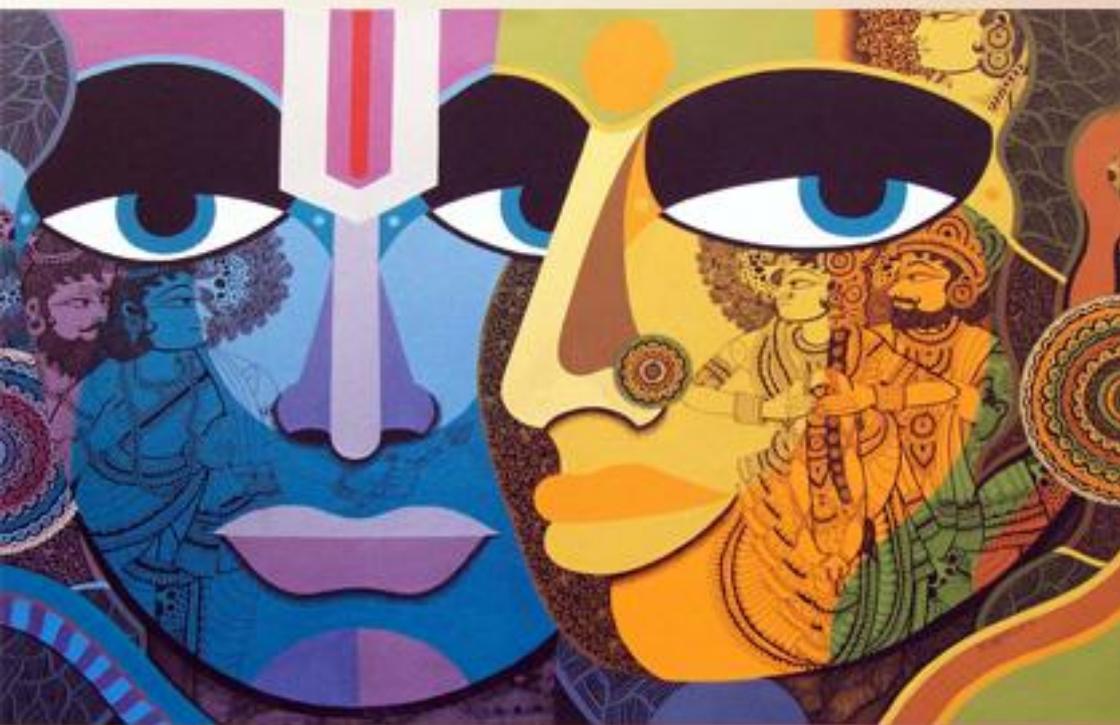


SITA:



THE EMBODIMENT OF PURITY

**Compiled by
Tumuluru Krishna Murty
Edited by
Desaraju Sri Sai Lakshmi**

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Sita:

The Embodiment of Purity

Compiled by Tumuluru Krishna Murty
Edited by Desaraju Sri Sai Lakshmi

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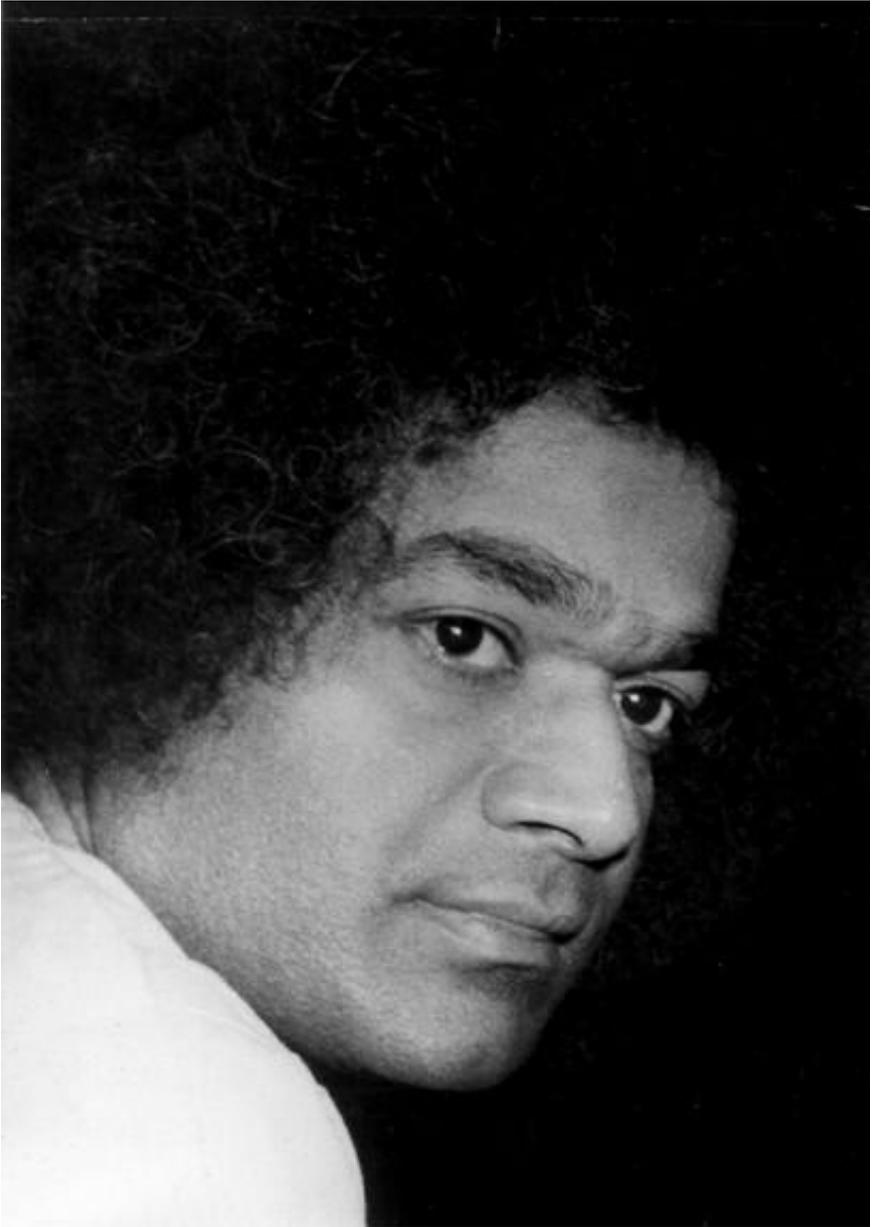
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Sita too kept up the *Dharma* of women. She declined to return to Rama on the shoulders of Hanuman for she said, she would not of her own will contact another male; nor would she deny Rama the chance of proving his prowess by destroying the wicked person who stealthily carried away His Consort. That is the *dharma* of a *pathivratha* (chaste woman).

-Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba

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Man is essentially Divine. However, he believes himself to be an individual, limited and temporary, because he is entangled in the characteristics of the Five Elements, namely, sound, touch, form, taste and smell. This error brings about joy and grief, good and bad, birth and death. To escape from this association with the elements, to rid oneself of the pulls of their characteristics, is the sign of Liberation, called in Sanskrit as *Kaivalya*, *Moksha* or *Mukthi*. Names may change, but the achievement is the same.

- *Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba*

Editorial

Dear readers,

Ramayana: A Divine Drama - Actors in the Divine Play as scripted by Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba is a five volume compendium which has been conceived by my father, Sri Tumuluru Krishna Murty, and has been compiled on the discourses given by *Bhagawan Sri Sathya Baba* at different times and places.

Keeping in view the voluminous content of the Ramayana, we thought that we should make smaller books on each player in the divine drama. This would create a greater interest and also would be easy to read.

I hope our readers will appreciate our efforts. The original books - *Ramayana: A Divine Drama - Actors in the Divine Play as scripted by Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba* are also available on Scribd if readers want more details.

The original introduction (Samarpanam) and editorial has been reproduced in this book for your information.

We would like to thank Sri Bolgum Nagesh Goud for giving us his painting to use as the cover picture.

Pranams at the Lotus Feet of Bhagawan

Desaraju Sri Sai Lakshmi
Editor

Vinavayya O' Rama Naamora

(Listen to my lamentation O'Rama)

Vinnapamaalimpumayya O' Rama

(I pray to you O'Rama to give an ear to my request)

Vivarinchalenu Naa Vyadhanu

(I am unable to explain my suffering and distress)

Vijnana Vyraagya Vivekamulanosagi

(I Pray to you to grant me wisdom, discrimination and detachment)

Karunimpumayya O'Rama

(I pray to you O'Rama for your Grace)

Dhanadhanyamulu Aasinchaledu

(I do not desire for riches and wealth)

Neecharana Daasyame Vedukontimira Rama

(I am only craving for the service of Your Feet O'Rama)

Karunimpumayya O'Rama ||

(Please shower Your Grace I seek You O' Rama)

Kankshinchaledu Bhouthikasukhamulanu

(I have not desired for external physical happiness)

Asinchaledu Bhogabhagamulan

(I have not expected enjoyment of riches and fortune)

Koritiney Neepadayugalamulan

I only desire Your Divine Feet)

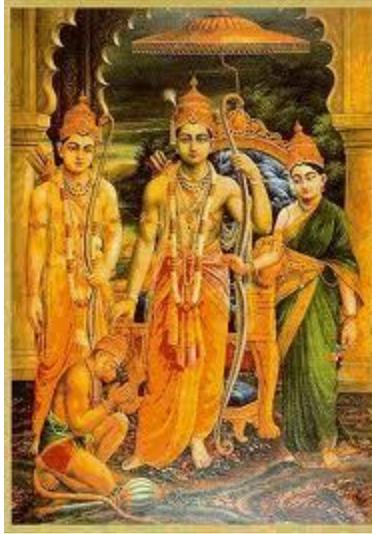
Vedukontiney Nee Apaarakaranan ||

(I pray for your infinite Compassion)

- ***Inspired Composition by Tumuluru***

- ***Translation by Sai Prabhakar Balanthrapu***

Samarpanam



Our Family Deity

Our family has been worshipping Sri Ramachandra for generations. When I started my career and was posted to Delhi in August 1955 my mother gave me this above photo of Kodandaramaswami which was perhaps in my parent's family prayer room for several years. This photo is still in our Puja Mandir and we worship Sri Rama.

We had the Darshan of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba for the first time on 11th January 1974 and ever since then, we have been protected by Swami as He said "*Inta Venta Janta Kanta Undi mimmu Kapadutaa*". We worship Sri Rama and Sai Ram as ONE. As a family we had attended the Summer Course in 1977 and I have had since then, a desire to compile the characters in Ramayana as narrated by Bhagawan. I did compile to some extent and even discussed some of the characters in Study circles.

Sita: the Embodiment of Purity

I had requested Bhagawan in one the interviews He kindly granted, to help me in compiling the same. But Bhagawan then said first let these two Ramayanas (tapping on my daughters' heads) be over. Later on, I have been praying to Bhagawan continually and have been trying since then to complete the Ramayana I had ventured on. I then realised that the ego 'I will compile' and that it should be completed by 'a certain date' were the obstacles. Bhagawan is the compiler as "He is the writer, director, actor and the curtain puller and All, while we are mere puppets and instruments in His hands. He is the Kaala Kaalaya, Kalaa teetatha, Kaala Rudraya etc. He is Time. He has His own time frame. One cannot have a choice but pray for help.

INSPIRATION

As Kavi Samrat and Jnana Peeth awardee, Viswanatha Satyanarayana in his 'Ramayana Kalpa Vriksha' questions 'why another Ramayana again' when there are so many versions. He answers, "In this world all the time we are doing the same thing, again and again (like eating food again and again ...doing *samsaram* (mundane state of leading domestic family life again and again). One's tastes and life are one's own but *Bhakthi* (devotion) and poetic composition are my own and let me also meditate and worship the same Rama"

Pothana says

*"Palekadedi Bhagavatamata
Palikinchedivadu Ramabhadrudata".*

Potana, the great devotee and poet who wrote the Telugu Bhagavatham, dedicated his work to Lord Rama at the outset, by saying that Rama was the real writer and he (Pothana) was a mere instrument in the hands of Rama. (*ICS p.159-160*)

The first and the last Governor General of Independent India, Chakravarthi Rajagopalachari (Rajaji) in his preface to Ramayana says, "Once again, I repeat my confession that in the evening of my busy life during a great and eventful period of Indian history, the writing of these two books wherein I have retold the Mahabharata and Ramayana, is, in my opinion, the best service I have

rendered to my people. At any rate, they embody the best joy I have experienced; for in these two books I helped our great sages to speak to our dear men and women again in their own language, elevating their minds through the sorrows borne by Kunti, Kausalya, Draupadi and Sita. The real need of the hour is a re-communion between us and the sages of our land, so that the future may be built on rock and not on sand.”

In this connection, I cannot say anything better than resorting to a quote by Sri N. Kasturi, Editor of Sanathana Sarathi, on ‘Ramakatha Rasavahini’ written by Bhagawan,

“*Sai* (Isa, God), whose Thought is the Universe, whose Will is Its History, is the Author, Director, Actor, Witness and Appraiser of the Drama that is ever unfolding in Time and Space. He has now deigned to tell us Himself the story of this one epic Act in that Drama, wherein He took on the Rama role. As Rama, Sai instructed, inspired and invigorated, corrected, consoled and comforted His contemporaries in the Tretha Age. As Sai Rama, He is now engaged in the same task.

Sai Rama has recapitulated herein, in His own simple, sweet and sustaining style, His own Divine Career, as Rama! What great good fortune, this, to have in our hands, to inscribe on our minds, to imprint on our hearts, this Divine narrative! May we be processed by the study of this book into efficient and enthusiastic tools for consummating His Mission of moulding mankind into One Family, of making each one of us realise Sai Rama as the Reality, the only Reality that IS.” (*RKRK - The Book*)

“Ramayana and Mahabharata are sacred books, which will directly tell us about many things, especially the way in which we have to conduct ourselves. Ramayana and Mahabharata will help us in our daily life, like our two eyes. We are not able to know the true value of these jewels and we think that Mahabharata is merely a battle between the sons of two brothers, and that Ramayana is a story wherein a demon stole away the wife of Rama and Rama again won her back. It is not like that and these two epics are like the heart and the head of India, are as vital to India as the heart and the head are to a human body.” (SSB 1972, p. 146)

Sita: the Embodiment of Purity

“The *Ramayana* is not merely a great poetic work, but a great treatise on Human relationships between parents and children, between brothers, husband and wife and the king and his subjects. It is only when we are able to understand the significance of *Ramayana* in the larger context that the country will prosper with love and affection between citizens. In a few years’ time, nay, very shortly, the world will realise the greatness of *Ramayana* and try to emulate the ideals set in *Ramayana*. Today, we find wide variety of nations, religions and castes in the world. NO. No. The situation will certainly change. Within a short span of time, the world will realise the truth.” (SSS Vol.38, p. 84)

Our Good Fortune:

We are indeed blessed to be Bhagawan’s contemporaries and to have had the opportunity of reading and hearing what Bhagawan had written and said in the Ramakatha Rasa Vahini and through the discourses given at various times which have been recorded in 42 Volumes of Sathya Sai Speaks, The Summer Showers, Sathyam Shivam Sundaram and the other Vahinis, He had penned.

