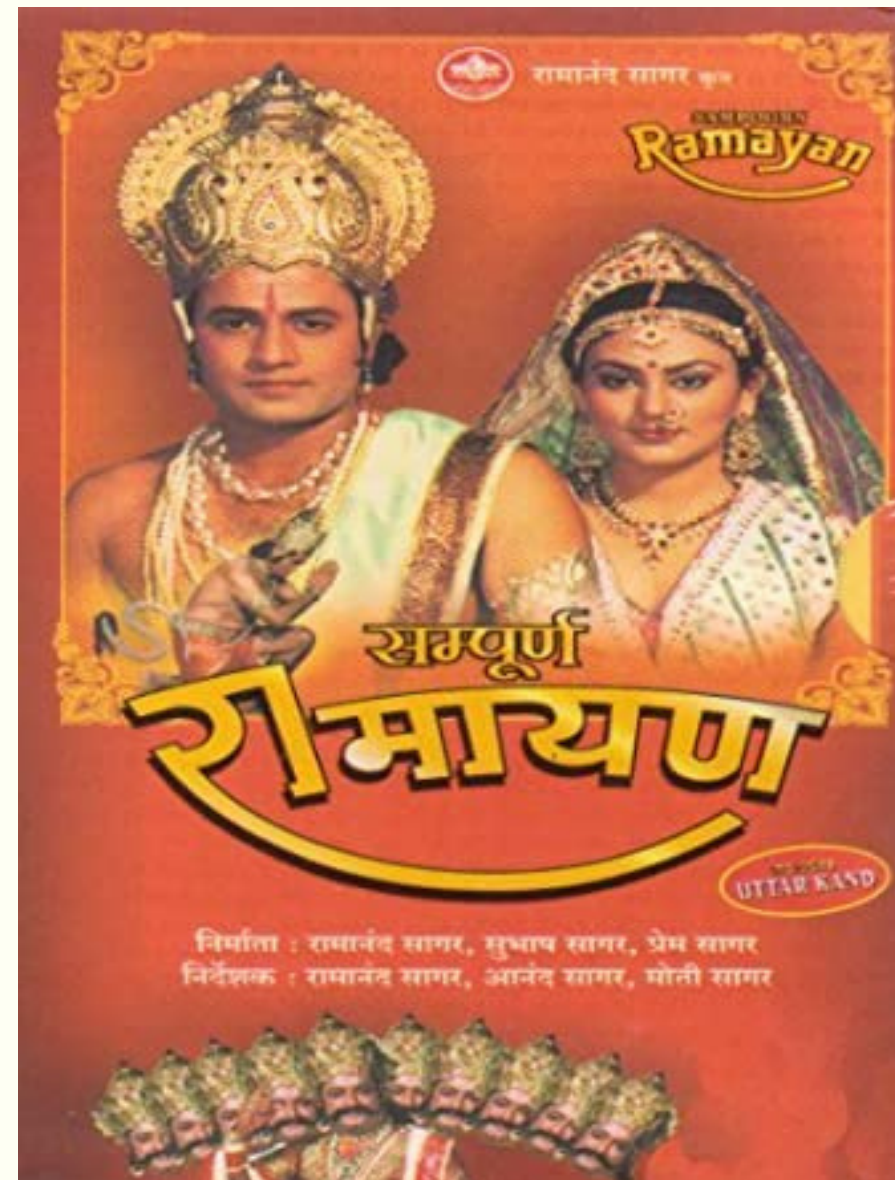


# MODERN INTERPRETATIONS OF THE RAMAYANA

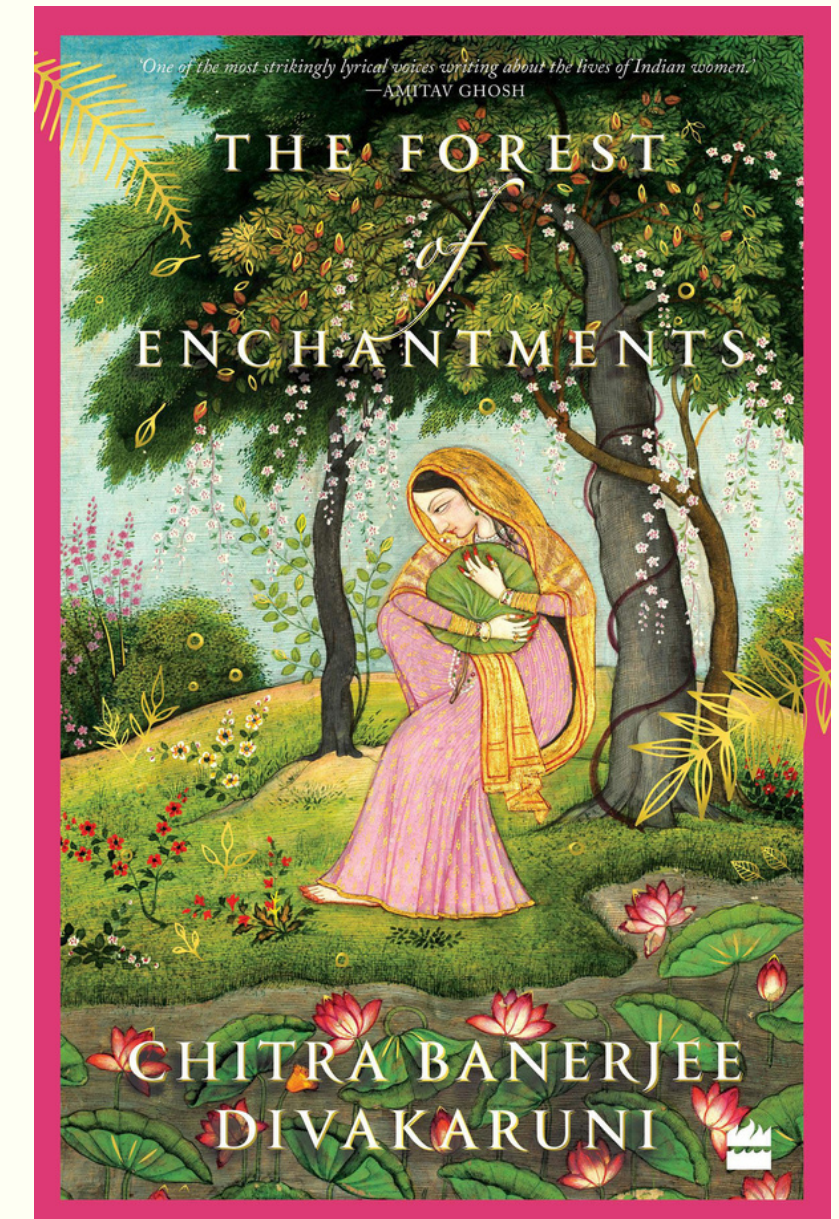
The Ramayana has been interpreted in many ways through the five millenia it has lived. Here are some modern representations.



Amar Chitra Katha's comic book



Ramanand Sagar's TV series The Ramayan



Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's The Forest of Enchantment



# DIWALI

A CELEBRATION OF RAM & SITA



This five day long holiday celebrates the return of Ram and Sita to Ayodhya, after Ram defeats Ravana.

It is said that upon their return, the citizens of Ayodhya lit the way home with thousands of lamps to celebrate and show their love for their true King and Queen.

