

## SHRI SITA RAM FOUNDATION BLOG POSTS

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**Blog Heading: Ramayana—Teaching Values**

The Ramayana is not just a story, but also an educational medium to demonstrate the importance of values such as loving and respecting your family, keeping your promises, protecting the weak and so on. We can use the magnum opus of Hindu mythology, the Ramayana, as a medium to teach our children about values and ethics here.

The Ramayana is one of the greatest epics of Hindu Mythology. Written by the Hindu sage Valmiki, the Ramayana is not just a story, but also an educational medium used by the ancient sages to espouse the importance of doing your **dharma (duty)** in relationships. The Ramayana depicts characters that we should aspire to be like, such as the ideal father, ideal son, ideal brother, ideal leader, ideal wife, etc.

We can teach values and ethics to our children by way of storytelling. **The Ramayana and Mahabharata especially, preach a lot of values that we would want our children to imbibe.** Not for nothing, are they the most commonly taught epics since ancient times. Instead of simply commanding our children to respect their elders, we can use examples from their favourite epics to teach them the same.

Let's learn how we can use one of the **greatest gems of Hindu Mythology, namely the Ramayana to teach our children moral values and ethics** with the following suggestions.



Ram and Lakshman during exile.

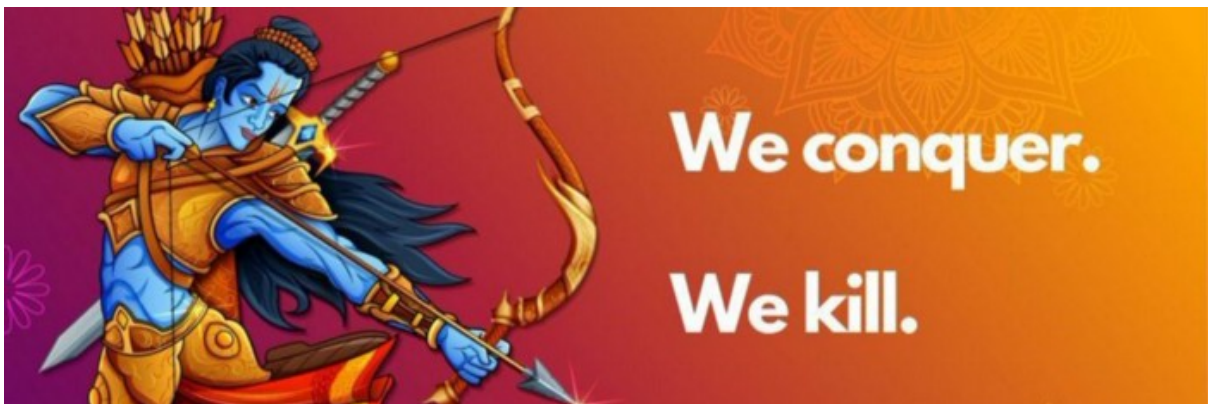
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### Sibling Relationships

If your child has any siblings, focus on the love the brothers had for each other. Why did Lakshman, who was used to all the worldly luxuries due to a prince, decide to give all of that up voluntarily to live with his elder brother for 14 years of hardship in a forest? Because he loved his brother and could not bear the thought of having to live 14 years without him.

You can also teach your child the importance of standing up for his siblings with the example of Surpanakha. **When Surpanakha was insulted by Lakshman, her brothers Khaara and Dooshan rushed to avenge her not caring of the fact that it could lead to their death.** When Rama and Lakshmana did indeed vanquish her brothers, Surpanakha sought her other brother Ravana's aid, setting the wheels for the grand battle between Rama and Ravan, good and evil, into motion.

In today's materialistic world where disputes between siblings are commonplace, stories like these need to be extolled and repeated time and again. **Parents need to encourage their children to not only spend time with their siblings, but also stand up for each other and be there for each other when required.** Such deep affection can be cultivated only when parents encourage such growth, and keep emphasizing the importance of love amongst siblings.



Epic describes justice.