As motivated by Him only, I had culled them at the appropriate place giving within brackets the sources and cross references and also incorporating in the Story of Rama, the Character of Rama. When one reads the narration, one is bound to feel both Sri Rama and Sai Rama are one and only ONE.

Bhagawan has said, “After the annihilation of Ravana, when Rama was requested to take over the reins of Lanka, He declared: *Janani Janmabhoomischa Swargadapi Gareeyasi* (mother and motherland are greater than heaven itself). One who does not have love and regard for one’s own mother land, one’s own mother tongue and one’s own religion is a living corpse!” (*Sanathana Sarathi, June ‘98 p.154-155*)

Therefore, we have a duty to ourselves and to our children and grandchildren to maintain the culture of Bharat by studying and imbibing, implementing ‘the eternal moral, ethical and Human Values enunciated in Ramayana, Mahabharata and Srimad Maha Bhagavatham and the Bhagavad Gita,” making ourselves worthy of motherland and Bharatiya Culture.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

With my prayerful Pranams at the Lotus Feet of my parents and Bhagawan Sri Rama and Sai Rama, My Aaradhya Daivam, I invoke His choicest blessings on all those who have contributed to bring the narration of HIS STORY and offer it at His LOTUS FEET. I am ever and eternally grateful to Bhagawan Baba and with a further prayer to HIM to make me, His instrument by giving me more opportunities to serve in His Mission till my last breath. I must mention that I have received the encouragement and inspiration from my wife Srimati Prabha; help, assistance and suggestions from all the members of my family; Sri B. R. Prasad and Sri Balantrapu Sai Prabhakar. My special thanks to Kharidehal Venkata Bhima Rao who has contributed his artistic pictures; Desaraju Sri Sai Lakshmi who has taken lots of pain in editing the compiled material under various characters of the Ramayana. I shall be failing in my duty if I do not thank Sri D.S.N. Murthy for encouraging, cooperating and helping Sri Sai Lakshmi and me in seeing through this Divine Work.

I would also like to acknowledge the various websites which have hosted the pictures for free download. I have acknowledged the source at the verso of each Photo.

I shall be failing in my duty if I do not thank all those who have directly and indirectly helped me especially the encouragement and suggestions given by Sri K.S. Rajan and Sri V.N. Prahlad of Publications Division of Sri Sathya Sai Sadhana Trust in this Bruhat karyam.

Samastha Loka Sukhino bhavanthu

Tumuluru Krishna Murty
Prasanthi Nilayam
Guru Poornima (3rd July, 2012)

***“That heart which you have given me, O Lord!
I give it back to you, O mighty one!
What else can I offer you, my Master!
I offer my prayerful salutations with tears of
Gratitude, O Lord!
Accept them all with my heart.”
(Telugu Poem)***

(SSB 2002 p.143)

Editorial Comments

Dear readers,

The entire story of Ramayana has been divided into five volumes: the first, second and third volumes relate to the members of the Ikshvaku Dynasty – the dynasty in which the protagonist of the divine play took birth as the seventh avatar of Vishnu; the fourth volume is dedicated to the Vanaras and the other associates of Rama in his war for the revival of *Dharma*; and to our noble and revered Sages and seers, who enacted their parts in the drama of Ramayana; the fifth volume deals with the antagonist, Ravana and his family members and the other characters who appear in the story.

The entire book which has been conceived by my father, Sri Tumuluru Krishna Murty, has been compiled on the discourses given by *Bhagawan Sri Sathya Baba*.

As the editor of these volumes, I have tried to insert a few passages at the beginning of each character of Ramayana outlining their stories. This is for our foreign readers who might not be aware of the lesser known characters of Ramayana. The passages have been taken mostly from *Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia*. The copyright information is given at the end of the fifth volume.

The acts of each character as played by them in the divine drama have been told in the beginning of each chapter which is followed by the inner perceptions and interpretations given by Bhagawan for their roles in the play. Since we have had to show how each character's role unfolds in the divine play, there will be a repetition of story and also a few passages. However, we have tried not to repeat the passages as far as possible by taking the stories (from different sources) told at different times by Bhagawan in His various Discourses.

I have tried to be true to the books from which these pages have been compiled from. However, I have tried to maintain uniformity in spelling and have as such changed the spellings of the names of the various characters. In some books we have different spellings of proper nouns, for example Raama, Rama, Ramaa;

Sita: the Embodiment of Purity

Surpanakha and Soorpanakha; Sita, Seeta and Sita (phonetical). As a foot note, I have listed all the various spelling used in the different books.

After the end of the passage or a few paragraphs, I have cited the name of the book and the page numbers in Italics from which those were taken. The source page numbers may differ if one refers to a subsequent edition. A few lines which have been italicised in between a paragraph, indicates that these lines have been taken from a different book and the source has been cited in the footnote. To avoid monotony, I have highlighted the gist of the proceeding paragraphs in Bold. A complete bibliographic citation has been included at the end of this book.

These volumes are a humble offering at the Lotus Feet of Bhagawan.

Desaraju Sri Sai Lakshmi
Editor

SITA, THE EMBODIMENT OF PURITY



Figure 1: Sita

Source of the Photo :

From Indonesian Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

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Sita: Her Birth and Beauty

Sita (meaning "furrow") is the wife of Rama, the seventh Avatar of Vishnu in the Hindu tradition. Sita is one of the principal characters in the Ramayana, a Hindu epic named after her husband Rama. She is esteemed as a standard-setter for wifely and womanly virtues for all Hindu women. Understood theologically in Hinduism, Sita is an Avatar of Lakshmi.

Sita was a foundling, discovered in a furrow in a ploughed field, and for that reason is regarded as a daughter of Bhumi Devi (the goddess earth). She was discovered and adopted by Janaka, king of Mithila, and his wife Sunayana. Upon her coming of age, a Swayamvara was held to select a suitable husband for her. She wed Rama, prince of Ayodhya, an Avatar of Vishnu on Vivaha Panchami.

Soon after her marriage, she is forced into exile with her husband and brother-in-law Lakshmana. While in exile, the trio settle in the Dandaka forest, from where she is abducted by the Ravana, Rakshasa King of Lanka. She is imprisoned in the Ashoka Vatika of Lanka by Ravana. Sita is finally rescued by Sri Rama in the climatic war where Sri Rama slays Ravana. Sita proves her chastity by undergoing a trial by fire. Thereafter, Sri Rama and Sita return to Ayodhya, where they are crowned as king and

Sita: the Embodiment of Purity

queen. However, Sri Rama abandons a pregnant Sita when one of his subjects casts doubt over her chastity. In the refuge of Sage Valmiki's hermitage Sita gives birth to twins Lava and Kush. After her sons grow up and unite with their father, Sita returns to her mother, the Earth's womb for release from a cruel world after refusing another test of her purity

Sita is known by many epithets. She is called Janaki as the daughter of Janaka; Maithili as the princess of Mithila. As the wife of Sri Rama, she is called Ramaa. Her father Janaka had earned the sobriquet Videha due to his ability to transcend body consciousness; Sita is therefore also known as Vaidehi.

- From Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia

SITA¹: Wife of Rama; brought up by King Janaka who found her in a box in the earth. Also, a tributary of the Ganga flowing westward. (Glossary for the Vahinis)

Sita is the daughter of Goddess Earth – Bhoodevi. She is therefore also called Bhoojatha². (SSB 2002, p. 112)

¹ Also spelt as Sitaa, Seethe, Seeta

² The name of Sita should not be taken to mean Sri Rama's wife only, in a limited sense. Sita was in fact, Bhoojatha (daughter of Mother Earth). The same Mother Earth who was responsible for the birth of Sita is responsible for the birth of all the human beings. In a way, all are sons and daughters of Mother Earth. The nature of Prakriti is dwaitha (duality). It is also called 'Maya', who comes between Jiva and Deva (God) and prevents him from realising God. Sita represents Prakriti or Maya stands in between the Jivatma and Paramatma, that is Sri Rama, who was an incarnation of

Sita had another name Vaidehi, meaning one who has no body attachment. King Janaka was her foster father. He lovingly brought her up and gave her in marriage to Rama. (SSS Vol. 41, p. 115)

Her Birth

Story of Sita's previous birth

Here you must understand the past life story of Sita. In her earlier life, the name of Sita was Vedavathi. She was performing *Tapas* (penance) with the desire to marry *Vishnumurthi* (Lord Vishnu). One day Ravana had seen her, wanted her to accompany him to Lanka. She rejected this. He caught hold of her plaited hair and tried to drag her. Instantly she created a yogic fire (*pyre*). "In my next birth, shall marry Vishnumurthi, come to Lanka and destroy your family. Whatever portion of the hair is left in your hand, that many rakshasas will be destroyed," so saying she immolated herself in the fire. Her hair remained in the hands of Ravana. That very Vedavathi born as Sita went to Lanka. The other name of Sita was Vaidehi, meaning one without body attachment. There are many such subtle secrets in the story of Ramayana. (Sri Sathya Sai Vachanamrutham 2008 Telugu p.96-97, DD 28/6/2008)

In this Avatar

Sita was born out of the womb of the earth. When King Janaka was ploughing a field in the process of the performance of a *Yajna*, he found a box in it. When the box was opened, a small baby was found in it. Considering this as the boon of God, he took the baby home and brought it up with great care and affection. This baby

Vishnu. That is the reason why all human beings are not able to realise Him as Paramatma. (Beacons of Divine Wisdom, Part 1, p. 109)

was given the name Sita. Since she was the daughter of the King of Videha, she was also called Vaidehi. This name had great significance since it meant one who transcended the illusion caused by body attachment. (SSS Vol.40, pp. 104-105)

Her Beauty

Surpanakha³ said to Ravana "Rama has a woman with him, who is endowed with superlative beauty. She is even more charming than they. She is the very Goddess of Love, in human form. In fact, I have never so far set eyes on such perfect feminine beauty; the like of her does not exist on heaven or earth." (RKR V Part II, p. 42)

³ Surpanakha: Ravana's wicked sister. (Glossary for the Vahinis)

Swayamvara - Winning Sita

Sita's Strength and Janaka's decision regarding her marriage:

Once, Sita was playing a game of ball with her companions in her house. There was a big box in the house of Janaka, which contained a huge bow. As her playmates were playing with the ball, the ball went under the box. It was not possible for anyone to move this box⁴. Sita went there and put it aside with her left hand⁵.

⁴ Emperor Janaka said, 'Six generations after Nimi, the great ancestor of my dynasty, the King named Devaratha ruled over this kingdom. The Gods placed this Bow of Lord Siva in trust in his palace. It had been with us since then. It is a weapon of the Gods and so, I assert it is no ordinary Bow! It weighed some thousands of tonnes! No one has held it in the erect position so far! For, who can lift that weight? Many times in the past, I tried to discover who could bend the Bow and use it or hold it for public gaze and invited people to try. But I have yet to see one who could do it. Every king and prince who attempted the feat failed and returned humiliated. They could neither bend the Bow nor even move it ever so slightly". (RKR Part I, pp. 164-165)

⁵ For a long period of time, scientists were under the mistaken notion that magnetic power is the same as atomic power. Only of late have they recognised the difference between the two. This magnetic power is present in the human body from top to toe. There are innumerable unseen powers present in man. They are known as transcendental powers (*Atheeta Shakti*).

Scientists know that energy, which is infinite and unfathomable, can be neither created nor destroyed. Since time immemorial, man has been investigating the nature of this energy. They have come to the conclusion

Sita: the Embodiment of Purity

Seeing that act of Sita, King Janaka decided that very day that Sita's power should be made known to the world. Thereafter he organised a *Yajna* and made a declaration: "Whoever strings the bow of Lord Siva, I will give my daughter Sita in marriage to him." (SSS Vol.40, p. 105)

Swayamvara

Kings of many countries came there. All of them thought it was a great good fortune to marry Sita and to become the son-in-law of King Janaka. (SSS Vol.40, p. 105)

Shiva's Bow is broken

Thousands of strong men wheeled the great bow of Shiva into the open court. Many a Prince from far-off parts of Bharat had assembled there, to win the hand of Sita. They were more interested in winning the hand of Sita than in facing the trial of strength. But Rama and Lakshmana came there in simple obedience to the command of Viswamitra and without any expectation. One after another, the Princes tried to lift the bow of

that the whole world is based on psychotronic power, which is also termed bioplasmic power. This is present in every cell and every vein of the human body. Human mind cannot comprehend the nature of this power.

This power is also called *Ajnatha Shakti*, that which is not known. All these powers are not visible to the naked eye. It was this power that enabled mother Sita to lift the mighty Siva Dhanush (bow of Siva) with her little finger. It was then that king Janaka decided to give his daughter in marriage to one who was equally powerful. Sage Viswamitra, who had understood the intimate relationship that exists between Divinity and transcendental power, took Lord Rama to Mithilapura and solemnised the marriage. (SSS Vol.32 Part II, p. 86)

Shiva; but they returned to their seats humiliated. (SSB 1996, p. 28)

Ravana tries his hand

At that time, Ravana came to try his strength. With his massive fearsome personality⁶, he walked up proudly towards the bow. He tried with one hand and then with both to lift the Bow. In spite of his mighty effort, he could not lift it and instead fell back on the ground with Bow on top of him. There was nobody to help him out, as he lay trapped under the bow. Rama's instinct was to go to Ravana to get him out of his predicament⁷.

