

Diwali in Madhubani

Madhubani painting is a style of Indian folk painting practiced in the Mithila region of Bihar state, India. It is done with fingers, twigs, brushes, nib-pens and matchsticks, using natural dyes and patterns. A two-dimensional form of painting, it is characterized by eye-catching geometrical patterns and usually portrays festive occasions such as birth, marriage, Holi, Durga Puja, etcetera.

With an intention to appreciate the Indian culture, I have chosen to narrate the epic, Ramayana, behind the biggest Hindu festival, Diwali, on a storyboard of Madhubani paintings. For this project, I have used ink colors on a Pune handmade sheet.

Diwali, also known as the festival of lights, is celebrated by lighting up diyas (earthen lamps) inside and outside homes, which spiritually signifies the victory of light over darkness, knowledge over ignorance, good over evil and hope over despair. According to the Ramayana, Diwali commemorates the return of Lord Ram, the prince of Ayodhya and an epitome of all virtues, from his fourteen-year exile with his wife, Sita and younger brother, Lakshman, after killing Ravan, the ten-headed demon king.



Lord Ram, along with his beautiful wife, Sita and loyal brother, Lakshman, was on a fourteen-year exile. They resided in a small hut in the forest. Once, when Lord Ram and Lakshman were away to hunt food for the evening, Ravan approached their hut. He abducted Sita and flew her away on a chariot, across a large water body, to his kingdom, Lanka.



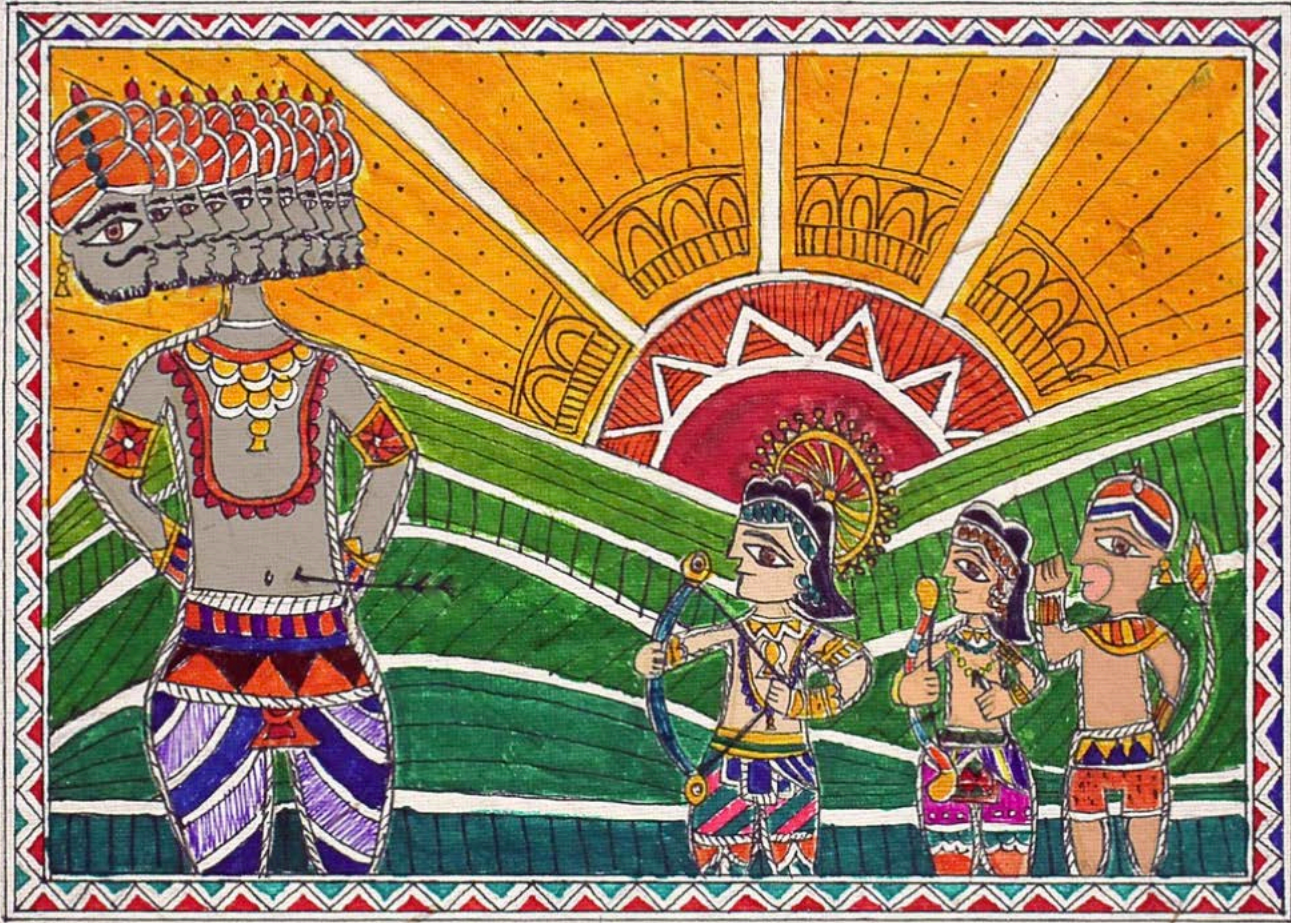
On their return, the worried brothers looked for Sita everywhere, but she was nowhere to be found. When they had almost given up hope, Lord Ram spotted a trail of jewelry that Sita had left behind. As they followed the trail, they encountered the Monkey King, Hunuman, who agreed to help them.



