

SCENE 1 - EX / TRIMBAK / BRAHMGIRI HILL / DAY - 1878

A small boy sits on a flight of stone stairs leading down into a deep pond. The child is slipping some chips of stone bearing the name of RAMA into the water. Surprisingly, the chips start to float.

(Enacting his *kathavachak* father and maybe even school teachers)

DHUNDIRAJ

Come, each of you write lord RAMA's name on the stones and throw them into
KUSHAVARTA

FRIEND1:

Hey Dhundi, why would our stones float on water?

DHUNDIRAJ

Why not? If you write with faith, even your stones will float; come on, throw your
stones.

FRIEND 2

Hey, my stone is floating!!

FRIEND 3

Mine too!

FRIEND1

And mine, but how come our stones are floating? Where did you get them from?

DHUNDIRAJ

They're floating because these are not stones but coals (*Dagdi Kolsa*)

FRIEND1

Oh, that's why they were lighter.

FRIEND2:

I thought it was really some divine power!! Ha ha!

DHUNDIRAJ

OK now, all of you line up and tell me what role you are playing.

FRIEND 2

Angad

FRIEND 3

Jamvant

FRIEND 4
Sugriv

FRIEND 5
Laxman

FRIEND 1
Halumal

DHUNDIRAJ

What is this? You cannot even pronounce a simple word, how will you deliver whole sentences? Come on, somebody else can become Hanuman.

FRIEND
This is not fair Dhundi, I'll never play with you ever again.
(Crying and angry he runs off.)

FRIENDS:
Dhundi, why do you play RAMA all the time?
Today, I'll be RAMA or else even I won't play.

DHUNDIRAJ
Well, for that you'll have to learn the whole of the Ramayana by heart, if you agree, I have no issue.

FRIENDS:
Sorry, no conditions please!

FRIEND2:
Hey Rakhma, leave that lamb and come here. You're supposed to play Sita.

RAKHMA:
Mind you, it's not a simple lamb; it's the 'Golden Deer'. Dhundi, would you take my lamb in our play?

All the children erupt into peals of laughter.

CHILDREN
Ha Ha Ha

FRIEND3:
Lamb? In the Ramayana? What a joke!

FRIEND 4:
Can your lamb speak?

RAKHMA:
Don't make a fool of my lamb, why should my lamb speak? We will make the lamb run like the Golden Deer, and anybody can shout "Laxmana, save me" What's the big deal?

DHUNDIRAJ
Hello, is anybody going to listen to me? Enough of your suggestions.

As they are engrossed in their play, a mist appears, blindfolding every one in its whiteness.

Fade in a mix of tribal marriage ceremonial music.

In that white veil of the mist, the children, mesmerized, watch a marriage procession, all kinds of freaks and creatures following Shivji who is sitting on a bull.

When the mist clears, the sky is blue and crystal clear, but the mountain has turned white, like the Himalayas.

And far, far away Shivji's marriage procession disappears over a mist-covered hill.

The spell is broken when, from a distance, one friend comes running shouting, breathless.

FRIEND
Dhundi...Dhundi.....

Nobody is going to listen to you anymore, the British have come to arrest your father!

Everybody gets tense and surprised on hearing the news.

FRIEND2:
My God, the British? They're very cruel!

FRIEND3:
Their soldiers hit very hard!

FRIEND4:
They have big leather whips!

DHUNDIRAJ
Shut up, you're all fooling me. Why would the British arrest my father? It's all lies.

Dhundiraj runs home.