

Hanuman and I

by Rupa Gupta

Pre-reading Task

1. Have you ever dreamt of performing on stage?
2. If you are asked all of a sudden to perform in the Annual Day Programme, will you—
 - (i) perform successfully and confidently?
 - (ii) refuse to perform without practice?
 - (iii) perform nervously?

Rupa, a small girl, has a strong desire to act on stage. She is very confident about herself. Luckily, she gets a chance to act on stage on the Annual Day. Does she perform well? Read the play and find out.

Characters

Teacher

Rupa

Anu (Rupa's friend)

Suman : Rama

Radhika : Sita

Alka : Hanuman

Ravana

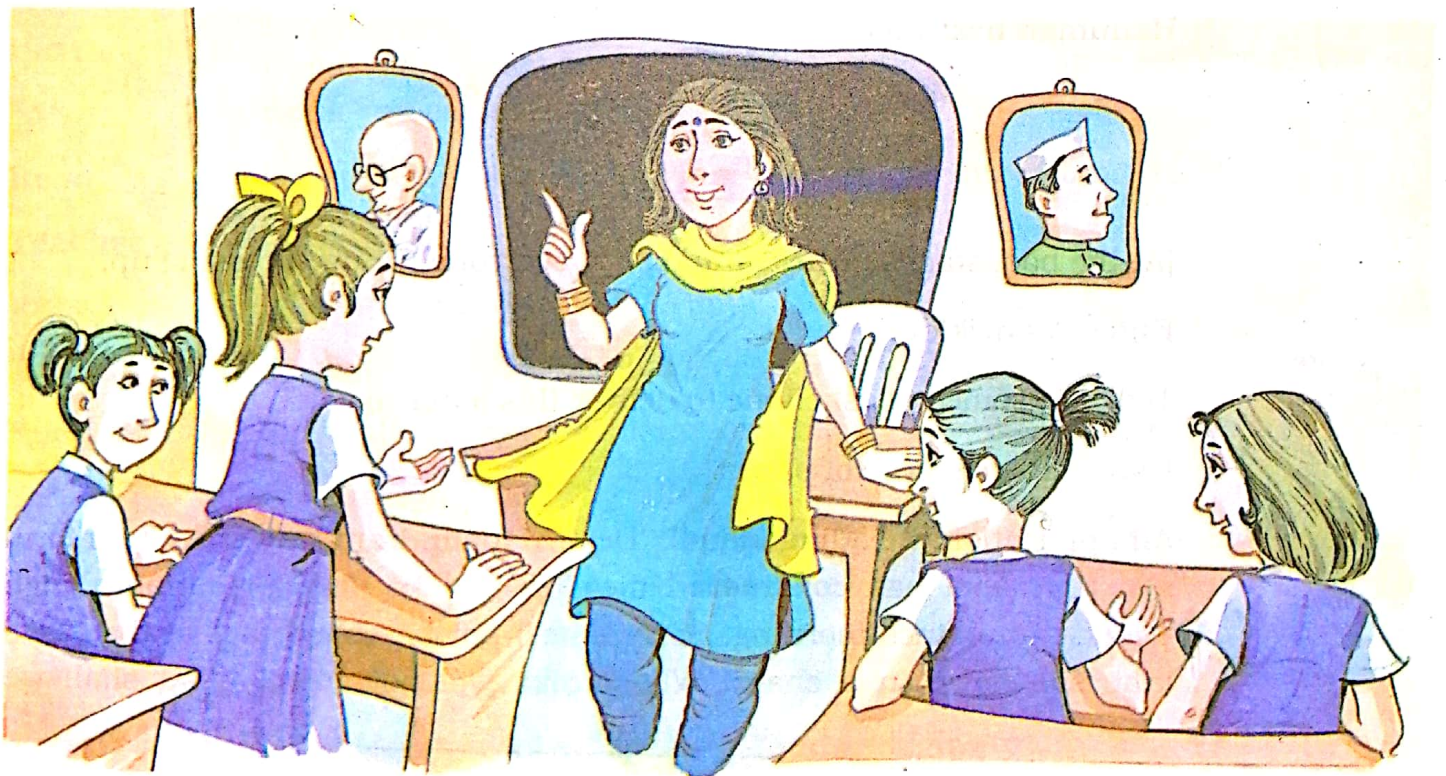
Chowkidar

Scene I

[A scene in a classroom.]