### Differentiating between Right and Wrong

You can teach your child to choose right over wrong even when wrong may feel more right by giving him the example of Bharat, who was awarded the honour of ruling the mighty kingdom of Ayodhya. **Bharat could have just accepted the throne and the absolute power and luxury that came with it but his sense of right and wrong would not permit him to do what most others would greedily do.** Instead, upon learning that his mother Kaikeyi had unjustly managed to get Rama banished from Ayodhya, he immediately went into the forest to look for Rama and offer him his rightful position as ruler of Ayodhya. **So great was his devotion to his brother and so strong was his desire to be fair and just, that when Rama refused to return to Ayodhya before completing his 14 years in exile, Bharat placed Rama's footwear on the throne and ruled Ayodhya in the name of Rama — as Rama's emissary until he returned to regain his rightful position.**

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This teaches your child that even if something is extremely desirable, **he should only accept it if it is attained in a just manner** without hurting or affecting anyone else in an unfair and unjust manner.



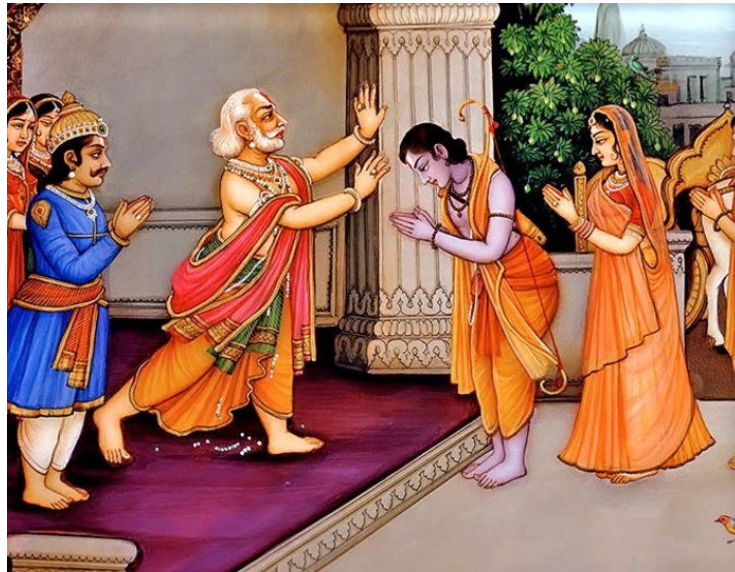
Ram with his father, Dashrath.

### The Value of a Promise

Dashrath had granted Kaikeyi two boons when she had saved his life on the battlefield. The day before Dashrath was to retire and crown his eldest son Rama as king, Kaikeyi demanded that Dashrath grant her the boons she desired as promised. Her first desire was that Rama should be exiled to the forest for fourteen years, and the second, that her son, Bharat, be crowned King in his stead. Dashrath was naturally heartbroken at the prospect of having to send his son into exile for fourteen years, but for this noble hearted clan, honouring one's word is the highest duty. Even when Dashrath began to falter at the prospect of actually following through on his promises due to his love for his first born and pleaded with Rama not to leave, **Rama reminded his father of the value of a promise given and left Ayodhya to keep his father's word.** When Bharat begged Rama to return to Ayodhya, Rama once again reminded Bharat that he could not and would not dishonour his father by breaking the promise he had made to Kaikeyi.

If Rama, a prince who had been brought up in the lap of luxury and who stood to gain a position of absolute power and luxury if he disregarded his father's promise, willingly chose to live a life of exile and hardship for 14 years in a forest, what does it teach our children? **It teaches them not to tarnish the value of their promise for small and unimportant things like eating their veggies or finishing their homework and so on.**

