

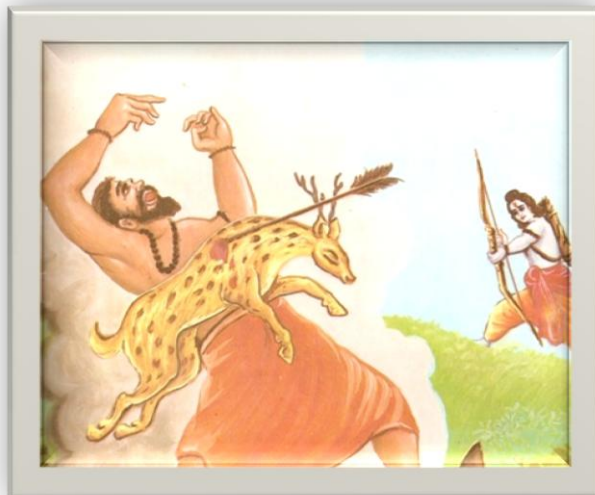
The Story of Maricha the Golden Deer in the Ramayana



Maricha is one of the characters in the Ramayana and plays a most notable role in Ravana's kidnapping of Sita. Once, demon Sunda (son of Jamba or Jharjha) attacked the hermitage of Agasthya Rishi. The angry sage burnt him by his meditative powers. On Sunda's death, his wife Yaksha Thataka and his sons Mareecha and Subahu attacked Agastya. The sage cursed them to become demons.

Vishwamitra's Yajna

As Sage Vishwamitra was performing a sacrifice, he was tormented by Tataka and her sons. Vishwamitra approached Dasaratha, the king of Ayodhya, and requested him to send his eldest son, Rama to protect his sacrifice. Though with reluctance, Dasaratha sent the 13-year old Rama and his younger brother Lakshmana with Vishwamitra. Near the forest of Tataka, the demoness attacked them, where Rama, aided by Lakshmana, slew her with his arrow. Vishwamitra reached his ashram and began his sacrifice. On the sixth day, Maricha and his brother Subahu, appeared and tried to destroy the sacrificial fire. Rama fired his arrow and Maricha was thrown hundred leagues away and the sacrifice was completed successfully. Under the guidance of Vishwamitra, Rama married Sita, the adopted daughter of Janaka and the princess of Mithila.



Maricha fight with Rama in Dandakaranya

Later, Dasaratha directed Rama for an exile in forest for 14 years, at the behest of Rama's step mother Kaikeyi. Rama proceeded to forest. Lakshmana and Sita followed him. The trio travelled through the Dandaka forest to the banks of the river Godavari, where they built a hermitage at Panchavati. Once, Maricha saw them and attacked them to wreak vengeance. Rama killed Maricha's allies, but his arrow narrowly missed Maricha, who fled. Surpanakha, the sister of Ravana, requested Rama to marry her. Rama refused and directed her to Lakshmana. Lakshmana joked at her. Surpanakha attacked Sita. Lakshmana cut out her ears and nose. Surpanakha reached Lanka and prompted Ravana to steal Sita.

Ravana went to meet his uncle, Maricha. He told Maricha to turn into a golden deer with silver spots and graze near Rama's ashram. On seeing the deer, Sita would surely tell Rama and



Lakshmana to catch it. When they would leave Sita alone, Ravana would abduct her. Rama, aggrieved by Sita's separation, would be easily killed by Ravana. Maricha dissuaded Ravana. Ravana reiterated his plan and finally Maricha agreed.

Maricha's disguise as a Golden Deer

Maricha and Ravana flew to Panchavati. Maricha assumed the form of a beautiful golden deer, which had silver spots. It appeared in the vicinity of Rama's ashram. Sita was collecting flowers. The golden deer lured Sita, who called Rama and Lakshmana to see it. Lakshmana sensed foul play and suggested that the deer was Maricha. Sita persuaded Rama to get her the deer. Rama asked Lakshmana to take care of Sita and went after the deer. Maricha ran, followed by Rama. After a long chase, Rama shot him down. Maricha took his real form and cried out mimicking Rama's voice "Oh Sita! Oh Lakshmana!" Sita asked Lakshmana to go and search for Rama. Lakshmana insisted that no one could harm Rama. Worried Sita ordered Lakshmana to go. Lakshmana reluctantly left. Immediately, Ravana appeared as a mendicant. Sita stepped forward to give him alms and he kidnapped her.

Maricha and Subahu were brothers, the sons of demoness Tataka. Maricha was Ravan's maternal uncle as Thataki was the mother of both Maricha and Kaikasi.

Maricha is an important character in Ramayana, who turned the story by helping Ravana to kidnap Sita. When Ravan approached for help, Maricha was reluctant to support Ravana. Maricha told Ravana that he is leading an ascetic life like a saint by controlling his food habits. He counselled Ravana and he even did not believe Ravana when he said that Rama attacked Khara, Dushanas with no reason.

Maricha discouraged Ravan when asked for help. Maricha praised the great qualities of Rama and asked Ravana to not to get into a fight with Rama. Ravana not pleased with his uncle Maricha and wanted his plan to be executed. Ravana told him that he would kill Maricha if he could not execute his plan. Ravana wanted Maricha to be a golden deer with attractive spots on the body and wander near the hermitage of Rama. This Deer should be unique and beautiful, so Sita would want it. Rama and Lakshman would go for the deer giving way for Ravana to kidnap Sita.

Maricha had to take a decision; he had seen Rama twice earlier and narrowly escaped death on both the occasions. He knew that it would be impossible to escape this time. In fact, Maricha moved to Dandakaranya, which is on the banks of Godavari after his first encounter with Rama on the banks of Ganges and Sarayu at Siddhasrama. Maricha was roaming around in Dandakaranya in the form of a beast with two of his followers, killing saints and eating human flesh. When Maricha saw Rama in exile, he thought he could Kill Rama as Rama was not having any weapons in his hand. But Rama shot three arrows in no time, which killed both of his followers and Marich could narrowly escape because of his earlier experience with Rama. Out of fear, Maricha moved to further south and living in a secluded place near the sea.

Maricha decided to go with Ravana and support his plan. Maricha took this decision as he might want to die in the hands of Rama instead of Ravana.