Viswamitra asks Rama to lift the bow

Viswamitra seized the opportunity and told Rama to go⁸ and pick up the Bow. Rama's aim was not lifting the Bow; but to help Ravana. Help ever hurt never. This was Rama's motto. (Dasara Discourses 2001 p.114-116)

Rama walked quietly towards the bow, much to the chagrin and amazement of the princes gathered. Commotion arose in the court when Rama, a tender boy of fourteen, was walking towards the

⁶ He was very powerful and had a fearsome personality. He was the first one to come forward to lift the bow. As he was proceeding towards the bow, kings were surprised at his gait and personality. They thought, "If he is able to lift the bow, King Janaka has to give his daughter in marriage to him. The very sight of Ravana is terrifying. How can Janaka give his daughter in marriage to him? Anyway, let us see what is going to happen." (SSS Vol.35, p. 119)

⁷ The one who is swayed by ego is sure to suffer in life. When people laughed loudly at his plight, Ravana felt deeply wounded, as though he had lost all his ten heads. (SSB 1996, p. 28)

⁸

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bow of Shiva, for it was an audacious act on the part of a young boy to dare to lift the matchless bow of Shiva. (SSB 1996, p. 28)

Rama walked up⁹ to the place and lifted up the bow with his left hand and put it aside. The moment he did that a severe turbulence

⁹ The earth is endowed with several forms of energy. In between Akasha and the earth is permeated by a vast medium of energy field. The power of planet earth is unimaginable. Hence, earth is considered to be the storehouse of all energies. Predominant among the energies is the power of magnetism. Repeated investigations have failed to throw light on the nature of this energy.

At the time when Rama went to lift Lord Shiva's bow, Bhoodevi rejoiced. The various kings and princes who had assembled were not of the right age for Sita. Their looks too were of no match to those of Sita. Rama alone looked extremely youthful. His physical features were beyond description. He was extremely handsome. Bhoodevi decided that Rama was the right match for Sita. She saw to it that there was no obstruction on Rama's path to victory in the assembly. When Rama lifted Lord Shiva's bow, he used his left hand as if to indicate that he required just his left hand to accomplish something which others found impossible. This was actually the great strength of mother earth at work. She reduced the weight of the bow and enhanced Rama's strength. The wonderful powers of the earth are indescribable. However, all the minerals, metals and chemicals that are in the earth are present in man too. Energies like the electric, chemical, magnetic, etc., these and many more strengths are immanent in man. One cannot say how many, but every kind of energy and material in the core of earth are already in man. But, there is no realization in man regarding his great potential. The power of the divine in man is extremely sacred. Man is tremendously powerful because of this Divinity in him.

He can do anything, if only he wills. Today, thanks to the influence of science, man has reached the moon. He has also brought back dust from the moon. Actually, these are all expressions of the inner strength of man. It is a pity that man cannot recognize his own strength. At present, everyone is asking the others, "Who are you?" Very few ask the question, "Who am I?" All your problems get solved when you inquire into this question. In the answer to this question is embedded the answer to all questions. (SSB 2002, pp. 112-113)

struck and shook everybody. Lakshmana then got up and with one foot pressed down the earth firmly. Even Viswamitra didn't know what Lakshmana was up to. He asked, "Lakshmana, what is happening? What are you doing?" Lakshmana humbly bowed the head and said, "This is the help I must render to my elder brother". What Lakshmana meant was that, when Rama raised the bow, there was a sudden tilt in earth's balance leading to the turbulence. By pressing down the earth Lakshmana was balancing the shift. (SSB 2002 p.54)

All were astonished. The weight of the Bow was phenomenal and the power required for lifting it was of a cosmic proportion. It was far beyond human capacity. The divine power is truly cosmic in nature. This power was present in Rama.

People thought it would be very difficult to lift the bow; but what is difficult for Rama? His mere *sankalpa* (Will) could do any stupendous task. Viswamitra went near Rama and said, "Rama, today You have demonstrated Your divine power. Certainly it is not a human power. It is indeed divine."

Janaka came there and said with wonder¹⁰, "one who can lift it can string it also.' But, Rama said that without His Preceptor's command, He would not do that. Then Janaka looked at

¹⁰ Janaka was reminded of the incident of Sita having lifted the bow. He was overjoyed with the feeling that he had found a suitable match for Sita. (Dasara Discourses 2001 p.51-52) Janaka realised that Rama and Sita were well matched in every respects---beauty, character and strength. (SSS Vol.20, p. 48)

Viswamitra who in turn indicated to Rama to go ahead. (Dasara Discourses 2001 p.114-116)

Rama Strings the Bow

When Rama lifted the sacred bow of Lord Shiva out of its box, strung the thread and twanged the string, a peel of thunder was set off. Everybody wondered as to how a boy of such a tender age could achieve such a stupendous task. The bow could not have been lifted even if a thousand men were to make an attempt to do so. Several elephants were required to pull the box into the hall. How could Rama lift such a heavy bow? How could he manage to string it? News of this wonderful feat spread throughout Mithila and created a sensation. (SSB 2002, p. 55) They hailed the good fortune of Sita profusely. They were happy that Sita won the hand of a person who was virtuous, powerful and handsome. (*Dasara Discourses 2001 p.51-52*)

Everyone praised Rama and started garlanding Him. Then King Janaka brought his daughter Sita. As she came, Rama did not even look in the direction from where she was coming. Why? He did not want to look at her without the command of His parents. King Janaka conveyed the good news to King Dasaratha at Ayodhya. He requested all of them to come after deciding the *muhurtham* (auspicious time) of the marriage. He said, “Your son has achieved success in the competition organised by me. Therefore, all of you are requested to come prepared to celebrate the marriage of Sita with Rama.” (SSS Vol.40, pp. 105-106)

The Celestial Wedding - Sita Kalyanam

Dasaratha along with his queens and his sons Bharatha and Satrughna and his ministers arrived in Mithila with great enthusiasm. It appeared as though the entire Ayodhya had come to Mithila. King Janaka extended a royal welcome to them with great honour.

The name of the second daughter of King Janaka was Urmila. His younger brother had two daughters, namely, Mandavi and Sruthakeerthi. It was decided to give Urmila to Lakshmana, Mandavi to Bharatha and Sruthakeerthi to Satrughna in marriage. Everyone was happy that all the four pairs were going to be married at the same time.

The Invitations, preparations and celebrations:

It seemed as if the entire population of Ayodhya had come to witness the marriage of Sita and Rama. (SSS Vol.42, p. 85)The people of Mithila were fascinated by appearance of Rama. They went in ecstasy watching the conduct and beauty of Rama. They thought that Rama and Sita made an excellent match. They sang songs¹¹ inviting people to see the marriage of Rama and Sita. One such song goes like this:

*Welcome to all for Rama's wedding;
together we shall witness the joyous scene.
Many have gathered already,
decked up in all their finery.
With necklaces the ladies are adorned
Of jewels pure and gleaming.*

¹¹ See at the end of this chapter, **Lyrics Of Few Of The Wedding Songs**

*Rama shall tie the knot today
to beautiful Sita, oh what a fine match they make.
Father Dasaratha has made ready bounteous feasts.
All learned sages are assembled with Vashishta
presiding.
Oh, what a multitude has assembled
to rejoice, hearts with joy overflowing.
Wedding of the holy pair
Rama and Sita, such a sight is indeed rare.
The sight shall confer great merit.
Rama looks the cool full moon,
and Sita is a matching double.
The compassionate Rama who loves all
will confer his grace on us all.
Come quickly to see the holy wedding of Rama and
Sita.
(Telugu Song)*

People sang songs like this, rejoicing at the marriage of Rama and Sita. The people of Ayodhya as well as Mithila were greatly delighted. They rejoiced immensely. (SSB 2002, pp. 108-109) There is an episode in Ramayana, which indicates what love the people of Ayodhya and Mithila bore to Rama and Sita. The people of Ayodhya set out in their thousands to witness the wedding of Rama and Sita in Mithila. The whole of Mithila was rejoicing over the auspicious occasion. Women were summoning all women and children to witness the sacred wedding. They were telling the other ladies; “Sisters”! What a unique opportunity to witness the glorious wedding of Rama and Sita.” (SSS Vol.27, pp. 116-117)

The Marriage Rituals:

The marriage celebrations at Mithila lasted four days. Though to us our marriage rituals appear to be merely materialistic, they are laden with deep, spiritual significance. On the first day of the marriage, the bridegroom's party proceeded to the house of the bride, accompanied by pundits and priests, to hand over the wedding invitation. On the same day, the bride's party, accompanied by Sumangalis (women whose husbands are alive), proceeded to hand over the wedding invitation to the bridegroom's house. (SSB 1996, p. 31)

On the second day, the history of the dynasties to which the bride and the bridegroom belonged was read out aloud, and due gratitude was expressed to their respective ancestors. The names of the great Kings who brought glory to Kosala and Mithila were read out and their virtues extolled. The great Emperors who adored the Ikshvaku dynasty were remembered, and their virtues were praised. Similarly, the names of the great ones who reigned over the Kingdom of Videha were read out, beginning with Emperor Nimi who founded the great city of Mithila. These rituals bring out the truth that gratitude is an important aspect of life, and should be expressed towards all those who had contributed to the glory of one's lineage and country. (SSB 1996, p. 31)

On the third day, great acts of charity were performed. Cattle and cows, beautifully decorated with ornaments and golden linen, were given away in charity to the deserving ones. Giving away cows in charity is significant, for the cow is one of the four mothers of man (*Dehamata Gomata, Bhoomata, and Vedamata*). (SSB 1996, p. 31)

On the fourth day, the ritual of *Kanyadana* took place. (SSB 1996, p. 32)

Kanyadana

*The brides and the grooms*¹² were then readied and brought to the stage¹³. Janaka brought his daughter Sita, followed by Urmila, Mandavi, and Sruthakeerthi. These three were the daughters of Janaka's brothers Saaka and Kusadhwaja. Urmila was the daughter of Saaka, while Mandavi and Sruthakeerthi were the daughters of Kusadhwaja. In the meanwhile, Dasaratha brought his four sons. The curtain between the brides and bridegrooms was raised. (SSB 1996, p. 32)

As they were all seated on the stage they appeared to light up the entire city of Mithila. The ladies experienced unlimited thrill. They praised their good fortune at being able to witness the wedding of not just Sita but all the four princesses. . (SSB 2002, p. 56)

The wedding was going on. But the four brothers would not raise their heads and look at anybody. In the modern age on the other hand conversations and frivolous behaviour begins much before marriage! But here the brides and grooms sat with their heads lowered in humility and modesty throughout the ceremony. They carried out the instructions of the priest without raising their heads. (SSB 2002, p. 56)

¹² Rama, adorned with most beautiful ornaments, was brought to the marriage pandal. (SSB 1996, p. 29)

¹³ (SSB 2002, p. 56)

Mangala Sutra:

Rama was looking elsewhere and refused to look at Sita. Janaka noticed this and said to Rama, *Mama putri iyam Sita* ('this is my daughter Sita'). To this Rama replied, "I have not yet tied the Mangala Sutra (wedlock thread). It is sinful to see the lady before marriage to her, I do not wish to bring disrepute to the great Ikshvaku lineage by my misconduct." This statement of Rama testifies to the fact, that He was the Embodiment of Dharma. Rama observed the principle of one wife, one word, and one arrow. While the priests were chanting mantras and the musicians were playing on the musical instruments, Rama tied the Mangala sutra around the neck of Sita. (SSB 1996, p. 32)

Garlanding Ceremony:

Sweet notes of auspicious music reverberated in the air. The *Vedic* priests chanted the sacred *mantras* full-throated and blessed the couples. King Dasaratha shed tears of joy. Everyone was filled with divine bliss watching the marriage proceedings. It is customary during the occasion that the bride and the bridegroom exchanged garlands. (SSS Vol.38, p. 115)

The brides waited with garlands in their hands, as did the grooms. The three brothers would begin their tasks only after Rama started it first. The parents too waited behind the children. They went up to Rama and bade him to place the garland around Sita's neck so that other remaining brothers could also do the same. Rama did so and all the brothers followed suit. It was now the turn of the brides. Sita waited with the garland in her hands. Moments passed but Rama would not bend his head! His was a valour and dignity that raised, strung and broke the mighty bow of Lord Shiva. He did not

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want to bend his head before a woman. And in order to protect his own honour, he kept standing. Rama was tall, broad shouldered and valiant. Though young of age all the brothers were tall and physically strong. The long delay made the people impatient. They wondered as to why Rama refused to bow His head. Rama too was not keen to remain thus. (SSB 2002, pp. 57-58)

Sita had to garland Rama first, before the other brides could garland their respective bridegrooms. Sita, being short in stature, could not garland Rama who was *ajanubahu* (tall personality). Unless Rama bent His head before Sita, she could not garland Him. But He did not want to bend His head lest people should blame Him for not maintaining the honour of His lineage. Unable to garland Rama, Sita was holding the garland in her hand for a long time. There was another secret in this act of Rama. Lakshmana was the incarnation of Adishesha who carried mother earth on his hood. (SSS Vol.38, p. 115)

Rama looked at Lakshmana and made an almost imperceptible signal. The four brothers were always sharp and alert. This was depicted in Thyagaraja's song:

*“But for their devotion to Rama,
Would a monkey cross the ocean?
Would the goddess Lakshmi worship you?
Would Lakshmana willingly serve you?
Would the highly intelligent Bharatha offer his prostrations to
you?
Oh! How great indeed is the power of devotion
to Lord Rama's strength”* (Telugu Poem)
(SSB 2002, p. 58)