People all over the world still celebrate by lighting lamps today.







# ***THINK FURTHER!***

What is togetherness?

What is the power of forgiveness? Have you seen it?

What is the purpose of retelling this story?

What did Jadhvani's choice of writing this as a solo performance do for the story? How did it affect you as an audience member?



# CREDITS

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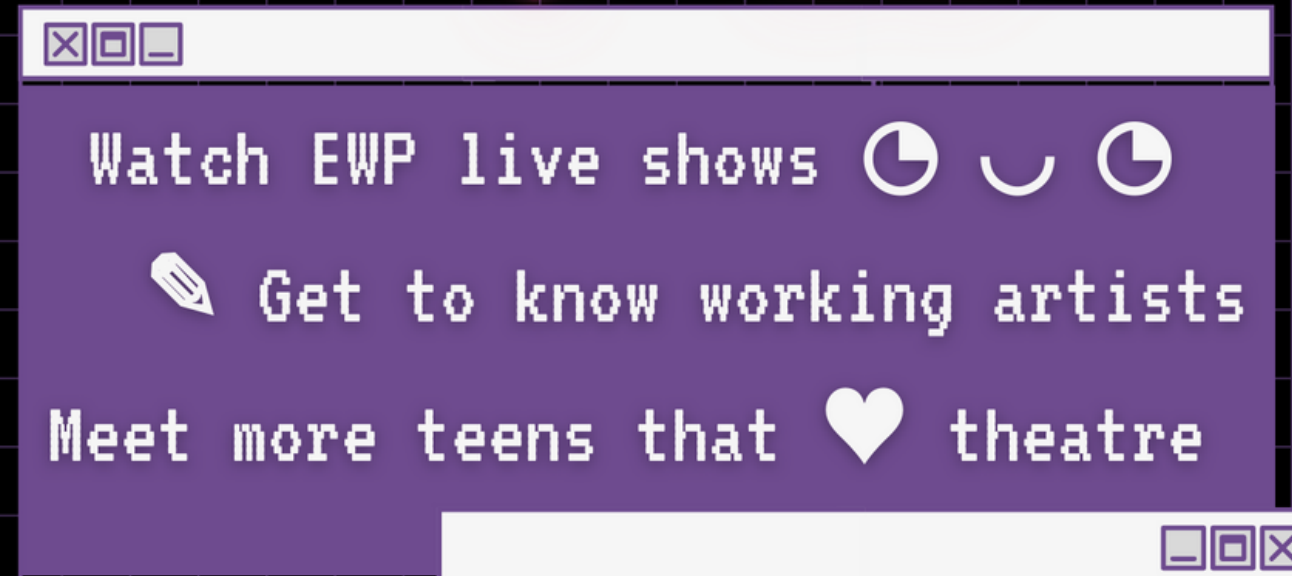
**For full bios of the artists and more please visit:**

<https://bit.ly/3CDnhOY>



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