

LAKHON KHOL – MASKED DANCE DRAMA

It is a theatrical masked dance drama, Cambodian traditional dance that is based on the Cambodian poetry book of the 16th century, the “Khmer Reamker”.



SCENE 1: THE ARCHERY COMPETITION

SYNOPSIS

- ❖ King Jonuk of Mithila Kingdom orders an archery competition.
- ❖ The competition is open to all contestants in the universe:
 - Human,
 - Angel,
 - Ogre.
- ❖ Whoever can raise a magical bow he created and shoot an arrow into the sky will deserve his beloved daughter’s hand (Princess Seda) in marriage.

- ❖ Among the contestants, there is a Prince named Preah Ream from Ayudhya Kingdom.

SCENE 2: THE BANISHMENT OF PREAH REAM

SYNOPSIS

- ❖ At Ayudhya, King Tusaroth is aging; it is time to crown his eldest son Ream.
- ❖ Queen Kaikesey (2nd wife) contests his decision, based on:
 - He promised her that her own son Bhirut will be crowned,
 - Breaking a promise is a serious offense by rules of past kings,
 - Bhirut must be crowned first. Ream must be banished for 14 years.
- ❖ King Tusaroth is caught between the traditional rule of succession (a-must-be eldest son) and a promise that must be kept.
- ❖ Ream agrees to be banished; his wife, Princess Seda, and his brother Leak will join him into a jungle living life as hermits.

SCENE 3: SURPANAKA LURES REAM AND LEAK

SYNOPSIS

- ❖ One morning at the Himalayas, Ream and Leak were meditating in the jungle.
- ❖ A female giant named Surpanaka flew over the area and saw them.
- ❖ She transformed herself into a beautiful goddess and went to lure them.
- ❖ She lured Ream first, but he refused, citing that he is married. He asked her to try his brother Leak who is single.
- ❖ Leak also refused, citing a woman has no room in his life.
- ❖ She went back to Ream who advised her to keep luring Leak as he may change his mind.
- ❖ Leak was annoyed and upset with Surpanaka; He beat her, grabbed and cut her hair; she then flew away to her brother's Kingdom, Langka.

SCENE 4: SURPANAKA INCITES KRONG REAP

SYNOPSIS

- ❖ Krong Reap, a powerful ogre King of Lanka Kingdom; He enjoys his quiet time at the palace listening to the music.
- ❖ Surpanaka, who got beaten badly by Leak, goes to incite her brother Reap.
- ❖ At first, Reap blames his sister, Surpanaka, for the inappropriate conduct of luring men.
- ❖ After Surpanaka describes the rare beauty of Princess Seda, he changes his mind.
- ❖ Reap dreams of seeing Seda; then he develops a crush on her.

- ❖ He asks for a servant, Moharik, to transform himself into a golden deer running around Seda's hermitage to get her attention for the purpose of kidnaping her.

SCENE 5: KRONG REAP KIDNAPS PRINCESS SEDA

SYNOPSIS

- ❖ Moharik transforms himself into a golden deer roaming around Ream and Seda's hermitage.
- ❖ Princess Seda asks her husband to go and catch the deer.
- ❖ When Krong Reap sees that Princess Seda is alone, he disguises himself as a Brahman priest and asks Seda to come out of the hermitage.
- ❖ Princess Seda believes him, comes out and then Krong Reap grabs her and flies away.
- ❖ On the way to Langka, Krong Reap encounters a big bird name Jatayu who attempts to rescue her, but unsuccessfully

SCENE 6: PREAH REAM ASSEMBLES MONKEY SOLDIERS

SYNOPSIS

- ❖ After learning from big bird Jatayu about Krong Reap kidnapping his wife, Princess Seda, Ream feels devastated. He asks his brother Leak to fetch Sugrib, the monkey king.
- ❖ When Sugrib arrives, Ream asks him to assemble his monkey troop.
- ❖ He also asks for a monkey volunteer to go bring news to Princess Seda and to observe the ogre's military strategy; the mission must be completed in one day.
- ❖ Sugrib suggests only his nephew Hanuman is cable to carry out the mission in one day.
- ❖ Hanuman agrees, but is afraid that Princess Seda may not believe him; Ream gives him his ring as proof.

SCENE 7: HANUMAN BRINGS RING TO SEDA

SYNOPSIS

- ❖ Krong Reap places Princess Seda in Asoka Palace.
- ❖ He attempts to consume love with her several times, but every time, he feels his body is burning severely that he has to give up.
- ❖ When Hanuman gets to Langka, he learns where Princess Seda is staying; at Asoka Palace, he does a magic blow to make all Seda's entourages fall asleep.
- ❖ When Seda wakes up and sees a beautiful white monkey in front of her, she thinks that is one of the Krong Reap's tricks.
- ❖ Hanuman presents the ring from Peah Ream; She recognizes it. She then gives him her ring and asks him to rush back and bring the news to Preah Ream.

SCENE 8: KRONG REAP BANISHES HIS ASTROLOGER PIPHAEK

SYNOPSIS

- ❖ Krong Reap worries about the advance of Ream’s monkey army.
- ❖ He calls for his astrologer Piphaek, who is also his brother, to prophesize the future of Langka and whether he will have victory over Ream.
- ❖ Piphaek prophesizes that Langka will be doomed because of Reap kidnapped Seda.
- ❖ Krong Reap gets uncontrollably angry with Piphaek; He humiliates and banishes him.
- ❖ Piphaek leaves and joins Ream; His daughter Ponyakay asks to Reap if she could disguise as Seda’s dead body floating in the river near Ream’s camp; she reasons that when Ream realizes that his wife is already dead, he has no reason to fight a war anymore; after seeing Ponyakay in form of Princess Seda is so real, Reap agrees.

SCENE 9: HANUMAN REBUKES THE DEATH OF PRINCESS SEDA

SYNOPSIS

- ❖ After the banishment from Langka, Piphaek becomes one of Preah Ream’s astrologers.
- ❖ Ponyakay transforms herself into the body of Princess Seda floating on the river.
- ❖ Preah Ream mourns his wife’s death; he then questions Hanuman’s recent visit to her.
- ❖ Hanuman rebukes the death of Princess Seda and asks Preah Ream to do some experiments.
- ❖ Hanuman puts Seda’s body onto a pile of woods and burn; Ponyakay can no longer endure the flame; She turns herself back to real Ponyakay.
- ❖ Piphaek begs Preah Ream for her forgiveness citing that she is his daughter forcing to do the trick.
- ❖ Preah Ream sets Ponyakay free and sends her back to Langka with a message that his army is advancing to capture Langka.

SCENE 10: THE FINAL BATTLE

SYNOPSIS

- ❖ The ogre army fights against the monkey army.
- ❖ Krong Reap fights against Preah Leak.
- ❖ Krong Reap fights against Preah Ream.
- ❖ Preah Ream is unable to defeat Krong Reap who is immortal by the blessing of Brahman god Siva.
- ❖ Phiphaek knows his brother's weakness; he tells Preah Ream to shoot an arrow into Reap’s naval, and he did.
- ❖ Krong Reap and his army get defeated; Reap escapes into a realm beyond the universe.
- ❖ Preah Ream and Princess Seda are happily united.