- Anu** : Do you know, Rupa, preparations have begun for our School Annual Day?
- Rupa** : Yes! Junior section is going to enact 'The Story of Rama'.
- Anu** : Radhika would certainly get Sita's role. She's so pretty!
- Rupa** : I wish I could get Rama's role.
- Anu** : You are shorter than Radhika and have a **shrill** voice. I don't think the teacher will give you Rama's role.
- Rupa** : I really want to act in the play. I am sure that once on stage, I would give a brilliant performance.
- Anu** : Well, why don't you talk to the teacher? She might give you Lakshmana's role.
- Rupa** : Oh really! How exciting it would be acting on stage with a bow and arrow slung on my shoulders! How surprised my parents would be! I can almost hear my father saying, 'We have such a talented daughter!'

[The teacher enters the classroom.]



shrill: sharp and unpleasant

Pupils : Good morning, madam.

Teacher : Good morning, students. I have something exciting for you today. I am going to **assign** all of you certain roles in the play 'The Story of Rama'. Suman, you will play the role of Rama. Radhika, you will be Sita. Alka, you will be Hanuman. Neha, you will enact Lakshmana's part.

Rupa : (Disappointed) I knew I wouldn't get any role.
to **Anu**

Teacher : And Rupa (Smiling), I have a role for you too. You will be one of the monkeys in the 'Vanar Sena'.

Rupa : Can't I at least get the role of Hanuman, teacher?

Teacher : No child, your voice is too squeaky.

Rupa : Won't get even a single dialogue then?

Teacher : All you have to do with seven other girls of the 'Vanar Sena' is to jump up and down and shout 'Jai Rama, Jai Hanuman'.

Rupa : Just that much?

Teacher : Yes, my child. If you perform your role nicely, I'll give you the role of Hanuman next time.

Scene II

[At the backstage on the Annual Day, everyone is busy dressing up.

Enters Chowkidar.]

Chowkidar : Teacher, someone asked me to deliver this letter to you.

