

APPENDIX A: STORY SUMMARY OF THE RAMAYANA, BY SHARON FREDERICK

Part 1: The Early Life of Rama

The birth of demons throws the universe into chaos as they attack heaven, earth, and the underworld, led by their king Ravana. To help defeat Ravana, the gods create monkeys, most prominent among them the powerful Hanuman. Ravana proves difficult to subdue, and eventually the god Vishnu finally incarnates as Rama, while a goddess ravaged by Ravana is reborn as Sita. When Rama grows up, he wins the hand of Sita in a contest.

Part 2: Rama's Exile

Rama's aging father wishes to crown Rama as his successor, but he is manipulated by one of his junior queens into putting her own son on the throne. Rama is exiled and sent to the forest with Sita and his younger brother Lakshmana. Meanwhile, somewhat similar events are happening in the monkey kingdom. Due to a misunderstanding, the monkey king Valin expels his brother Sugriva.

Part 3: Abduction of Sita

While living in exile, Lakshmana is approached by a demon who tries to seduce him. Disgusted, he mutilates her. As revenge, she convinces her older brother Ravana to abduct Sita and make her his wife. One of the demons changes into an enchanted deer to first tempt Sita and then lure Rama and Lakshmana away from her.

Part 4: Destruction of Lanka and Sita's Rescue

Rama and Lakshmana agree to help make Sugriva king of the monkeys. In return, he sends his monkey warriors, led by Hanuman, to help conquer Ravana. After many adventures and battles, Rama and his forces kill Ravana, subdue the demons, and rescue Sita. However, before Rama is reunited with Sita, he orders her to undergo a trial by fire to prove that she remained faithful and pure during her long captivity. She survives the public ordeal and returns home. Things are not peaceful for long, though, because there is lingering public suspicion over Sita's behavior during her captivity. Rama banishes her to the forest where she gives birth to twin sons.

Finally, Rama meets his two sons and tries to convince Sita to return to him. But she is disgusted with his treatment of her and decides to end her suffering by descending into the earth. Rama rules for a long time before leaving the mortal world and resuming his divine form. In heaven he is reunited with the goddess who was Sita.