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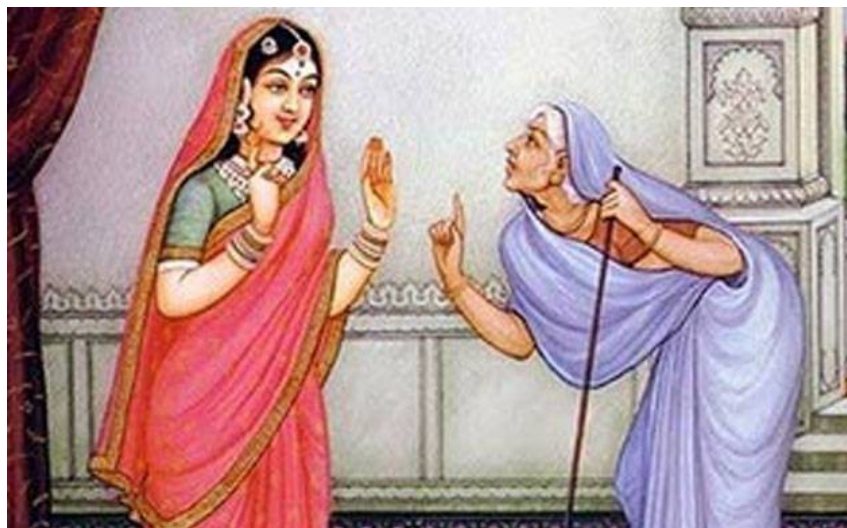


Ram with his family.

### Love and Respect for Parents

Rama's insistence on keeping the promise made by his father also shows the deep love and devotion that he had for his parents. He willingly chose to spend 14 years in exile in a forest to protect his father's much respected honour. Such was the regard he paid to his father. Dashrath too loved his child so deeply that when Rama left for the forest, **Dashrath could not bear the thought of being away from his son for 14 years and breathed his last.**

This demonstrates the love and respect Rama had for his parents. He listened to every command his parents made, he honoured their promises and ensured that no one could accuse them of being unfair. He did not go against his parents' wishes even though being passed over for the throne was unfair to the firstborn son of the ruler of a mighty kingdom. **He obeyed his parents and is immortalised for doing so. It also showcases the love parents have for their children.** Hopefully, the fact that Dashrath died pining for his son will make them aware of the attachment you have for them and will make them more respectful of and more devoted to you.