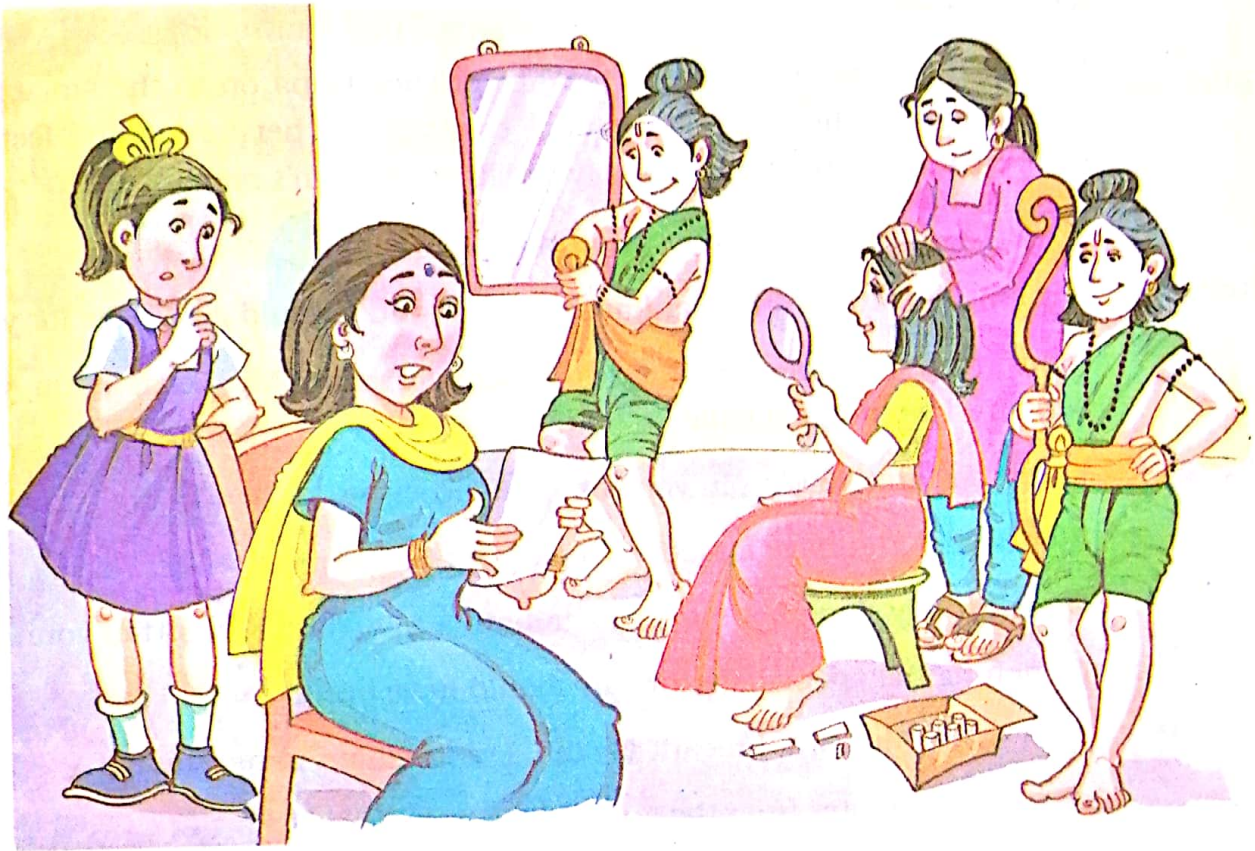
[Hands over a piece of paper.]

Teacher : An application! (Reading aloud), 'Dear Madam, I am very sorry to inform you that Alka has **contracted** measles and has been running a high temperature since morning. Sorry, she'll not be able to act in the play.' (She sits down in a chair). What? Alka will not come! What shall we

assign: to allot

contracted: caught

do? How will we perform 'The Story of Rama' without Hanuman? (looks around in dismay and her eyes fall on Rupa).



Rupa, you, look here, you wanted to be Hanuman, didn't you? Do you think you can manage?

Rupa : (Excited) Me! (speaking to herself) Is my dream coming true?

Teacher : Can you manage it?

Rupa : Of course, I can!

Teacher : Do you remember the dialogues?

Rupa : No, but I can always think up something.

Teacher : Oh no! You shall certainly not do any such thing. I shall be **prompting** from the **wings**. All you have to do is to repeat what I say and for God's sake, don't mumble. Speak as loudly as you can.

Rupa : Don't worry, teacher. I'll speak loud enough.



prompting: causing someone to do or say something

wings: the hidden sides of the stage

Scene III

[On the stage]

(The curtain goes up and the teacher pushes Rupa on to the stage. She almost falls on her face. Drums are echoing and her hands and feet are cold. She opens her mouth to say the lines but can't remember.)

- Rupa** : My LordMy Lord RamaGod Rama
- Teacher** : (Prompting) My Lord Rama, I am your servant. I would gladly die for you.
- Rupa** : (Hearing the prompting, heaves a sigh of relief) My Lord, I am your servant. I would gladly die for you.
- Regular** : You have forgotten to pin your tail.
- Rupa** : (Repeating) You have forgotten to pin your tail.
- Rama** : Don't be silly. I am not supposed to have a tail. You've forgotten yours.
- Rupa** : (Touching the spot where the tail should have been.)

I am sorry, My Lord, I meant my tail. I've forgotten to pin my tail.

(A roar of laughter from the audience is heard.)



Teacher : Now jump.

Rupa : (Repeating) Now jump.

Rama : (Shouting) You jump, stupid!

(Realising her mistake Rupa starts jumping like a mad person, audience laughs and the curtain falls.)

