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Code	IN2 Scriptural Story
Concept/value	<b>Integrity</b> , keeping promises, being principled, humble and of high character.
Title	<b>Bharat's Great Promise</b> Written by Vandna Syngal
Reference	Valmiki. <i>Ramayana</i> , Ayodhya Kanda 83. [Online]. Available from: <a href="http://www.valmikiRamayan.net/utf8/ayodhya/sarga83/ayodhya_83_fRamae.htm">www.valmikiRamayan.net/utf8/ayodhya/sarga83/ayodhya_83_fRamae.htm</a> [Accessed 31/07/14]. Palika Devi Dasi. <i>Ramayan Children's Book</i> . India: Sri Vaikuntha Enterprises.

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*It* was the night before the prince's coronation in the city of Ayodhya. The palace was bustling with servants who decorated the halls, gathered sacred preparations and prepared magnificent feasts.

Prince Rama was to become king in the morning. Noble, kind, strong and virtuous, he was the oldest of four princes. He was actually the incarnation of the Supreme Lord, come to inspire mankind by leading a life of principles and duty.

But by morning anguished cries filled the halls. Lord Rama's father, King Dasaratha had been ensnared in a devious plot hatched by his favourite wife, Queen Kaikay\* and her hunchback maid called Manthara. He had unwittingly agreed to crown Kaikay's son Bharat as king and exile Lord Rama to the forest for fourteen years.

King Dasaratha was grief-stricken. He was a warrior and duty-bound to keep his word though he loved Lord Rama more than anyone in the world. Lord Rama understood his father's torment and said reassuringly, 'Don't worry father, fourteen years will be over quickly and I will come back to you.'

Lord Rama's virtuous wife, Sita Devi, the incarnation of the goddess of fortune, begged to accompany him. Lakshman, Lord Rama's younger brother also pleaded to come to serve them. Soon enough the three of them were leaving the city gates for the forests beyond. Heart-broken, King Dasharatha died and Kaikay's son Bharat, who had been away the whole time, was called back.

Bharat was outraged at his mother when he heard what had happened.

'You caused my dear father to die and sent our beloved Lord Rama to the forest. You are a cruel and wretched person, I want nothing to do with you,' he said.

With tears of determination, Bharat set out to the forests to bring Lord Rama back. Everybody went with him: the ministers, queens, priests, every man, woman and child of the city. They took all the sacred preparations so they could crown Lord Rama instantly.

The brothers met in the forests of Chitrakuta. Bharat fell at Lord Rama's feet and wept:



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'I am nothing but your faithful servant and love you more than my own life. I cannot be king and tolerate that you suffer as a hermit. You deserve to be ruler and nothing less – the whole kingdom desires it.'

An intense discussion lasted for days. Everyone joined in; the royal priests and ministers and royal family. But no one could change Lord Rama's mind.

'I cannot break our father's promise,' said Lord Rama. 'I have to fulfil it. We are bound by oath to righteousness and truth. I will not return to Ayodhya until after 14 years.'

Bharat begged and pleaded with all his might but in the end surrendered to Lord Rama's wishes. He asked for the wooden sandals worn by the Lord and declared these would sit on the royal throne as representative of the true king.

Before returning to the destitute capital city, Bharat made his own great promise of love: 'I will be caretaker of the kingdom on behalf of Lord Rama. I am his servant, nothing else. Out of love and repentance, I will live in a hut for fourteen years, wear an ascetic's garb, eat only leaves and roots and count every moment of every day until my dearest brother returns. If you are even one moment later than fourteen years, I will enter fire once and for all.'

Bharat upheld his magnificent fast with great resolve and spent every breath of the following fourteen years in remembrance of Lord Rama until they were reunited.

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## Notes

\*Queen Kaikay also loved Lord Rama dearly but the demigods had warped her mind. They used her as a ploy to get Lord Rama out of the kingdom and into the forests where he would kill the ferocious demons who were multiplying. Thus, the demigods poisoned Kaikay's heart with selfishness, which made her willing to follow her maid's malevolent suggestions.



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**TASK:** Read “Bharat’s Great Promise” and Research the difference between Bharat’s approach to ruling a kingdom versus Adolf Hitler’s approach to ruling.

- Are their approaches similar or different?
- What values and qualities does Bharat show? How does it differ from Hitler’s views on what it means to be a leader?
- Which one do you personally think is a better approach in leading a kingdom or country. Give reasons with examples.