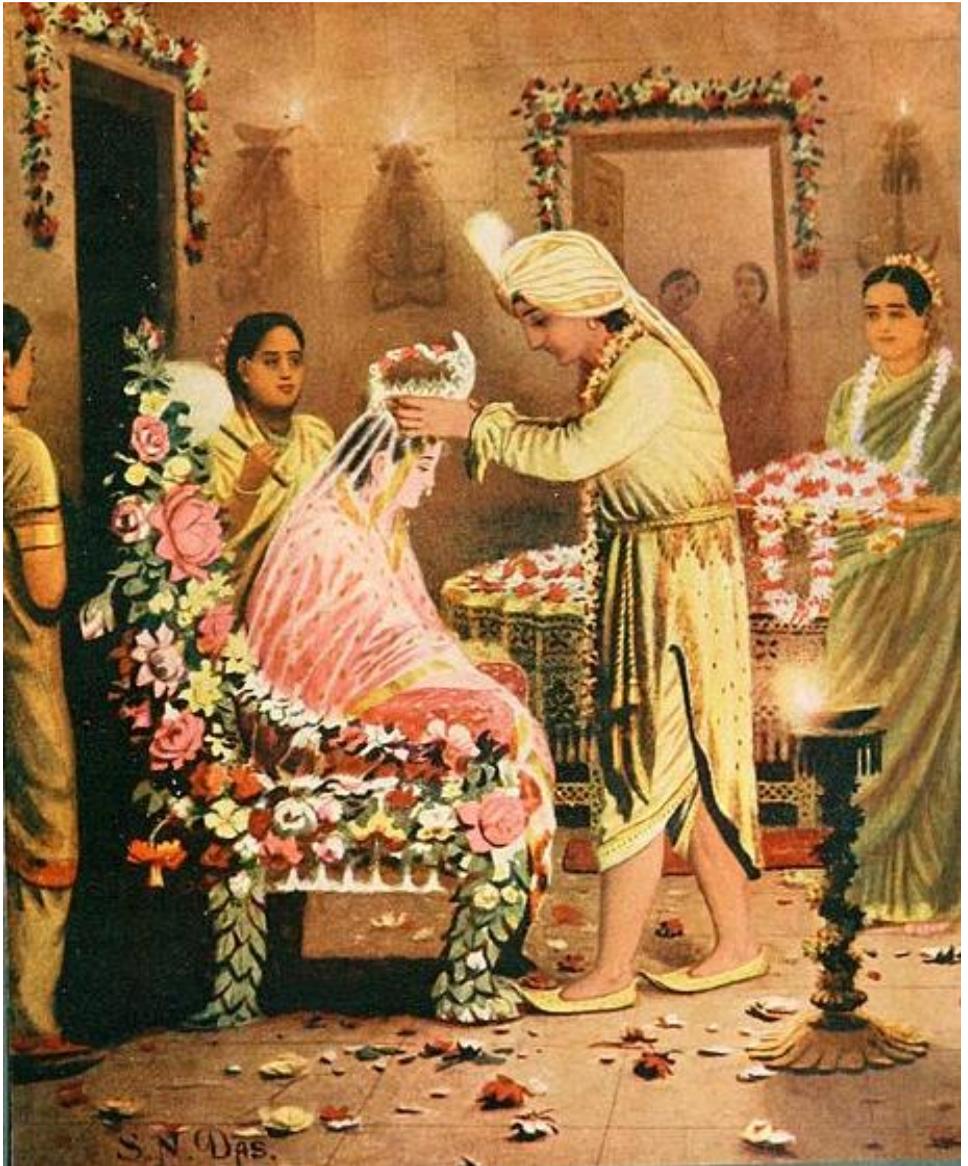


Figure 2: Sita Rama Kalyanam

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Description	English: Nine ideal Indian women (1919) Author: Sunity Devee, Maharanee Publisher: Calcutta : Thacker, Spink & Co. Possible copyright status: NOT_IN_COPYRIGHT Language: English Call number: SRLF_UCLA:LAGE-3264077 Digitizing sponsor: Internet Archive Book contributor: University of California Libraries Collection: cdl; americana Scanfactors: 2 Full catalog record: MARCXML [Open Library icon]This book has an editable web page on Open Library.
Date	12 June 2013, 19:43:04
Source	[Nine ideal Indian women (1919) http://archive.org/details/nineidealindianw00suni]
Author	Sunity Devee, Maharanee Artist - S. N. Das

Rama looked at Lakshmana as if to say, “Look, why don’t you raise that part of the earth where Sita is standing to enable her to garland Me.” (SSS Vol.38, p. 116)

He caught Rama’s signal and understood that Rama wanted him to raise the portion of earth where Sita was standing. With an equally slight shake of his head, he indicated that this plan would defy the laws of nature and was hence not suitable for execution. If Sita was raised, so would everyone else! Rama signalled back to Lakshmana to hit on some plan to break the deadlock. *Lakshmana, being endowed with intelligence, thought of a plan to solve the problem*¹⁴. All of a sudden, he fell at Rama’s feet and would not get up. Rama was forced to bend down and raise Lakshmana from his feet. Grabbing this chance, Sita at once placed her garland on Rama’s neck. The moment Sita garlanded Rama; the other sisters too proceeded to garland their grooms. This incident amply demonstrates the lofty, disciplined and honourable style of functioning and behaviour of the brothers. (SSB 2002, pp. 58-59) The four brothers and their brides shone like brilliant gemstones. The onlookers shed tears of joy watching the grand spectacle. (SSS Vol.38, p. 116)

Thalambraalu:

One of the rites in the marriage ceremony in India is *Thalambraalu*¹⁵. Since Janaka, the father of Sita, was immensely rich, he arranged for the pouring, of pearls instead of rice. Sita held

¹⁴ (SSS Vol.38, p. 116)

¹⁵ It (*Thalambraalu*) is an Indian custom that the bride and the bridegroom should pour on each other’s head a handful of sacred grain. (SSB 1996, p. 29))

a palmful of pearls in her hand over Rama's head. The white pearls in the palms of Sita shone with reddish splendour as her palms were of reddish hue. When she poured the pearls on the white turban Rama wore for the occasion, the pearls shone with the white hue of the turban. The pearls rolling down the body of Sri Rama assumed a dark colour reflecting the bluish colour of Sri Rama, *they shone like sapphires*¹⁶.

The pearls shining with reddish hue in the hands of Sita are symbolic of the *Rajo Guna*, conveying the message that one is of *Rajasic* nature in the company of *Prakriti*. The pearls shining with whitish splendour are symbolic of the *Satwa Guna* indicating the fact that one acquires the *Satwic* nature in the company of God. The nature of persons who belonged neither to *Prakriti* nor God will be *Tamasic* persons like the colour of the pearls that rolled down from Rama's head. People of divine orientation shine with *Satwic serenity* and purity. People with a worldly outlook display *Rajasic quality* while those who are neither worldly nor Godly are *Tamasic*. (SSS Vol.25, pp. 182-183)

Promises to be made by bridegroom

According to the Indian tradition, the bridegroom should make the promise *arthecha, kaamecha, dharmecha, naathi charami* (I will please her with regard to wealth, desire, and righteousness). Rama refused to give such a promise for He felt that one should be ready to renounce one's partner in life if she came between Him and His people. So, He vowed, "The welfare of my subjects is of Supreme importance to Me. If I find that she displeases My subjects, I will renounce her." That is how Rama set high standards of conduct as

¹⁶ *ibid*

a ruler. The rulers of those days were particular about every word they uttered, for they would never go back on their word. (SSB 1996, p. 33)

When everyone was seated in their respective places, the marriage ceremony started. Sita, Urmila, Mandavi and Sruthakeerthi stood in front of Rama, Lakshmana, Bharatha and Satrugna respectively. First Sita put the garland around the neck of Rama. Thereafter, the other three brides garlanded their respective bridegrooms. All the people joyfully hailed the occasion. (SSS Vol.40, p. 107)

Revelation of Divinity - Her hesitation to wash Rama's feet

A servant maid then brought a vessel filled with the water of the Sarayu river for Sita to wash the feet of Rama. Sita was hesitant to do so, for she thought that the golden wristlets that she wore might turn into women, as did the petrified Ahalya rise as a full-blooded woman, on contacting the feet of Rama! Lakshmana who read the thoughts of Sita, wiped the feet of Rama with a towel. He then asked Sita to wash the feet of Rama with the waters of the Sarayu River. Sita did so and sprinkled the water on her head. (SSB 1996, p. 33)

Her mind was not in peace at the time of Rama Lifting Siva's bow

Moon is the presiding deity of the mind. Before Rama lifted the bow of Shiva in the court of King Janaka, Sita's mind was not at peace¹⁷. ((SSB 2002, p. 8)

¹⁷ When Sita went to Ayodhya after her marriage with Rama, one day she confided to Him how the moon of her mind was clouded before Rama

Her Joy

When Lord Rama lifted Siva's bow, Sita's joy knew no bounds. Her prayers were answered. Rama, being the embodiment of love and righteousness, had the power to lift, not just one bow of Lord Siva, but ten such bows. (Dasara Discourses 2004 p.77)

lifted the Siva bow. Rama then told Sita that at the time of His birth, thick clouds covered the moon; so, it could not have His Darshan at the time of His birth. Rama then promised to the moon that He would add Chandra (moon) to His name to make it happy. Rama further told that in His next incarnation in Dwapara Yuga, the moon would be the first to have the Darshan of the Lord and to pay salutations to Him. True to the words spoken by Lord Ramachandra, the moon had the good fortune of having the first Darshan of Sri Krishna when His father Vasudeva was carrying Him across the river Yamuna. Thus, the moon was the first to do *Namaskar* to the Lord in His incarnation as Krishna. (SSB 2002, pp. 8-9)

Preparation for Coronation and Banishment

Preparations for Coronation:

People of Ayodhya rejoiced to see the royal couples. One day at three o'clock in the morning, Dasaratha had a dream. It was his belief that whatever one saw in a dream in the early hours would come true. He had dreamt that he had become very old and that his hands and legs were shaking. He woke up in a disturbed state of mind considering this as a bad omen. (SSS Vol.35, p. 123) Dasaratha realised that he was growing old and that it was time he should have crowned one of his sons as heir to his kingdom. Since Rama was the eldest of the four sons and he had all the qualities of a worthy king, he thought of crowning him as the heir to his kingdom. *He sent word for Sage Vashishta and obtained his permission*¹⁸. This news was received by the subjects of the kingdom with great joy and happiness because all of them thought that Rama was most suited to assume the reigns of the kingdom. (SSS Vol. 41, p. 60)

Manthara, the servant-maid of Queen Kaikeyi, became very angry when King Dasaratha decided to crown Rama instead of the son of

¹⁸ (SSS Vol.35, p. 123)

Kaikeyi; she started poisoning the mind of Kaikeyi by fabricating many false stories against Rama. Hearing this evil talk of Manthara, the mind of Kaikeyi changed. Though a queen, she was influenced by the words of her servant and became responsible for the exile of Rama. Manthara pleaded with Kaikeyi: “Mother, I am your servant. From your very birth, I have nursed you and brought you up. Kindly fulfil a desire of mine. King Dasaratha has decided to crown Rama. But as per the promise given to you earlier, he should crown Bharatha. Rama should be sent on exile for fourteen years.” Both Sita and Rama were ready for the coronation wearing yellow coloured silk clothes. All were waiting in the royal court to extend welcome to them. Meanwhile, Rama went to mother, Kausalya and said, “Oh mother! I am going to forest. Kindly permit Me.” Then Kausalya asked, “Why my dear one, why do you want to go to the forest now, as this is the time of Your coronation.” Rama said, “Mother! It is the command of My father that I should stay in exile in the forest for fourteen years; I have to uphold the promise made by My father.” Saying so, he saluted His mother. (SSS Vol.40, pp. 108-109)

Sita Insists on Following Rama and Wins

Rama stepped on the royal road, and started walking along, barefooted, through the concourse of citizens who had filled it. He proceeded to the apartments of Sita. (RKR V Part I, p. 302)

Sita enquiries about Rama's bowed head and bare feet:

Sita was watching the entrance door, for she was anxious to learn what had happened at the palace of Kaikeyi, and why Rama had not come as yet, though the auspicious hour fixed for the Coronation was fast approaching. She had finished her own rites of Vigil and Fast, and held in readiness a plate of sandal paste, flowers, grain and other prescribed articles so that there would be no delay caused by her tardiness, to accompany her Lord to the Coronation Hall. Her heart was beating fast in expectancy of Rama's arrival. All the maids and attendants around her were overcome with the ecstasy of the coming hour of triumph. Lovely maidens were ready with sparkling lamps for the ceremony of waving them before Rama as he entered. Into the decorated hall shining in unprecedented charm, suddenly Rama stepped in, unheralded, with bowed head, and on bare feet. (RKR V Part I, p. 303)

Everyone was shocked. Sita moved forward towards her Lord. She could scarce believe her eyes. Her body shivered like a leaf in the wind. She bit her lips; and swallowed her surprise. "Lord! What is the meaning of all this? Why are you thus? You said this day is the day dedicated to Brihaspati, the Preceptor of the Gods. You said, it is a very auspicious day, the star is Pushya, and you are to be crowned this day as the Yuvaraja, the Crown prince, of this Empire. How is it that they do not hold over your divinely beautiful self the White Umbrella of Imperium with the brilliance of sunlit Pearls, with its hundred ribs of gemset gold? Where are the resplendent whisks with their feather-pure sheen that appear like Moons? Why are they not accompanying you today? Why are the minstrels of the court silent, without singing your praise, as

you proceed to the Durbar Hall? Oh, Lord! How is it that the Masters of Vedic Lore, the Brahmins, have not anointed you with consecrated honey and curds? And the Ministers, the Vassal Kings and the Leaders of the various communities in the State are not walking behind you, as usage requires! The majestic royal elephant, a mountain peak on the move, Sathrunjaya, trampling the ground, making people mistake it for a dark blue cloud flowing over the road, he should come first, announcing your arrival, shouldn't he?" (RKRV Part I, p. 304)

Rama breaks the news of his banishment

While Sita was raining questions like these, Rama could not decide how to answer them. It was not a matter that could be explained quickly in few words. So Rama entered an inner Hall, and drawing Sita nearer, he said, "Sita! Revered Father has willed and resolved at this very auspicious hour to send me to the forest. Therefore, it has become urgent to honour his command." Sita heard the words, but she could not believe that they could be true. She asked, "Lord! What crime did you commit to deserve this punishment, this exile into the forest? Dasaratha is the embodiment of justice, a *dharmaatma* (embodiment of justice). He will never issue an order of this nature without legitimate reasons! What is the real purpose, the inner significance, of this order to live in the forest?"