[The teacher scolds Rupa for messing up everything and tells her that she would cut short her role. Rupa apologises.]

Scene IV

[The curtain rises. Sita and Hanuman are talking in Ashok Vatika.]

Sita : Who are you?

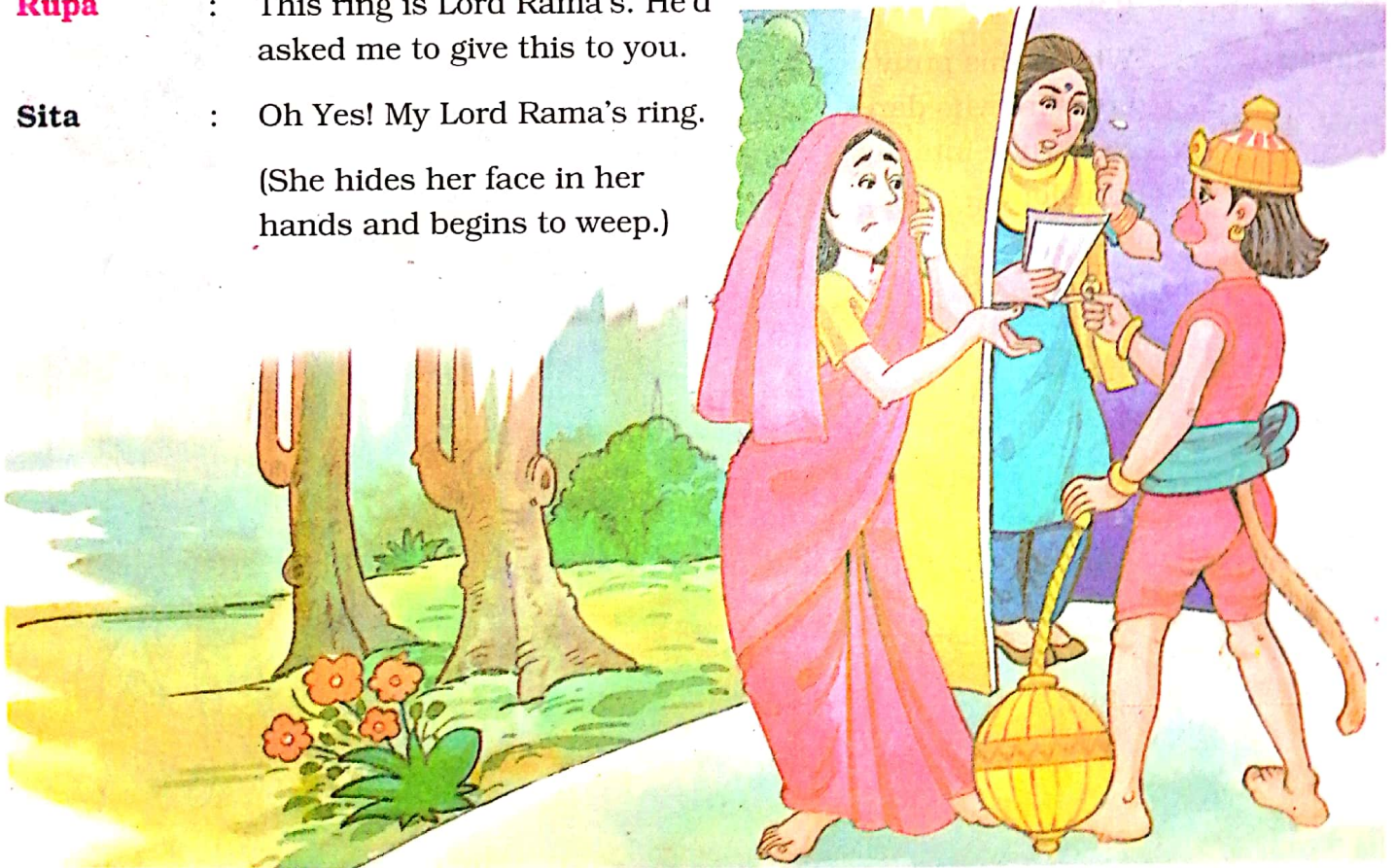
Rupa : I am Lord Rama's servant, mother. I have come to help you.

