



GLOSSARY



ashok grove

Sita's place of captivity on Lanka, the isle of demons.

ashram

A hermitage, and also one of the four stages in life.

asvamedha

The horse sacrifice performed by Emperor Dasaratha in order to bear a son and heir.

atma

The individual soul.

avatar

Literally, 'to descend into': an incarnation

Ayodhya

An Indian city on the banks of the river Sarayu in the kingdom of Koshala, the seat of the Ishvaku dynasty ruled by emperor Dasaratha. The modern city of Ayodhya is in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh.



banyan tree

A sacred tree, often an object of veneration.

Bhagavad Gita

Meaning 'Song of God', the Bhagavad Gita is the essential text of Hindu teachings, spoken by Krishna.

brahmana

A priest or intellectual of the highest class.

Buddha

The ninth avatar of Vishnu.



Chaitra

The first of the twelve months of the Hindu year, equivalent of March to April.

Chitrakoot

A key stopping point in northern India on Rama's exile route on the way to Dandaka Forest.



Dandaka Forest

The place of Rama's exile with Sita and Lakshmana. A vast forest that once covered the whole of central India.

dharma

The essential purpose of life (see page 8).

Diwali

The festival celebrating the return of Rama and Sita to Ayodhya.



Ganges

The River Ganges crossed by Rama, Sita and Lakshmana during exile.

guru

A teacher and guide.



Ikshvaku

The noble dynasty from which Rama descended.

**karma**

The law of action and reaction governing the movements of all beings, rewarding and punishing their good or bad behaviour (see pages 7, 52).

Kiskindha

Capital of the Vanara kingdom and the territory of Vali, the Lord of the Monkeys, in the region of Pampa.

kshatriya

A member of the ruling class of warriors (see page 99).

**Lanka**

The isle of demons and home of Ravana, equivalent to the modern Sri Lanka.

**mantra**

A sacred prayer or chant often used as an aid to meditation.

**Pampa**

The site of a beautiful lake on Rama's exile route in the northern part of the modern state of Karnataka

Panchavati

A forest near the river Godavari close to modern Mumbai (Bombay), where Rama and Lakshmana first encounter the demons.

**rakshasha**

A demon.

rishi

A sacred sage. In Ramayana, rishis are often endowed with mystic powers.

Rishyamukha

The hilltop where Sugriva took refuge from his brother, Vali, in the region of Pampa.

**sadhu**

A holy man or woman.

samsara

The cycle of rebirth.

Siddha Ashram

The hermitage of the sage Vishvamitra.

sudra

A member of the working class (see page 99).

**tapas**

Penance, such as fasting, in order to achieve purification or mystic powers.

**vaishya**

A member of the class of farmers and merchants (see page 99).

vanara

A generic name for monkey.

varna

One of the four classes in traditional Hindu society.

Vedas

The original Sanskrit hymns that form the basis of all subsequent Hindu scriptures.

Vedic

The religious culture and tradition based on the Vedas.

Videha

The noble dynasty from which king Janaka descended.