Rama smiled at her question, and replied, "Sita! Long ago, father had promised to grant mother Kaikeyi two boons; but, that promise had not been fulfilled so far. She too had not demanded them, until now. This day, she asked for them both. They were, first: Bharatha must be crowned as Yuvaraja, and second: I should move into the forest, and live there with matted hair and vestments of bark for

fourteen years. Father is supremely righteous. He never acts against the plighted word. Therefore, he bowed his head to Dharma and acceded. I felt I should see you before leaving! (RKRV Part I, pp. 304-305)

Rama instructs Sita on her duties, do's and don'ts and the directives to follow:

You have taken birth in a greatly revered family. You know and value all the moral codes and goals. Janaka Maharaja, Master of the inner Mysteries of the highest morality, is your father. You too walk steadily on the path of Dharma. I have to leave for the forest this very day. Dasaratha has given this empire, inherited by him through many generations, to Bharatha. From now on, he is the Lord over this realm. Immediately after being crowned, he will come to you for your blessing. Do not extol me before my brother. Nor should you exhibit any trace of sorrow or displeasure at my being sent to the forest. Don't slight him or look down upon him. Kings appreciate only those who adore them and serve them. So, do not praise me or decry him. He is my brother and your brother-in-law; but that is only with reference to physical kinship. With reference to kinship, Bharatha is your monarch and mine. Give him due honour. Do not cause any displeasure or distress to him by word or deed. Fair one! Follow the directives of not only Bharatha, but also of old father, Dasaratha. Serve also mother Kausalya who is suffering unspeakable agony because I am leaving her. Take all appropriate measures to keep grief away from her. The other two mothers, Kaikeyi and Sumitra, them too you must obey and please. Sita! Bharatha and Satrugna are to me as dear and close as my very breath. Treat them as your own brothers; or foster them

lovingly as your sons. Oh, charming damsel! Do not leave this place and go to Mithila City, for the reason I am not here. Remain in Ayodhya itself and comfort mother and father, serving them in suitable ways to remove the sorrow from their hearts. With love and care, confer comfort, courage and contentment on them.” (RKR V Part I, pp. 305-306)

Sita intervenes and says that only if she stays back she needs to be told how and in what ways she has to serve the In-laws - She was taught by her father before her wedding all duties that guide and bind her - As a wife her place is with Rama:

When Rama was instructing Sita on her duties, she could not contain her laughter! She also felt a sense of shame at the turn the arguments took. She could not remain silent for long. “Rama,” she interrupted, “Rama! you are the son of Dasaratha. I have not heard at any time words unworthy of that lineage fall from your lips. Mother, father, brother, sister, son, daughter-in-law, everyone has to experience a quantum of happiness and misery, in proportion to the good and bad done by each. But the wife has a special source of fortune, good or bad. That is to say, she has a share in the good and bad for which her husband is responsible. She is endowed with a part of his joy or grief. So, if the Emperor Dasaratha has ordered you to go into the forest, he has given me too the order to go. A woman may be fed and fostered by her mother and father. She may be revered by her son, she may be served by her maids, but they can never be her shield and support. The trinkets and toys with which you try to convince me serve only to arouse amusement in me. During the years preceding my wedding, father taught me all the duties that shall guide and bind me. I am neither an ignoramus nor a seeker of power. And more than these let me tell you, I do

not cling fanatically to any opinion because it is mine. There is no need for you to point out my special duties to me, for, I know them all. It is only when I decide to remain here, isn't it, that you have to tell me how and in what ways I have to serve the parents-in-law, the sisters-in-law, and the ruler of the land? But when I am with you, what chance is there, what need is there, for me to take on the service of others. I am coming with you in full joy! Since a long time, I have had an unfulfilled desire to spend some years in forests. It is my good fortune that I have now the chance to satisfy that desire, in the company of my Lord! I will not give ear if you insist that I should not express my point of view in this great matter. Don't be angry with me that I disobey you. It is not just and proper for you to throw me aside here, as one throws out water from the cup after quaffing a mouthful. Believe my word! I shall not continue in Ayodhya even for a moment; take me with you.” (RKRV Part I, pp. 306-308)

Sita pleads to follow Rama saying that wherever Rama is, that is the Empire for her:

With these words, Sita fell at Rama's feet and held them tight. “I have not the slightest sorrow that you were not crowned. I hold you dear, crowned or uncrowned. Wherever you are, that is the Empire for me. There is my Treasure. That is my Glory,” she pleaded and prayed. Rama told her that forest life was fraught with fears and dangers. The forest was infested with wild animals¹⁹ and

¹⁹ Sita replied, “Where is the scope for any fear of animals when Rama, a lion in the human form is there with me? Rama is Lord Narayana Himself. Therefore, I have nothing to fear.” In this manner, Sita, Rama and Lakshmana put at rest the fears of everyone and proceeded to the forest. (SSS Vol.40, p. 112)

wilder men, demonic predators and dacoits. One has to encounter floods in rivers, wade through thick thorny undergrowth. He said that she was not used to traverse places on foot and therefore, she will have to undergo great exhaustion. He described various other forms of fear and anxiety that will confront her. But Sita was unmoved. She replied, “Lord! However wild the animals may be, however thick and terror striking the forest may be, what harm can they cause, what injury can they inflict on me, when you are by my side? I can walk through forest tracks. It will be no trouble for me. I will be happier if you ask me to walk first, preparing the path smooth for you to tread. I shall pick and cast away stones, pebbles and thorns to lessen pain, making your journey easy. Allow me to be with you, so that I may render this service and be happy. Here, in the palace of Ayodhya, and in the zenana, I could not get the chance to serve you. I felt worried and miserable that all services for you were undertaken by attendants and aides. There will be no attendant, no aide in the forest! So, I can be happy, doing all the services myself. That is my great good fortune! Make my life worthwhile, Lord. Give me that glorious chance!” Sita prayed in a variety of ways, pleading for mercy and justice. Rama was moved to compassion, He said, “Sita! Living in the forest, you cannot be happy, you have to suffer greatly in the coming days.” Rama expatiated on the horrors of jungles and the sufferings that one has inevitably to meet there. But Sita stood firm, “Rama, I shall not interpose any obstacle in the observance of your vows. From your words, I infer that you are hiding something from me, some objection which you do not like to raise before me. I shall observe along with you the vows of personal austerity incumbent on a person on the Brahmachari path. I too shall live on tubers and fruits. I too shall discard the use of scents. We shall only inhale the

fragrance of forest flowers. You are a scion of the Ikshvaku line, which has saved millions from danger and disaster! Can you not guard me against them? Are you so weak of hand? I won't give you trouble. Through me, you will not have the slightest worry. Lord! I cannot but follow you. I will lay myself down and sleep at your feet. That will give me the fullest bliss. Rama! I know and recognise none except you. I cannot exist alive for a moment apart from you. Well. If you hold fast to your resolution and proceed, leaving me in Ayodhya, Sita would have drawn her last breath before you reach the forest. Take this as Truth.” (RKR Part I, pp. 308-309)

Rama tries to Pacify Sita:

Sita's eyes shed streams of tears as she spoke these words. Rama tried to pacify her. He said, “Oh Sita, you are a very staunch adherent of Dharma. It is best for you to stick to your righteous qualities maintaining them at this place. You cannot act as your will dictates. You have no freedom to behave as you desire. Your Dharma is to act in accordance with my words. Therefore, give up this idea of yours. I am saying this for your own good. Guarding you will be a burden for me certainly. Streams rolling down from mountain peaks, wild beasts that dwell in the caves, lions and tigers roaming without let or hindrance amidst the hills and valleys—these have to be overcome. Rivers in spate will have to be forded. We may have to leap down from huge boulders and rocks. Considering these difficulties I have to tell you in such emphatic terms to stay. You have to wear matted hair and clothes of the bark of trees. We men have to go to some river or lake for the evening rites of worship. At that time, who will watch over you against any calamity that might happen? Whatever may be the

crisis, we cannot give up those rites. You know how strict that rule is. So, you may have to be alone for sometime daily. We cannot say what will happen when.” (RKR V Part I, p. 310)

Sita says being Rama’s Ardhangi, she would never agree to a life without Rama:

Rama tried to picture before Sita fearful scenes of forest life, but Sita was not affected in the least. She said, “Rama! Why tell me these things, as if I am a simpleton of some backward village, or an ignorant stupid woman, unaware of the teachings of the Sastras? I am well aware of your skill and prowess. Nothing is impossible for you on earth, nay, in all the fourteen worlds! And when you are with me, what fear can disturb me? Well, if a wild beast attacks me and I fall a prey to it, I will be happy that I die in your presence, rather than anywhere far! I shall die happily then. I shall never agree to a life, if I have to spend it without you. You said that I have no freedom to do as I wish. Did you say so, with the full consciousness of its meaning? Or, was it just a remark to test me? I am not able to reason out.

I am half of you. It is my right to name myself as your half. You too have the same right. And that is the truth. You are not fully free, nor am I. I have as much right over you, as you have over me. But I do not now plead for my rights or claims. I am yearning for being near you, being ever in your presence. My words arise from that craving.” (RKR V Part I, pp. 310-311)

Rama says Sita's duty to serve his parents:

Listening to Sita revealing her hard determination, Rama continued. "Sita! You are entangling yourself in the complexities of rights and claims! When I proceed to the forest, the aged parents will be wailing and weeping for me. At that time, you can console and comfort them, with gentle assurances. That is your duty. You must conduct yourself according to the needs of each occasion. Be with them; serve them; that is the way to please me, and give me Ananda." Rama spoke as if his decision was final, and in a tone of command. (RKR V Part I, p. 311)

Sita says for the wife, the husband is God – Moral rules same for Mother Kausalya and her:

But Sita responded only with a smile. "When the son born of these very parents plunges them in deep grief and goes away, clinging with a bear's grasp to his adamant resolution, and when the very son whom they love so much gives everything up and goes into the forest, what responsibility has the daughter-in-law, who has entered this household from her own, a stranger in the family, what responsibility has she to console and comfort those deserted by the son? Ponder over this for a while!" she said. "I am told you insisted on your mother remaining here, serving her husband, though she wept out her eyes in bitter tears, and prayed that she be allowed to follow you to the forest! You told her that her duty of serving her husband is predominant. You declared that it will bring untold disgrace on the Ikshvaku dynasty if she abandons the lord she is wedded to, out of affection for the son she has borne and brought forth into the world! Such moral rules of inestimable value, you dilated upon, before her. But as soon as you come near me, you have reversed that advice and started telling me that my

predominant duty is service to the parents-in-law and not service to the husband! Think it over! Which is the correct advice? For the wife, the husband is God—this was not laid down for Kausalya alone. It is the guide and goal for women, all over the world, without exception. You have, evidently, forgotten this truth, for it does not suit your present wish. You are unable to explain how the moral rule you quoted before Kausalya does not apply to me. (RKR V Part I, pp. 311-312)

Sita says that it was predicted she would spend years in the forest with her husband:

“However long you argue, whatever you may assert; I shall not leave off treading along the prints your feet make. You may kill me for transgressing your order, but I assert I can never be without you, Ramachandra! No sooner did you speak of the exile in the forest you are entering upon than I had such an upsurge of joy, remembering an incident that took place in my childhood! You cannot understand the extent of that joy! My mother, with me seated on her lap, was immersed in anxiety about the husband destiny had in store for me, whether he would be morally upright and endowed with excellent attributes. She was stroking my hair, and lost in thought. The maid put in her appearance just then and announced that a certain woman ascetic desired audience with her. She lifted me and gently placed me on the floor, and went forward to meet her. Mother fell at her feet and directed me to do likewise. I did as she directed. The woman eyed me closely from head to foot, and said, “Mother! Your child will spend years with her husband in the forest.” At this, my mother replied, with a laugh. ‘Not married yet! And you talk of her spending life in the forest!’

She did not keep quiet, however. She explained, ‘After marriage! She will have to live in the forest with her husband, for some time!’ And then, she went her way! Ever since that day, I am looking forward excitedly to the time when I can go and live in the forest with my Lord! Make me happy, take me with you.” Sita fell at his feet and sobbed out her prayer. (RKRV Part I, pp. 312-313)

Rama puts forth that as is in the apparel of ascetics, it would be improper to enter into fights with kings and Princes whose eyes might fall on her:

Rama was moved to pity. He raised her gently and said, “Sita! To whom else am I to confide the secret spring of my decision? Listen! You are young. In the forest there are many hermitages full of ascetics, hermits and sages. I will have to go to them in order to be of service to them and to offer my reverence to them. Kings and Princes too may be present there (since they come to hunt) and honour them and be blessed by them. Their eye may fall on you, and consequential complications and conflicts may arise. And since I will be wearing the apparel of an ascetic, it may not be proper to enter into fights with them. At least for this reason you will have to remain in Ayodhya.” (RKRV Part I, pp. 313-314)

Sita’s resolution to follow Rama:

Sita had her own reasons to protest at this. She said, “Rama! It is not just that you should deceive me, spinning such fairy tales, as if you are of common stock! When you are by my side, can even the Ruler of the Gods cast his eye on me? If he does, will he not be reduced to ashes that very moment? No, for this reason, you cannot leave me here. You cannot escape your duty and

responsibility on this score! Let me also tell you something: If you are not with me, what will be my fate? I will have to be alone in Ayodhya; the incidents of the nature you just now dilated upon can happen here! Or else, I may suffer inner agony not being able to bear the conjugal happiness of others! So, do not leave me alone, take me with you, and let your renown and mine spread for all time over the entire world. Let me add: You are dear to all as Ramachandra, Rama the Moon! I am Sita, which means, cool, the cool Moonlight! How can the moon be in the forest and its cool light stay away in Ayodhya? Where the moon is, there its light must be! Hence, this separation can never be. The two shall ever be together, never apart! If the two happen to part, it is but evidence of the approach of some unnatural catastrophe, a world shaking tragedy. Or, it may come about for the sake of an epoch-making endeavour to destroy the wicked and save the good from extinction! Since no such crisis is evident now, our separation is impossible. It cannot happen.” Sita, the Supreme Mother, spoke these words in a resolute voice, as if she would brook no objection. (RKR V Part I, pp. 314-315)

Rama paints the terrors and tribulations of forest life-

“Sita! You will have to sleep on hard rocky ground, wear apparel made of fibre or bark, live on tubers and roots. Even this food, it might be difficult to get every day. Their availability depends on the seasons of the year. When they are not procurable, you might have to be hungry for days. The forest²⁰ is infested with demonic

²⁰ Kausalya was also worried about Sita since she was accompanying Rama to the forest. Rama had tried to dissuade her from going to the forest, saying, “Sita! The forest is full of thorny bushes and wild animals. You will be put to a lot of difficulties in the forest.” Sita then reasoned with

tribes who are masters of a million stratagems, and who eat, with delight, human flesh. Oh! It is impossible to describe fully the travails of life in the forest! You cannot bear these terrors and tribulations. If you accompany me into exile, people will condemn me and pour abuse on me. How can the Celestial Swan that lives on the ambrosial waters of the Manasa-Sarovar survive drinking the brackish waters of the sea? How can the Kokil sporting in the garden that is full of tender-leafed mango trees be happy and carefree in a patch of low grass? Reflect on these matters. It is most desirable that you stay at home.” (RKRV Part I, p. 315)

Sita counters the argument and insists on Joining Rama

Sita listened to these words of Rama, spoken so soft and sweet; but all the while she stood with her eyes on the ground, and tears were streaming down her cheeks. She stood like a pillar, unmoved and immovable. Her tears fell continuously on the floor. Rama could not bear the sight of her distress. Sita could find no word to answer the objections Rama raised. Finally, she managed to control her emotions and swallow her grief. She said, “Oh Lord of my life! You are the treasure house of everything good and auspicious. When I am separated from you, even heaven is horrible hell. Parents, brothers, sisters, parents-in-law, sons, preceptors, kinsmen—all these might be resplendent repositories of goodness; but for a woman, her husband is the only source of strength, joy and fortune. He alone can grant her happiness and delight. Except

Rama, “Oh! Rama! You are the protector of the entire world. Can You not protect Your own wife from the wild animals? You are omnipresent, omnipotent and omniscient. I am sure that none of these wild animals can cause any harm to me when You are with me. I have no such fear.” Rama felt very happy to hear these words of Sita. (SSS Vol.39, p. 80)

the husband, she has none to guide her and guard her. He is her refuge, her only resort. Lord! When the husband is away from her, the wife will find the body, the home, the city, the kingdom, the wealth heaped around her, everything as sources of grief and sorrow. They cannot confer joy on her stricken mind.