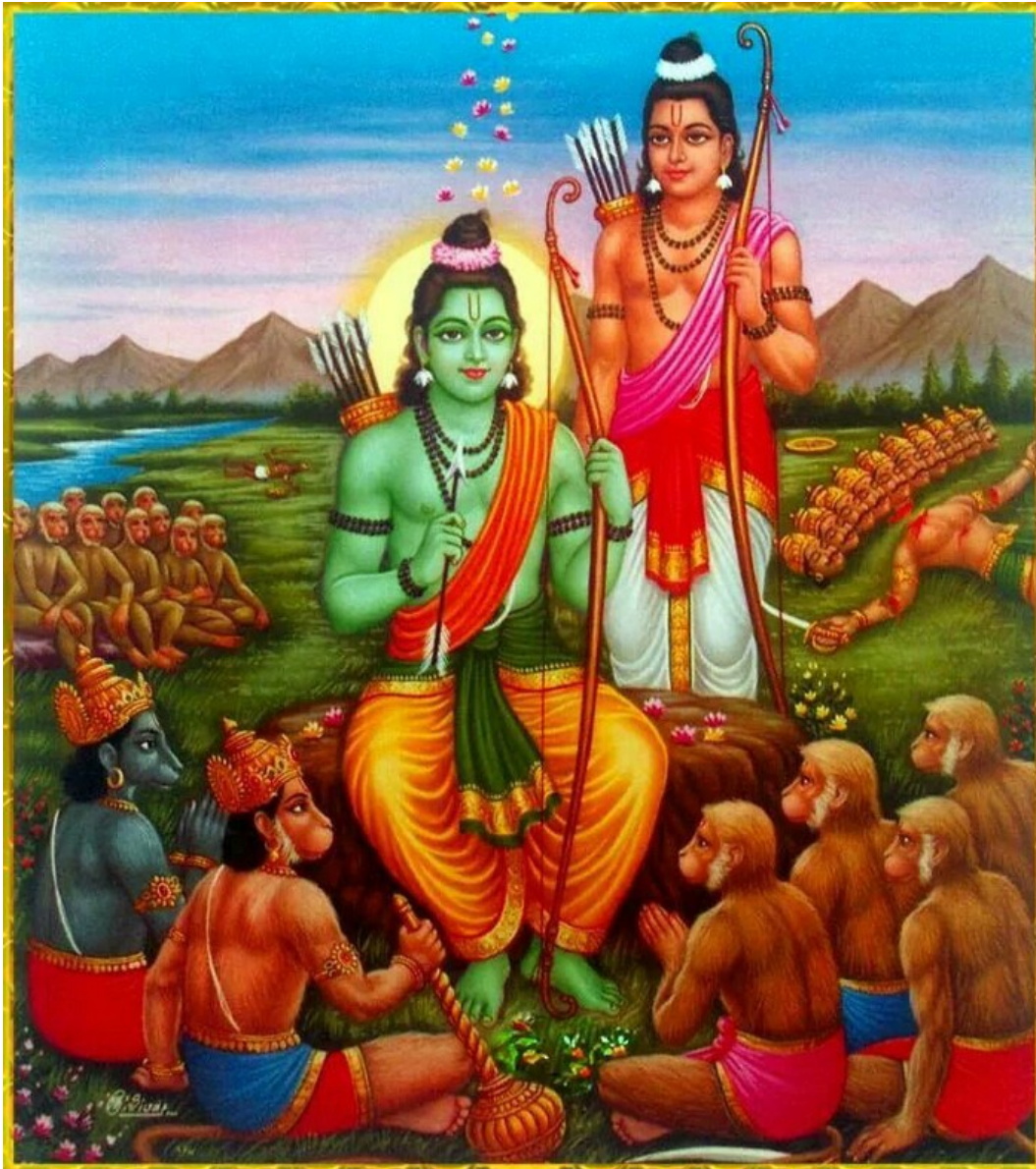
Manthra counselling Queen Kaikeyi

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### Beware of Bad Counsel

Kaikeyi was fundamentally a good natured woman, but was convinced to send Rama into exile and insist on her son Bharat being crowned king by the venomous counsel of her maid servant whom she considered loyal and wise. **Manthara's vicious scheming not only poisoned Kaikeyi's mind into demanding those two appalling boons, but also ruined her life.** She lost her beloved husband to heartbreak and her son Bharat, for whom she asked for those very boons, chastised her for dreadful behaviour.

This is a very important lesson for your children. **It teaches them to stay on guard against vicious counsel.** It teaches to be vigilant in order to avoid being scammed. It teaches them to be firm of mind and not let their minds get swayed easily by people. It teaches them to question their behaviour and think of the consequences of their actions before making any big or small decisions.



Ram with his friends and subordinates.

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### Protecting the Weak

Jatayu, an aged demigod in the form of a vulture, witnessed Ravana kidnapping Sita and taking her forcefully to Lanka. Disregarding his old age, Jatayu tried to save Sita by fighting Ravana valiantly but failed. Rama and Lakshman came across him where he was lying breathing his last. Jatayu informed Rama about Sita's whereabouts and Ravana's plans before breathing his last. Moved to tears by the gallantry and courage of the aged Jatayu, **Rama gave the bird its last rites as though the bird was his father.**

This teaches your child that **he must always stand up for the weak**. If his friends begin bullying a younger child, your child's moral code will not allow him to just stand by as a meek spectator. The fact that Jatayu was so old and still tried to take on the powerful Ravana single-handedly, teaches your child **to be courageous and be unafraid to take on any challenge that comes his way and accomplish it to the best of his ability.**

Therefore, re-tell the Ramayana to your children not just for its piety, but also because the magnum opus **teaches your children to have strong morals and live a life of righteousness**. The **Ramayana will enrich their lives and help you mould your children to be the leaders of tomorrow with strong cultural and traditional influences.**

**Take Shri Sita Ram Foundation's heartfelt thank you to all concerned for the decision to let you all know about "Ramayana" at this juncture. But let us be responsible, safe and yes, compassionate.**

**Jai Shree Ram!!**