

Arts of Asia Lecture Series Fall 2015
Asia's Storied Traditions
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Telling the Tales of Rama

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Some matters an artist, performer, or poet must deal with when depicting or telling a tale:

- Setting
- Situation in and passage of time
- Characters and how to identify them
- Emotions and moods
- Audience's prior knowledge
- Audience's expectations

Modes of transmittal and their implications: recitation, reading, picture recitation, dance, drama, puppet performance, festival reenactment, film, TV, video games, sculptural reliefs, murals, paintings of various formats (scrolls, albums, stand-alone paintings)

Key characters of the Rama Epic

Rama	Heroic and righteous prince; a god, as an incarnation of Vishnu
Sita	Faithful and virtuous wife of Rama; a goddess, associated with Lakshmi
Hanuman	Brave and wise monkey ally of Rama; a god in his own right
Ravana	Demon king of Lanka and abductor of Sita

Indrajit	Ravana's most prominent son, a mighty and treacherous warrior
Jatayus	Vulture king who tries to prevent Ravana from abducting Sita and is dealt a mortal blow
Kumbhakarna	Giant demon, brother of Ravana
Lakshmana	Rama's devoted brother
Mandodari	Admirable chief wife of Ravana
Maricha	Demon whom Ravana orders to take the form of a golden deer to lure Rama away from Sita
Shurpanakha	Demoness who makes advances to Rama and Lakshmana and is rebuffed. She threatens Sita; Lakshmana cuts off her nose and ears.
Sugriva	Monkey king assisted in taking the throne by Rama in exchange for his help in recovering Sita

Valin	Monkey king killed by Rama to enable Sugriva to reclaim the throne
Vibhishana	Principled brother of Ravana who goes over to Rama's side
Vishvamisra	Sage who serves as teacher to the young Rama and Lakshmana
Bharata	One of Rama's brothers, who rules Ayodhya as Rama's regent

Key places

Ayodhya	Capital of Rama's kingdom of Kosala
Kishkindha	Kingdom of the monkeys, ruled by Sugriva
Lanka	Island kingdom of the demons, ruled by Ravana

For further reading

On visual narration:

Dehejia, Vidya. "On Modes of Visual Narration in Early Buddhist Art," *The Art Bulletin* 72:3 (Sept. 1990) 374-392

On the Rama Epic:

The introductions to each volume of the Princeton *Ramayana of Valmiki*, edited by Robert and Sally Sutherland Goldman are extremely valuable.

A satisfactory one-volume condensed translation of the Valmiki Ramayana is:

Valmiki, and Swami Venkatesananda. *The Concise Ramayana of Valmiki*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988.

Also, among many:

Losty, Jeremiah P. *The Ramayana: Love and Valour in India's Great Epic: the Mewar Ramayana Manuscripts*. London: British Library, 2008.

This and many other useful and beautiful books on the Rama Epic in the arts are on special reserve shelves in the museum's library.