Sweetness will turn bitter when her Lord is away. Delight will be curdled into disease. All the joys I crave for are centred in you. Nothing can equal the ecstasy I derive when I fix my eyes on your face that shines so bright and comforting like the full moon in autumn. When I am with you there the birds and beasts will be my kith and kin. The forest will be the city I love. The apparel made of tree bark will be silken clothes. The hermitage with the thatch of leaves will be as delightful a home for me as a heavenly mansion. The fairies and angels of the forest, the sylvan deities will be parents-in-law. I shall revere them with equal awe. When I am with you, sheaves of grass and heaps of floral petals will give as much softness for the bed. The God of Love cannot aspire for more. And the tubers, roots and fruits that you speak of will be as sweet and sustaining as Divine Nectar itself! The mountain peaks there will gladden me as much as the towers of Ayodhya. I will come down one slope and climb another, as gladly as while coming down one flight of stairs and getting up another here. It will be so easy and delightful.

“Every day, I will derive the thrill of delight at the sight of your Lotus Feet. Besides, this will be a golden chance for me to serve you at all times in every way. How can I survive the agony if I am to lose this precious chance? Oh, Treasure chest of Mercy! Do not leave me here. Take me with you! Really there is no need for me

to pour these importunities into your ear; for, you reside in all beings and you are aware of all that they feel and think. It isn't proper that you should inflict such pain on me, when you know how my heart is yearning for the chance to be with you. Lord! I am downcast, miserable. If you leave me and go, it will bring your name down. You have all the noble attributes, why then deny mercy to me? Can I keep alive for fourteen years, separated from you? I find it impossible to keep alive even for ten winks of separation! Accept my prayer, show me a little kindness. When I am with you, how can anyone dare harm or attack me? Why? No one dare cast a glance at me. Can the jackal or the hare open its eye and dare look at the lion? I am not a tender fragile person. To speak the truth, *you* are tenderness personified! The Earth is my mother. Therefore, I have every right and every strength to traverse the Earth. Really, happiness is your share in life. My lot is to suffer. When such is the case, why do you invent facts and cause disappointment to me. It is not correct. I declare that I can carry out with ease tasks which are beyond you! You know full well that I lifted up and placed aside the Bow of Siva that no king however proud of his prowess could lift. I am surprised that you doubt my capabilities! My valour and skill are not inferior to yours. So, do give me permission, and make arrangements to depart with me in great joy." (RKR V Part I, pp. 315-318)

Sita Wins

Sita bowed low, and fell at Rama's feet with these words. Rama felt that it would be improper to continue resisting her wishes. He resolved to yield. "Sita!" he said, "Give up your grief. Do not give way to sadness. As you desire, I shall take you with me. Engage yourselves quickly in preparing for the journey to the forest!"

Hearing the sweet words with which Ramachandra spoke, Sita was elated. She was filled with boundless joy. She said, "Preparation? What has one to prepare, to live in the forest? I am always ready, with whatever I need, for I need only you. I have no other want. I am following you, this moment. In you I have all I need. You know I have no desire for anything other than you." With these words, she held Rama's hand in hers and stepped forward. Rama said, "Sita! Consider this: You will not be in Ayodhya for fourteen years. Therefore go and release the parrots and birds you have reared as pets with love and care. And the cows you fostered with affection, give them away to Brahmins, so that they might be treated lovingly. Distribute the various articles of dress, the vehicles, and other articles used by you, to the people, or else, they will be ruined by time. It is better far that they be used rather than get disintegrated." When this suggestion was made, Sita immediately ran towards the cages, and addressing each pet bird in loving accents, told them; "Go! Like us, roam freely in the beautiful forest." With her own hands, she opened the cages and set them free! Then she went to the cow shed. She fed the cows with various tasty foods and talked to the Brahmins who were to receive them as gifts. Her charming face beamed with joy. Spectators who watched her give the things away felt their hearts melt with sorrow at her impending departure. They shed tears in streams for they were moved by the large-hearted generosity, and more than all, by her exultation at the prospect of accompanying her husband into exile in the forest. Her ecstasy was beyond the pen of any poet. (RKR V Part I, pp. 318-319)

Meanwhile, Lakshmana joined them. After taking leave of his mother the three then moved on. (RKR V Part I, p. 319)

Entering Into Exile

Sita in the city of Nagas

The three resumed their journey. Soon, they saw before them a City, which shone brighter than even the City of the Nagas. As they neared the light, they wondered which City it was. The nearer they came, the more delighted they were at the grandeur and charm of the City and its suburbs. Reaching quite near, they took it to be Amaravathi²¹, the City of the Gods and they were still more delighted. They felt that the citizens must be gods, not men. They sat under a tree in its cool shade and admired its splendour and magnificence.

The people came around them and questioned among themselves whether they had come down from “heaven” and were the Immortals themselves. They ran into the town and spread the good news that some divine personalities were coming into the City bringing great good luck with them. Everyone who heard them ran towards the visitors and vied with each other in attending to their comforts. Some placed milk before them. Some spread fruits. All

²¹ Amaravathi (Amaraavathee). Residence of Indra. Also, a city through which [Rama](#) passed on the way to exile in the forest. (Glossary of the Vahinis)

looked at them without even a wink! No one could leave them and go back. They stood unwilling to depart.

One of them, bolder than the rest, came forward, and spoke; “Sirs! Your charm and imposing personality make us infer that you are princes of royal blood. But you are journeying by foot along these rough jungle paths, with this damsel. You are climbing mountains and crossing rivers. You are hard travellers braving all the dangers of the trek; so, we have to conclude that you are like us, mere citizens. We cannot understand how you manage to travel across this forest where lions abound and herds of wild elephants roam. And you have with you this tender embodiment of loveliness and beauty. Have you no kith and kin, no friends and comrades, no well-wishers? If there were any such, certainly, they would not have allowed you to venture on this journey.” He enquired into the nature and cause of the journey and put a number of other questions to Rama. Meanwhile, a woman advanced from the gathering towards them, and addressed Rama thus: “Oh Prince! I am placing a prayer before you. Woman that I am, I am afraid to express it. Pardon my effrontery. We are common folk, unacquainted with verbal finesse. Your physical charm reflects the lustre of emerald and gold, which seem to be the source of your brightness. One of you has the complexion of the rain cloud, while the other is resplendent white. Both are as enchanting as a billion Gods of Love, moulded into human bodies. Again, we are not aware how this sweet damsel is related to you. She has the exquisite charm of the Goddess of Love, *Rathi Devi*. Watching her modesty and innate humility, as well as her charm, we women are ashamed of ourselves. Kindly tell us who you are, and for what purpose you have come thus wise.” Listening to their prayers and

watching their eagerness and joy, Rama and Lakshmana were very much amused.

Just then, Sita turned towards the women and spoke to them thus: “Sisters! This simple, sincere person with the golden complexion is Lakshmana. He is my Lord’s brother, a younger brother. Then about the dark-blue person; he with the Lotus-petal-eyes that enrapture the worlds, with the long, strong bow arms, (here, she turned towards Rama), this is my Lord, the very breath of my life.” Saying this, she bent her head and looked at the ground. Just then, a young maiden interjected, “Ma! You haven’t told us your name!” Sita immediately said, “My name is Sita. I am known as Janaki, the daughter of Janaka.” The women looked at each other in wonder and appreciation and then, with one voice, they blessed Sita profusely, saying, “May you both be as happy a couple as God Siva and Goddess Parvathi and may you live together, as long as the Sun and Moon, as long as the Earth rests upon the hood of the snake Adisesha, in harmony and unbroken joy.”

Rama too spoke to the men and informed them that they had come to see the grandeur and beauty of the forests and that their journey so far had been quite comfortable and useful, that they were not in the least exhausted or inconvenienced. He asked their permission to leave, and then, they turned to the forests again. Having nothing left to do, the men and women hied homeward. Sita, Rama and Lakshmana wended their way, talking among themselves about the citizens and the questions they asked, and affection they manifested and the joy that glinted in their eyes. Suddenly, Rama noticed signs of exhaustion on the face of Sita, and proposed that they rest awhile under the shady tree. A cool broad stream flowed

near by. Lakshmana ventured to the jungle and soon gathered some fruits and tubers, which all three ate with relish. They spent the night there, quite happily. At dawn they awoke, and finishing the morning ablutions, they started off on the next lap of their journey. Soon, they entered the fearsome recesses of the forest. The towering peaks, dark dreadful tangle of trees, and the deafening roar of flooded streams, produced a queer feeling of awe and mystery. (RKRV Part I, pp. 366-369)

Sita at Chitrakoota

Sita too never recalled, even for the fraction of a second, her relatives or parents, or the cities of Mithila and Ayodhya. She was fixing her eyes and attention on the Lotus Feet of Sri Ramachandra. That was the veritable festival for her eyes. She watched the stream of sages and their consorts who came to Rama for instruction and guidance. Time flowed by her without her noticing the passage of night and day. The chakora bird delights to the point of self-forgetfulness when the moon shines in the sky; so too, Sita reaped delight, fixing her eyes intently on the Face of Rama. For Sita, the lovely little grass-thatched bamboo cottage was so attractive that she forgot the palace of Mithila, where she grew up into maidenhood, and the palace of Ayodhya where she spent years as the Princely Daughter-in-law. That cottage was to her more pleasing and palatial than all the mansions she knew.

Jayantha

One day, a fool named Jayantha sought to measure the valour of Rama, an adventure as foolish and suicidal as the attempt of an ant to discover the depth of the Ocean!

Prompted by sheer mischief, he transformed himself into a crow²², and approaching Sita, who was seated by the side of Rama lost in the contemplation of the scenery spread out before them, and with his sharp beak, he pecked at the sole of her tender foot, causing blood to trickle from the wound. Seeing the stream of blood, Rama plucked a blade of dry grass from the ground and threw it at the crow. Rama will never hurt anyone who has not done any injury. But when it is necessary, and when it has to be done, even Rahu will swallow the Moon, isn't it? So too Rama. He will never hurt the innocent. But that blade of grass became a huge flame of fire and flew towards Jayantha. And when he fled, it pursued him relentlessly wherever he went. Helpless and frightened, the crow returned to its original form and Jayantha fell at the feet of Rama praying for succour. Indra came to know that the culprit was his own son and he too repented for his son's audacity and irreverence.

Jayantha prostrated before Rama and pleaded for mercy. He said, "I am a fool. I did not realise the baseness of my deed. Save me from your anger, from this fire."

Rama pitied the poor fellow, who had so humbled himself. He made one of his eyes ineffective and sent him away alive, as a single-eyed individual. The blade of grass that had become a

²² Kaakaasura, the crow-demon wounded Sita when Rama was sleeping on her lap *and* when Sita was helpless to ward him off. What happened to him? Rama made him and all his race one-eyed; the one eye-ball rolls from the right to the left and from left to right so that he may see this side and that. The meaning is that if you crave for Sita (*Prakriti*, the pleasing, the objective world) you cannot get a perfect picture, a synoptic vision; you become one-eyed, warped, defective. (SSS Vol.4, p. 134)

missile of fire was neutralised by him and it resumed its nature. Jayantha was grateful that he was let off with just a token punishment for the heinous crime he had committed. He lived for a long time on the Chitrakoota Peak, where Sita, Rama and Lakshmana had taken residence. One day, the tenth day of the bright half of the month Margasira, Rama ordered Jayantha to proceed southwards from his habitat. (RKRV Part II, pp. 1-2)

Rama, Sita and Lakshmana reach the hermitage of Athri

Sita, Rama and Lakshmana left Chitrakoota and reached the hermitage of the great Sage, Athri. The sage came to know in advance of the intention of Rama to visit his retreat, through his pupils. So when Rama was approaching the Ashram, he moved far out on the forest track in order to welcome Rama, Sita and Lakshmana. Athri was so overpowered with joy at the sign of Grace, that he shed profuse tears in his ecstasy and declared that the visit had indeed made his life realise its highest aim. He said that his austerities had at last borne fruit that day. That evening, the Sage Athri gathered his pupils and placed a high seat for Rama at the head of the assembly. His consort Anasuya²³ had meanwhile

²³ Anasuya: Wife of sage Athri and mother of Dattatreya; an incarnation of the Trinity. (*Glossary of the Vahinis*)

Anasuya (free from envy and jealousy), also known as Anasuya, was the wife of an ancient Indian rishi (sage) named Athri, in Hindu mythology. In the Ramayana, she appears living with her husband in a small hermitage in the southern periphery of the forest of Chitrakoota. She was very pious, and always practiced austerities and devotion. This made her attain miraculous powers. When Sita and her husband Rama visited her during their exile, Anasuya was very attentive to them, and gave Sita an ointment

attended to the needs of Sita and brought her too to that place. Then, he described to all present the sacredness of the occasion, the powers of Rama, Sita and Lakshmana, and the Divine Forces that had incarnated as those three. Anasuya also praised the virtues of Sita, and gave her holy counsel²⁴ on the duties of women and the ideals they should ever hold dear. Sita spoke to the fact that every individual, every being, and every creature had the feminine principle inherent in its composition. She said that though there are masculine and feminine roles, acting on the world stage, all are basically feminine, when their strength, emotions and attitudes are considered. She said that her Lord, Rama, is the incarnation of the One and only Masculine principle in the Universe. In him, she said, there is no trace of duality, of mine and thine, of grief or joy. He is the embodiment of fearlessness. He is strength personified. *Purusha* or the Eternal Masculine has wedded Nature or *Prakriti*, the Eternal Feminine. Though Nature appears manifold and variegated, it is really One undifferentiated Unity. Thus Sita revealed the truth of the Rama principle to Anasuya, the consort of the Sage Athri.

which was to keep her beautiful for ever. She was mother of the Dattatreya (the sage-avatar of Divine Trinity Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva), the irascible sage Durvasa and the moon-god Chandra. She was the daughter of Sage Kardama and his wife Devahuti. Sage Kapila was her brother and teacher. She is extolled as Sati Anasuya - Anasuya, the chaste wife. (***From Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia***)

²⁴ Sage Atri's wife Anasuya gave advice to Sita: 'Devotion of body, speech and mind to her lord's (husband's) feet is the only duty, sacred vow and penance of a woman'. A woman of the best type is convinced in her heart of hearts that she cannot even dream in this world, of a man other than her lord. (Aranya Kanda verse 4)

Asramites give a tearful farewell to Rama, Sita and Lakshmana:

Rama, Sita and Lakshmana spent a very happy time at the Ashram of the Sage Athri. They gave good counsel to the residents and pupils on various problems of right conduct. Then, taking leave of the Sage, they resumed their journey through the jungle. The Asramites shed tears of sorrow when they parted

At Bharadwaja Ashram:

Sita, Rama and Lakshmana went to the *ashram* of Bharadwaja²⁵. In that *ashram*, following the ancient practice, the women, the *rishipatnis*, were sitting on one side; the men, the *rishis*, were sitting on the other side. When Sita, Rama and Lakshmana entered the *ashram*, Sita went and joined the women and Rama and Lakshmana went and joined the *rishis*. As Rama and Lakshmana lived in the forest, they were wearing clothes suitable to life in a forest; and their shining faces were similar to those of the *rishis*. The situation was such that they were not able to make out who was Rama and who was Lakshmana. (SSB 1977, p. 64) *However, amongst them both, Rama was showing a certain amount of Divine light*²⁶.

