

The Avanti PRE Curriculum

Resource Sheet 7.6.3b

“Ravana Kidnaps Sita”

Surpanakha was terror stricken. She immediately flew to Lanka to seek her brother Ravana's protection. Ravana was outraged to see her sister mutilated. Surpanakha described all that happened. Ravana was interested when he heard that Sita is the most beautiful woman in the world, Ravana decided to abduct Sita. Rama loved Sita very much and could not live without her.

Ravana made a plan and went to see Maricha. Maricha had the power of changing himself into any form he wanted along with the appropriate voice imitation. But Maricha was 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 happened in Vashishtha's hermitage. Maricha tried to persuade Ravana to stay away from Rama but Ravana was determined.

"Maricha!" shouted Ravana, "You have only two choices, help me to carry out my plan or prepare for death." Maricha preferred to die in Rama's hand than be killed by Ravana. So he agreed to help Ravana in the abduction of Sita.

Maricha took the form of a beautiful golden deer and began to graze near Rama's cottage in Panchavati. 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. By then Rama already started to chase the deer. He hurriedly instructed Lakshmana to look after Sita and ran after the deer. Very soon Rama realized that the deer is not a real one. He shot an arrow which hit the deer and Maricha was exposed.

Before dying, Maricha imitated Ram's voice and shouted, "Oh Lakshmana! Oh Sita,! Help! Help!"

Sita heard the voice and 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. Sita turned on Lakshmana and accused him of not going because he secretly wanted to marry her, and now would be happy if Rama was killed.

Lakshmana was cut to the chase. How could Sita accuse him of this? He saw little his only option was to agree. Before his departure, he drew a magic circle, with the tip of his arrow, around the cottage. He asked Sita not to cross the line under any circumstance.

"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.

From his hiding place Ravana was watching all that was happening. He was glad that his trick 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 (bhiksha). Sita came out with a bowl full of rice 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 pounced on Sita and seized her hands, declaring, "I am Ravana, the king of Lanka. Come with me and be my queen." Very soon Ravana's chariot left the ground and flew over the clouds on way to Lanka.

Rama felt distressed when he saw Lakshmana. "Why did you leave Sita alone? The golden deer was Maricha in disguise! "

Rama and Lakshmana begin the Search for Sita

Lakshmana tried to explain the situation when both the brothers suspected a foul play and ran towards the cottage. The cottage was empty, as they feared. They searched, and called out her name but all in vain. Finally they were exhausted. Lakshmana tried to console Rama as best as he could. Suddenly they heard a cry. They ran towards the source and found a wounded eagle lying at the floor. It was Jatayu, the king of eagles and a friend of Dasharatha.

Jatayu narrated with great pain, "I saw Ravana abducting Sita. I attacked him when Ravana cut my wing and made me helpless. Then he flew towards the south." After saying this, Jatayu died on the lap of Rama. Rama and Lakshmana buried Jatayu and then moved towards the south.

On their way, Rama and Lakshmana met a ferocious demon, called Kabandha. Kabandha attacked Rama and Lakshmana. When he was about to devour them, Rama struck Kabandha with a fatal arrow. Before his death, Kabandha disclosed his identity. He had a beautiful form which was changed by a curse to the form of a monster. Kabandha requested Rama and Lakshmana to burn him into ashes and that will bring him back to the old form. He also advised Rama to go to the monkey king Sugriva, who lived in the Rishyamukha mountain, to get help in regaining Sita.

On his way to meet Sugriva, Rama 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, offered them the best nuts and fruits that she collected for years. Then she took Rama's blessings and departed for the heaven.