Sita : How can I trust you?

Rupa : This ring is Lord Rama's. He'd asked me to give this to you.

Sita : Oh Yes! My Lord Rama's ring.

(She hides her face in her hands and begins to weep.)



Teacher : (Prompting) Speak your dialogue now! Speak, 'My beauty is my bane.'

(Rupa, thinking that it was her turn to speak repeats the dialogue.)

Rupa : (Speaking gently) My beauty is my bane. It is because of my beauty that wicked Ravana wants to marry me.

Sita : What? (Startled) Not you, you idiot. He wants to marry me. I am Sita and I am beautiful.

(Seeing the startled expression Rupa realises her mistake.)

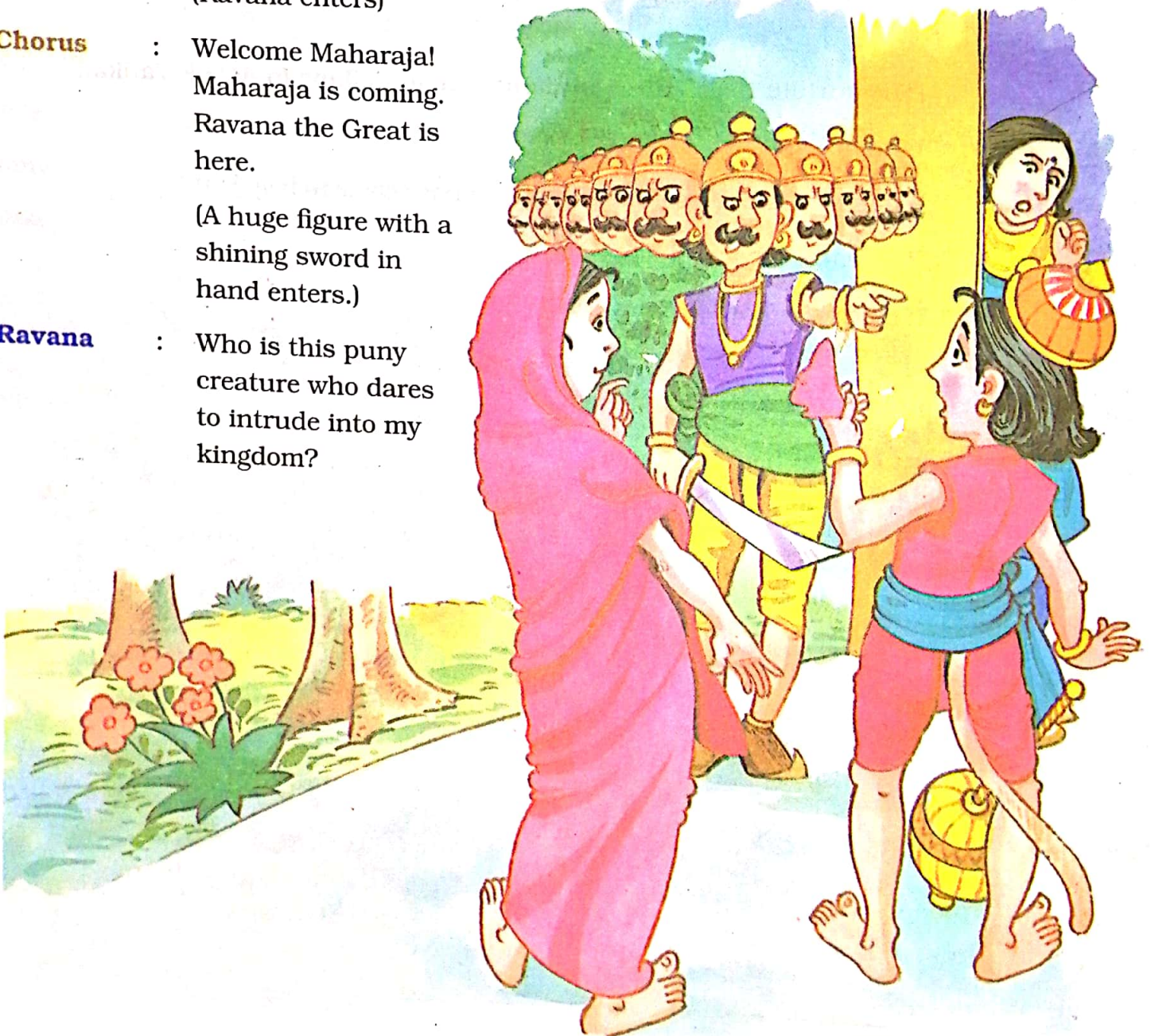
Rupa : Oh I mean, your beauty is your bane.