On the other hand, Sita could be recognised easily. Sita was alone and the *rishipatnis* recognised her and began talking to her. They were asking questions about her life in the forest. The men, on the other hand, went on explaining the *Vedas* and the discussions centred round the *Vedas*. On the other hand, the women began

²⁵ Celebrated sage who taught the science of medicine; seer of *Vedic* hymns. (DhyV, pp. 116 - Glossary)

²⁶ (SSB 1972, p. 79)

asking questions and whispering. They came to Sita and asked her, “Has your husband also come with you?” Sita replied, “Yes, I cannot come alone, I cannot live without Him. He has come along with me and He is sitting along with the *rishis*.” The second question which was asked of Sita was, “Who is your husband? Can you find him out among so many of the *rishis*?” Sita was a very noble and modest woman, and could not stand up in the midst of all those present and point to her husband and say who her husband was. She simply bowed her head down and kept quiet. Even then the women did not keep quiet. (SSB 1977, p. 65) Knowing what was passing through Sita's mind and recognising her reluctance to get up and point to her husband, one of the women asked Sita by pointing at one of the men, “Is that person your husband?” She then replied in the negative by just nodding her head²⁷. Another woman came and asked her, “Is that person whose hair is tied up in knots your husband?” She again nodded her head in the negative. In this way, when many women came and asked Sita, pointing at the wrong person and asking the question, “Is that your husband?” she was nodding her head to indicate a negative reply. When Rama who was sitting there was actually pointed out, Sita said neither “yes” nor “no”. She simply exhibited a significant, happy and pleasant smile.²⁸. (SSB 1972, pp. 79-80)

²⁷ But whenever a wrong person was shown, she would reply in the negative. Locating *Atma* should proceed in this manner. (SSB 1977, p. 65)

²⁸ Indian culture and the teachings of Vedanta take you through making the statements 'this is not I', 'this is not I', 'this is not I' and so on until you are able to realise what 'I' is. Our Vedanta teaches us something which is exactly similar to this story. If you point at the wrong thing and if that is not the supreme reality, then you say 'no'. Anything that is shown and is not the right thing should call forth the comment 'this is not that', 'this is not that' and so on.. When you put your finger at the supreme reality, the

Off and on, Rama used to relate stories of ancient heroes famed in Puranic lore and describe the varied achievements of persons who had mastered the mysteries of austerity. These were heard by Sita and Lakshmana eagerly and with enthusiasm. In the midst of these narrations, Rama used to remember his parents, and remind them of their grief at being separated from them. On these occasions, Sita had her eyes filled with tears at the thought of her father-in-law and mother-in-law. Drops rolled down her cheeks when she pictured the plight of Queen Kausalya. Suddenly, she pulled herself up, with the thought that she was with Rama, the Lion among men, that it was not proper to give in to sadness or anxiety in the forest while she was in his presence and that whatever happens must be welcomed as the leela (cosmic play) of her Lord. Thus, Sita spent her days in undiluted happiness in that cottage, with Rama and Lakshmana. They too were guarding her like the lids of the eye against the slightest disturbance or noise that might affect her equanimity, and raise fears in her mind. No worry affected them. No grief or pain or shade of sadness marred their happiness at Chitrakoota. (RKR V Part I, p. 380)

Sita's Dream

Even before the hour of dawn that day, Rama had risen from sleep. He communicated to Sita that his father was coming into his consciousness more often than on other days. At this, Sita said, "Lord! You know that I do not get any dreams, any day. But this night I had a very wonderful dream! I can even say it wasn't really a dream. I dreamt that Bharatha and Satrugna had become frail

Brahman, then you are in supreme bliss and happiness. Such is the nature of Vedanta of ours. (SSB 1972, pp. 79-80)

and weak, as a result of separation from you. I dreamt that, finding it impossible to be in Ayodhya without you for a single moment, they are coming to us, with not only the people of Ayodhya, but also the Queens Kausalya, Sumitra and Kaikeyi.” Tears gathered in her eyes while she was describing the experience. Rama called Lakshmana near and told him, “Brother, you heard, didn’t you, the account of Sita’s dream? This does not indicate good tidings; for Sita saw all the others and I saw in my dream only father, father alone, with no association or relation with the rest of them. This strikes me as a bad omen. Come! It is best we take a bath.” Accordingly, the three of them went to the river for the bath. (RKR V Part I, pp. 441-442)

The Brothers Meet

The Queens, Kausalya, Sumitra and Kaikeyi, and the ministers, the Royal Preceptor Vashishta, the Pundits and Citizens, the members of the armed forces came near, and were overcome by both grief and joy when they saw Rama. Their sorrow when they looked on Rama in hermits’ robes by the side of the lowly hut could not be wiped out by the joy at setting their eyes on their dearly beloved Prince. They wailed and wept, shedding tears of grief and gratitude. The cry, “Rama! Rama!” that rose from their torn hearts sped over the vast expanse of earth and sky. (RKR V Part I, p. 444)

Sita went towards her mothers-in-law, and touched their feet in great reverence. She also prostrated before the feet of the wife of the Royal Preceptor. She met the women who had come from Ayodhya and with due consideration put them at ease, by her sweet welcome. When their eyes fell upon Sita, the Queens wept

aloud. The womenfolk who had come from Ayodhya saw the plight of their charming young Princess and they were so overcome with sorrow that they too could not desist from wailing. Coming to know that Emperor Dasaratha had left the body, Sita prostrated before the Queens again and again, saying: “Alas! What misfortune is ours! The Emperor gave up his life because he could not bear separation from us!” Sita felt that the news of Dasaratha’s departure was as a thunderbolt on her heart. She and the Queens wept for long at the turn that events had taken. Everyone that day could not take either food or drink. They had no mind for either. The entire day and night were spent in sorrow. (RKR V Part I, p. 446)

Sita was engaged in serving the mothers-in-law, anticipating their needs and overeager to serve. She consoled and comforted them. She told them how she was spending her days happily in the forest, lacking nothing, and she made them wonder at her fortitude and skill. They were rendered happy at the thought that she was able to derive so much joy under such adverse conditions. They bore their own sorrow with greater ease, when they saw how Sita was braving her own. (RKR V Part I, p. 448)

Sita’s advice to Bharatha and Satrugna not to deviate a little from the guidelines marked by Rama:

Later the brothers proceeded to where Sita was and fell at her feet. On seeing her, they could not contain their grief. They burst into sobs. She consoled them softly and sweetly in various ways. “Is there aught else than the armour of Rama that can protect anyone in the world? You are indeed blessed. The fourteen years will roll

by as swift as fourteen seconds, and the Empire will smile in plenty and peace with the return of Rama. Carry on the administration with patience and devotion. Don't deviate a little from the guidelines he has marked out. By this rigorous obedience you will be able to secure the fruits of your desires." (RKR V Part I, pp. 473-474)

PANCHAVATI

Rama wished to stay at Panchavati on the Godavari for some length of time.

Sita's Advice

The three exiles started living in Panchavati. Sita, however, was not happy in Panchavati, because almost every day Rama and Lakshmana indulged in violence. One day, while Lakshmana was away collecting fruits and tubers, Sita approached Rama and said, "Lord, those who have desires commit three evils: uttering falsehood, eyeing other ladies, and committing violence. Certainly, You are free from the first two evils. I firmly believe that You can never utter falsehood, for You are the Embodiment of Truth." Rama felt happy at these words of Sita and said, "It is certainly a qualification for a man to be described as a virtuous person by his own wife. Sita, I am happy that you have recognised My affinity to Truth." Sita continued, "You are also free from the weakness of looking at the wives of others. This is another great virtue in You. But I cannot appreciate Your committing violence on the beasts and demons. These demons are in no way harming You." Rama smiled at these words and said, "Sita, though you have spoken the truth, My conduct is in consonance with the promise I gave to the

sages and aspirants here. I am bound by My duty and want to stand by My promise. Though these demons are not harming Me personally, they are subjecting My devotees to untold suffering. They ruthlessly disturb the sacrifices performed by the sages. The sages perform sacrifices for the welfare and well-being of mankind. I cannot but resort to violence for the well-being of mankind.”

Sita realised her mistake and sought the forgiveness of Rama by touching His feet. The conduct of Sita is in consonance with the scriptural injunction:

*The wife should advise her husband well when he indulges in evil;
She should be like a Minister who advises the King properly. (SSB 1996 p.44-45)*

Rama tells Sita to place herself in Keeping of Agni – time for the divine act to commence for which they have come:

At the hermitage in Panchavati, Sita and Rama suddenly felt that the moment of fulfilment of their task had come. Rama sent Lakshmana to collect tubers and fruits for the day. Noting that the proper hour had come, he told Sita thus: “Companion! You know all. Both of us are aware why we have come on earth, and what our task is. That task is now calling us. We have to enter upon it, in right earnest now. Your nature and characteristics are noble and holy beyond measure. We both have assumed these human bodies through rites associated with the Fire Principle. My body arose

from the Offering brought out of the flames of the sacrificial Fire by the God Agni Himself. You rose from the earth that was furrowed by the sacred plough in order to consecrate it for a Fire-Altar, where a Yajna (sacrifice) had to be performed. Our bodies are born in fire and are being sustained by the warmth of fire. Therefore Sita, deposit all your Divine attributes and splendour in Fire, and act as an ordinary human being hereafter. I too shall move and act as an ordinary human being, and exhibit sorrow and anxiety on your account, the pangs of separation and the pain of loneliness. The world would keep in mind only these modes of behaviour, and take us as human. They will accept them as worldly conduct and natural reaction. Remember that the smallest act of ours has to be an ideal for the householders of the world. We have to hold forth models in the relationship between the husband and the wife. They have to be quite in consonance with the principles of Truth and Righteousness. Our activities have to be in conformity with the guidelines laid down in the Sastras, the spiritual texts. We have to shape our lives, in an exemplary manner, so that common men can be inspired thereby and prompted to follow the ideals elaborated therein. We have to enact this drama until the final consummation, namely, the destruction of Ravana and the Rakshasas.

“Therefore, place your Divine Splendour in the keeping of the God of Fire, Agni, and move about as an ordinary woman caught in the coils of illusion, Maya. For, there can be no effect without a cause. We must consummate the effect, namely, the destruction of Ravana and the Rakshasa brood. So, we must manipulate a cause to justify it or bring it about. Ravana has a basic fault in his structure, namely, his lustful passion. We have to highlight it

before the world. So, we have to so prepare such a situation that it would appear as if he kidnaps you in a fit of passion. The world has to realise that his ‘dedication and devotion to God’ are not of the highest order, for of what use is that sense of surrender if it is tarnished by the craving for sensual pleasure and immoral yearnings? Activities and behaviour emanating from a consciousness that is not pure are tarnished. The devotion to God that is polluted by lust is as foul as dirt—these truths have to be emphasised now, for the benefit of mankind. It is also imperative to announce for the benefit of mankind that any spiritual sadhana or asceticism, or religious rite or ritual undertaken with the intention of gaining superhuman powers are paltry and pernicious. We have to hold forth Ravana as a warning to mankind that however many divine rites and acts one may do, if one does not give up one’s demonic passions and impulses, they add up to only one result: rendering them unholy and sterile.”

“Over and above all this, Sita, there is one overwhelming consideration we have to place before ourselves. There is a curse that has been pronounced on Ravana and he has also been assured of a means by which he could end its consequence. We have to see that the means is fulfilled. The beginning of his end has arrived. Today or tomorrow, we have to be separated from each other. Of course, we are inseparable entities and nothing can keep us apart. Yet, we have to pretend that it has happened, in order to render the make-believe effective. Go now, and deposit your Divine Form in the keeping of Agni (Fire). It is time for Lakshmana to return with the fruits and tubers. And Ravana is ready with his perverted intelligence.”

“I have to inform you of another secret, too. You have to perform your part in the destruction of the Rakshasas. Though you might be apparently under the surveillance of Ravana, since your Power is immanent in Fire, you will have to burn Lanka to ashes emerging from the Fire where your Self is dormant from now on. Lanka has to be turned to ashes, not by Fire, but by you as Fire. And Rama has to kill Ravana. That is the Divine Will. This truth has to be proclaimed. This mystery is to be kept from Lakshmana also. He is our instrument in this endeavour. When this task is accomplished and we have to re-enter Ayodhya, I shall accept you again from the Fire where you reside. That act too I will transform into a lesson for the world. The drama starts now,” Rama said. Both Sita and Rama decided on their plan of action and awaited the unfoldment of Ravana’s strategy. From that moment, every act and behaviour of Sita and Rama, the pangs of separation, the gasps of anxiety, the sighs of pain, and the groans of grief—were gestures and reactions in the drama decided upon. They were not genuine at all. For, how can Sita and Rama ever be separated? Through their conduct, they only willed to teach mankind some valuable lessons. (RKR V Part II, pp. 46-49)

Remember always that it is easy to do what is pleasant; but it is difficult to be engaged in what is beneficial. Not all that is pleasant is profitable.

Success comes to those who give up the path strewn with roses, and brave the hammer-blows and sword-thrusts of the path fraught with danger.