After a very long search, Hanuman found Sita imprisoned on an island, Lanka. Once there, he approached Sita and gave her Lord Ram's message of promise that they would soon rescue her. After their elaborate meet, Hanuman went to Ravan, to peacefully settle the issue, only to be threatened that his tail would be set on fire.



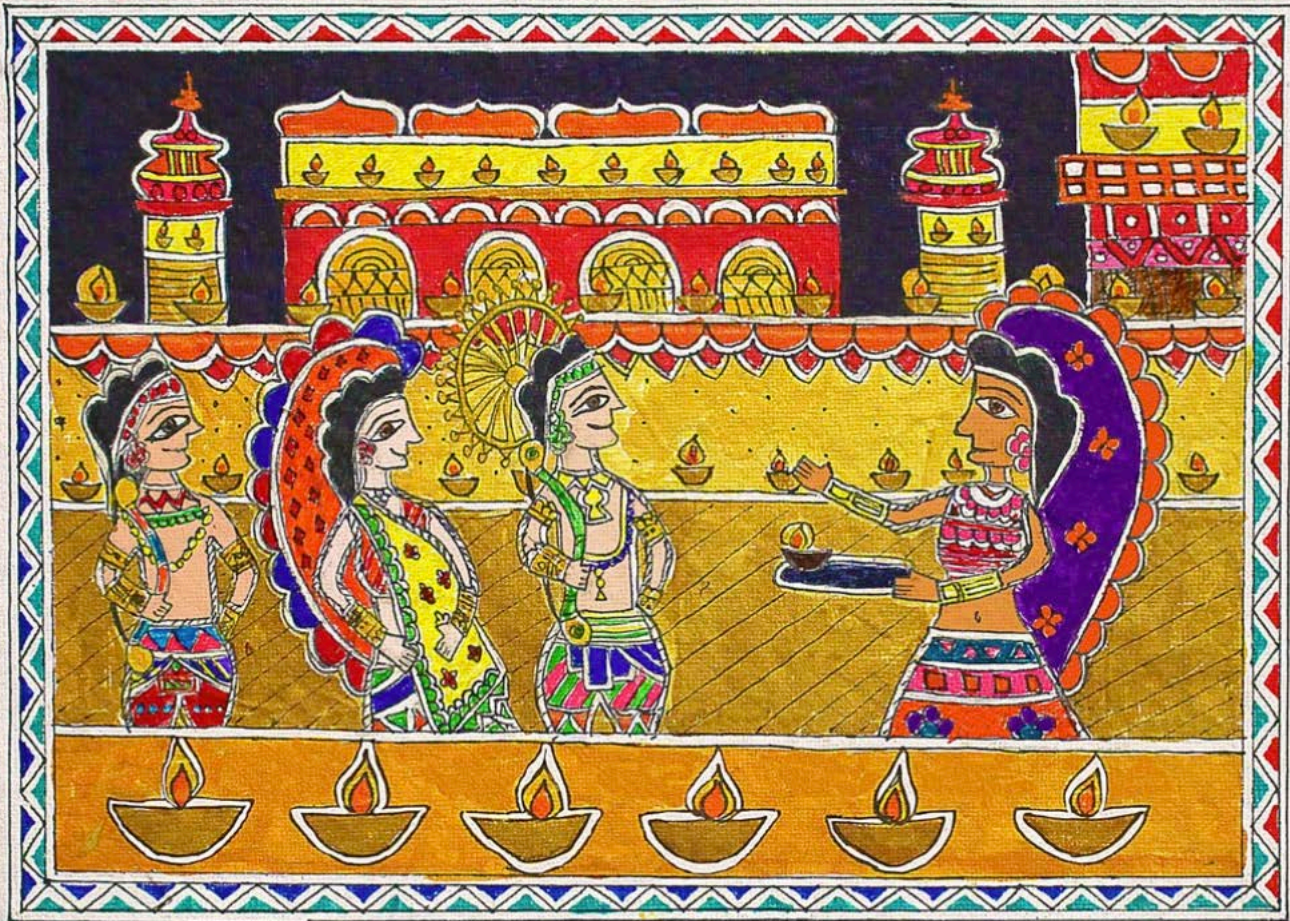
The audacious Hanuman smirked at Ravan's innocuous threat, which angered Ravan so much that he actually set Hanuman's tail on fire. The dauntless Hanuman set Ravan's whole kingdom on fire with his burning tail, thus teaching him a lesson.



Meanwhile, Lord Ram and Lakshman brought their army of monkeys, bears and men to Lanka and declared war. A mighty battle was fought between Lord Ram and Ravan, who had grown indomitably enormous. The winning arrow, shot by Lord Ram was targeted at Ravan's navel, which hit bull's eye and killed him.



Lord Ram finally reunited with his love, Sita, for whom the thunderous battle was fought. Lord Ram, Sita and Lakshman, having completed their fourteen years in exile, then returned to their kingdom, Ayodhya.



The return of Lord Ram, Sita and Lakshman, eagerly awaited by all townsmen of Ayodhya, was celebrated pompously. Streets were decorated with flowers and diyas, as the long wait for the kingdom's valorous ruler was finally over.

And this is why, every year in India, streets, homes and offices are lit up with lamps, like the city of Ayodhya was, in celebration of Lord Ram's homecoming and his marvelous victory, reminding everybody that good always wins over evil.