(Ravana enters)

Chorus : Welcome Maharaja!
Maharaja is coming.
Ravana the Great is here.

(A huge figure with a shining sword in hand enters.)

Ravana : Who is this puny creature who dares to intrude into my kingdom?



Teacher : (Prompting) Speak: I am the son of Pavandev, the Wind God, the worshipper of Rama, the immortal Hanuman.

(Rupa stands dumb and looks above at Ravana, who is towering over her.)

Ravana : (In a thundering voice) Who is this small creature? (Raises his shining sword to attack Hanuman.)

Rupa : (Screams in terror) No, no, I am not Hanuman. Don't kill me. (Pulling her mask off) I am not Hanuman. See I am Rupa and not Alka. The audience rolls with laughter and an infuriated teacher comes on stage and drags Rupa off the stage.

I Understanding the Play

A. Answer the following questions briefly:

1. Which role was Rupa assigned in the play 'The Story of Rama'? Was it in accordance with her expectations?
2. Why was Rupa suddenly asked to play the role of Hanuman?
3. Rupa was sure that once on stage, she would give a brilliant performance. Do you think she really managed to give a good performance?

B. Read the extracts from the play given below and answer the questions that follow:

(a) 'I wish I could get Rama's role.'

'...I don't think the teacher will give you Rama's role.'

1. Identify the two speakers.
2. Why won't the speaker (in line 1) get Rama's role?
3. Which role does the teacher assign to the speaker?

(b) 'You wanted to be Hanuman, didn't you? Do you think you can manage?'

1. Who is the speaker? Whom is the speaker talking to?
2. Why does she ask the listener to be Hanuman?
3. Is the listener able to 'manage' the role properly?

C. You are one of the spectators who enjoyed Rupa's foolishness on the stage. Report some of her funny dialogues given below to one of your friends.

1. Rupa (to Rama) : My Lord, I would die for you.
2. Rupa (to Rama) : Now jump.
3. Rama (to Rupa) : You jump, stupid!
4. Rupa (to Rama) : You have forgotten to pin your tail.
5. Rupa (to Ravana) : No, no, I am not Hanuman! Don't kill me.

II HOTS

How did audience react when they saw Rupa's performance? Do you feel that Rupa's performance achieved the purpose of the play?

III Life Skills

- A. Imagine yourself to be the teacher directing the play 'The Story of Rama'. How will you tackle the situation after knowing that Alka won't be able to perform in the play?
- B. One is often placed in an embarrassing situation like the one in which Rupa found herself. How should one handle such situations?

IV Values

Each and every character in the play is important. It is always the team effort which makes a presentation a great performance. Write dialogues among the characters of the play 'The Story of Rama' suggesting to each other how they could make it a great performance.

V Writing Skills

Imagine yourself to be Rupa. Write a diary entry expressing your feelings on your stage performance as Hanuman on the Annual Day function.

About the Author

Rupa Gupta, a Senior Editor with a leading educational publishing house based in Delhi, is a published author of around 30 children's books including novels, short stories, picture books and educational books. Several of them have won literary awards. She has been associated with *Amar Chitra Katha* as well as *Tinkle*.