- *Bhagawan Sathya Sai Baba*

Abduction of Sita

Arrival of Surpanakha:

It is at the time when Rama, along with Sita and Lakshmana, was having His sacred hut sixteen miles away from the *Rishi's ashram* that Surpanakha²⁹ came there. (SSB 1977, p. 14) The lady *introduced* herself, "I am the sister of the brave Ravana. I am the sister of Kumbhakarna and Vibhishana, Khara, and Dushana. My name is Surpanakha." (SSB 1996, p. 67)

Rama asks Lakshmana to cut off her ears and nose:

Surpanakha³⁰ who deemed herself most beautiful, approached Rama saying, "Rama! Does Sita possess the beauty that I do? She looks emaciated. Look how beautiful I am. Rama and Lakshmana laughed within themselves at this³¹. (SSB 2002, p. 207)

After some time, Surpanakha became enraged. She thought, "It is because of the presence of Sita that Rama is not interested in me. If she is not there, Rama will certainly yield to my request." (SSB 2002, p. 95)

²⁹ Ravana's wicked sister. (Glossary for the Vahinis)

³⁰ (SSB 1996, pp. 50-51)

³¹ Everyone considers himself/herself good looking but may appear ugly to others. So, they did not want to argue with her. They told her "We don't match your good looks. Please find someone who is as beautiful as you are." It is easy to criticize but very difficult to analyse. But in this world many criticize divinity in many ways. (SSB 2002, p. 207)

Surpanakha came to Rama and said, “If You permit me, I will kill Sita and Lakshmana so that both of us can live happily in this forest.” Saying this she rushed toward Sita in order to swallow her. Rama sent a signal to Lakshmana by looking at the sky. The intelligent Lakshmana, who had a thorough understanding of the signs and gestures of Rama, concluded that Rama was asking him to cut off her nose and ears, since the sky signifies sound and sound in turn signifies ears (SSB 1996, pp. 50-51) Lakshmana rushed towards the demonic woman with his sword drawn. He dragged her down to the ground; and shouting that her effrontery must be punished, he slashed off her ears and nose. (RKR V Part II, p. 31)

Surpanakha raised such aloud wail that the forest quaked and quivered. She assumed her real shape as an ogress yelled, “Is this just? How can you deform, so cruelly, a woman who has come to you? I shall bring my brother Ravana here and inflict retribution for this cruel act.” With this, she disappeared quickly into forest. (RKR V Part II, p. 31)

Surpanakha lost no time to appear before her brother, Ravana, rending the air with her weeping. Hearing her story, Ravana became uncontrollably furious. (RKR V Part II, p. 40) Ravana addressed his sister thus: “Sister, tell me, do those two brothers live at Panchavati all alone? Or, are there others with them? Have they no followers, companions or courtiers?”

Surpanakha describes Sita:

Surpanakha replied “No. They have no band of bodyguards or kinsmen or warriors. The elder of the two, named Rama, has a

woman with him, who is endowed with superlative beauty. She is even more charming than they. She is the very Goddess of Love, in human form. The two brothers are resident at Panchavati, with this woman. They roam about freely and without fear in the forest glades and valleys. In fact, I have never so far set eyes on such perfect feminine beauty. The likes of her does not exist on heaven or earth.” (RKR V Part II, p. 42)

Ravana sends an army of Forty thousand:

Ravana burned with fury when he heard her and at once dispatched a force of forty thousand demons to destroy Rama. Meanwhile, Lakshmana thought that it was not wise to keep Sita there, since there would be an encounter between Rama and the demons. He took Sita to a cave and stood guard at its entrance, while Rama fearlessly faced the forty thousand demons. He discharged an arrow, which multiplied itself into forty thousand arrows and attacked the demons, annihilating them all in no time. (SSB 1996, p. 51)

The Cause for the *Ramayana*

Surpanakha’s anger and frustration increased on seeing the death of the vast army of demons at the hand of Rama, and she now resolved to bring about the death of Rama and Lakshmana at any cost. She said to Ravana, “Brother, Sita, the wife of Rama, is the most beautiful lady I have ever seen. She is a lady worthy to be your wife. Somehow or other, bring her to your palace. This would be the greatest achievement in your life.”

*People do not hear noble words,
But they eagerly hear evil words.
How can these people ever realise You?
Of what avail is all their intelligence?*

Evil people easily succumb to evil words. The words of Surpanakha created a storm in the mind of Ravana. He worked hard at hatching a plot to abduct Sita and make her his wife. He summoned Maricha to help in the abduction of Sita. He asked him to don the guise of a golden deer and draw Rama away from Sita, so that he could abduct Sita. Maricha, who had earlier witnessed the prowess and sanctity of Rama, tried to reason with Ravana, saying, “Ravana, you do not know the matchless strength and prowess of Rama. There is none equal to Him in the world. Your power and prowess are infinitesimally small when compared with the infinite power of Rama. You will only bring about the destruction of your life and kingdom!” (SSB 1996, pp. 51-52)

Ravana seeks the Help of Maricha

Then Ravana went to Maricha and sought his help for killing Rama. (SSB 1977, p. 14)

Maricha the demon assumed the form of a golden deer and began moving about in the vicinity of the *Ashram*. Sita was fascinated by the charming golden deer and persuaded Rama to catch it and bring it to her so that she could play with it. (SSS Vol. 41, pp. 112-113)

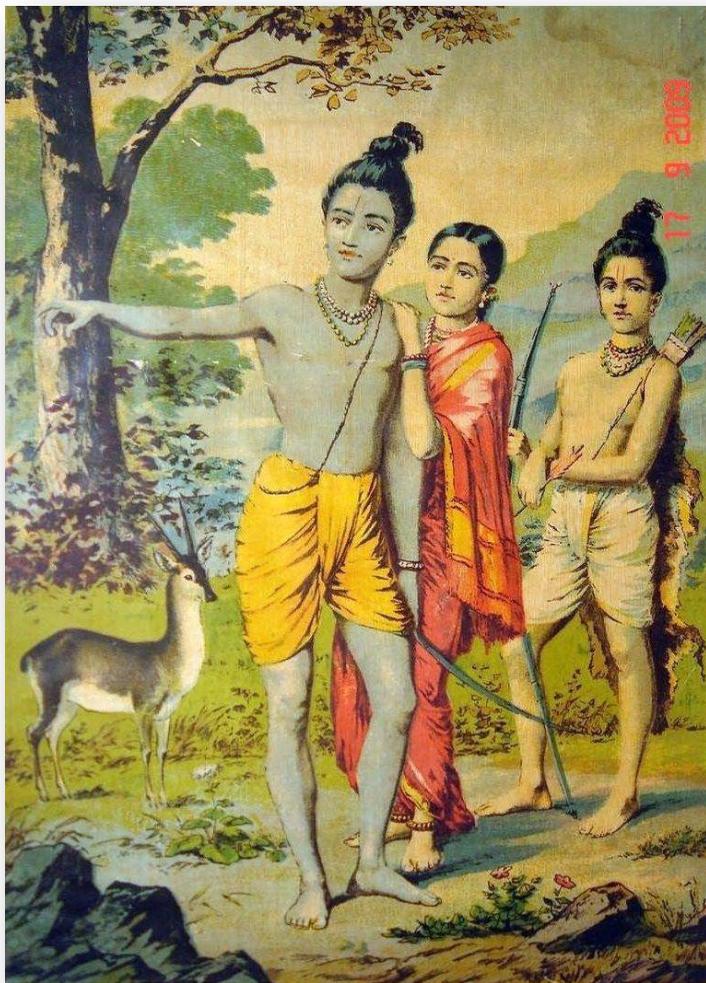


Figure 3: Sita desires the golden deer

Summary of the Photo (from Wikipedia)

Description **English:** The lord Rama portrayed as exile in the forest, accompanied by his wife Sita and brother Lakshmana

Date 1920s

Source http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00routesdata/bce_299_200/ramayana/goldendeer/goldendeer.html

Author Raja Ravi Press

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*Hear my prayer, O Lord! I love this golden deer
Fetch it for me. O Rama, and fulfil my desire
thereby.
I will play with golden deer,
In this lovely hut that my brother- in- law has built
for me.*

She had never before asked for the fulfilment of any wish³². So Rama went after the golden deer to capture it for her. (SSB 1996, p. 52)

Rama decided to oblige her as per the divine plan. However, he instructed Lakshmana to stay behind and guard the *Ashram* and Sita from the wily demons, during his absence. As Rama went in pursuit of the golden deer, it went deep into the forest. Finally, Rama lifted his bow and released a fatal arrow on the deer. Maricha in the guise of the golden deer at last fell dead in his real form. However, before he breathed his last, he cried in agony, in a feigned voice of Rama, “Ha! Sita, Ha! Lakshmana.” The cry fell on the ears of Sita and Lakshmana. (SSS Vol. 41, p. 113)

Sita, on hearing the cry implored Lakshmana to go in search of Rama immediately. Lakshmana counselled Sita that no danger could ever befall Rama and that this was all the plan of the wily demons. Sita was not convinced. She even used harsh words that

³² Sita renounced Ayodhya, the palace and all the dreams of happiness she had, and followed Rama into the forest, when he was exiled; but, the sight of a golden deer aroused her latent desires, and she had to face a series of calamities as a consequence of the emergence of 'attachment' to worldly objects! Time had conspired to keep the roots of desire alive in her heart. (SSS Vol.7, p. 121)

hurt Lakshmana, while compelling him to go to the rescue of Rama. “*Oh! Lakshmana! Perhaps you wish to make me your wife when Rama dies.*”³³ Of course, this too was as per the divine plan that would unfold itself in the future. Left with no other option, Lakshmana agreed to go in search of Rama. However, before he left the *Ashram*, he drew a line around the hermitage and asked Sita not to step out of that line under any circumstances till Rama and himself returned. (SSS Vol. 41, pp. 113-114)

In fact, after Lakshmana left the *ashram*, Sita too was deeply distressed at her own behaviour towards Lakshmana, She wailed,

Oh! Lakshmana! My brother-in-law dear!

I spoke bad words about you. Oh! Man of noble qualities!

Unable to bear those words and deeply hurt

Did you move away from me? (Telugu song)

She begged to be pardoned for her unbecoming behaviour. But, alas! What had happened had already happened. The damage had already been done. (SSS Vol.40, p. 193)

As soon as Lakshmana left the hermitage in search of Rama, Ravana approached the *Ashram* in the guise of a *rishi*. He stood before the *Ashram* and asked for food saying “*Bhavati bhiksham dehi*” (Oh Mother, give me food). (SSS Vol. 41, pp. 113-114)

Sita heard the cry. She knew that it was Ravana. She brought tubers and fruits in her palms, and came through the door and

³³ (SSS Vol.40, pp. 191-192)

stood outside. But Ravana dared not go near her to receive them. He said, "I shall not come close to any hermitage. This is my vow." He wanted Sita to offer the alms into his hand. Sita replied, "No, I cannot cross the line that was drawn by my brother-in-law. Come yourself, revered guest! Receive it from me here." At this, the mendicant who was really an impersonation, urged, "Lady, I will not cross the line and come beyond it. Nor can I accept alms given from beyond a line. It is not proper for ascetics like me. Come, give it to me, I am hungry. I am very hungry." He acted the part so well, with many a gasp and gesture that Sita decided to give him the alms she had in her hand, crossing the line and getting near him. All this happened in a trice. No sooner did she cross the line than Ravana drew her by the hand and lifted her away into a waiting chariot. He did not pay heed to her lamentations, but drove the chariot into the distance with terrible speed. Sita screamed out, "Oh Rama! Lakshmana! Come and save me from this wicked monster." The anchorites and forest-dwellers around Panchavati heard the cry but could not save the person who lamented. The entire forest faded green to brown, when the voice of agony passed through it. "Oh Rama! Oh Master, save me! Oh save me! Save me from this monster!" that was the cry that reverberated in the forest and made all things that move and do not move, sorrow-stricken.

Sita warns Ravana:

Sita was admonishing Ravana inside the chariot. "Ravana! You are building a royal road for your own destruction. You are effacing your empire, your subjects, your dynasty, completely, without trace. You are perpetrating this vileness with a laugh on your face; but, the day will come when you will pay for it with

tears in your eyes. Mean wretch, this vicious act is unbecoming of a person who has practised austerities like you.” She gave him many a piece of advice and warning. She also called upon Rama and Lakshmana to rescue her. (RKRV Part II, pp. 56-57)

Jatayu

Jatayu rushes to help Sita:

The monarch of eagles, Jatayu, heard the plaintive cries that rose from that moving chariot. He recognised the voice as that of Sita. He realised that Sita was in the chariot of Ravana. He grieved over his age, which made him too weak to fight Ravana, the villain who was taking her away. He felt that it would be wrong not to hinder him. He knew that no act of service can be nobler than rescuing a woman from the clutches of a fellow who was kidnapping her from her lord and master. He resolved to sacrifice his life, if need be, for the holy act of saving Sita from the demonic grasp, and using all his energy and skill for that act of service.

Jatayu consoles Sita and tries to rescue her:

Circling overhead, Jatayu shouted, “O Sita! Have no fear, I shall destroy this cruel villain and release you. I shall place you in the Presence of Rama.” He flew across the chariot’s path, and hit Ravana many times with his sharp beak, causing him to bleed profusely. He beat the chariot with his wings and attempted to stop it by creating a terrific wind that would retard its speed. Even while on his wings, he gave Ravana excellent advice to correct himself, before it was too late.



Figure 4: Jatayu Battles Ravana

Source of the Photo

Artist	Raja Ravi Varma (1848–1906)
Title	English: Jatayu Vadham
Description	English: Seetha horrified seeing Ravana cutting Jatayu's wing.
Date	1895
Medium	oil on canvas
Current location	English: Sri Chitra Art Gallery, Thiruvananthapuram , Kerala .
Source/Photographer	http://www.coolmags.net/art-paintings/raja-ravi-varma-paintings-part-ii-paintings-based-on-hindhu-mythology.html

Advices Ravana:

“Ravana! This is a step that would bring you no good. Release Sita and go safely home. Or else, like moths that fall into fire, you and your brood will be burnt in the fire of Rama’s anger. Your pride will cause your total ruin. To kidnap another’s wife is a heinous sin. Only a sinful heart will yearn for another’s wife and wander in search of her. Only base brutes, worse than dogs or foxes, will descend to such depths. You are acting like one who is so mad that he cannot pay heed to what is in store for him. Consider, is there a more barbarous crime than this? Oh! What a sin have your parents done to be claiming you as their son? Your head has turned because you reckon on your physical strength, your riches and the peoples under your control. But listen, all these will go up in flames and be reduced to ashes. Even the powers you have achieved through your austerities will be destroyed in a trice. Will you remain calm and inactive, when your wives are carried away or coveted by other Rakshasas? In fact, those who respect women, both those who are their wives and those who are not, will never invite this dread misfortune on their heads.”

Uttering these words of golden advice, Jatayu flew along with the speeding chariot for some distance; Sita derived great consolation listening to the words of Jatayu. She was comforted when she heard these sentiments so well expressed.

Jatayu battles Ravana:

Jatayu succeeded in stopping the chariot and forcing Ravana to engage in battle with him, after making Sita dismount and helping her to sit under a tree. But age took its toll. He could not fight for

long. He was soon overcome. But he was able, during the fight, to pull down the crown from his head and pluck a few bunches of hair. He pecked at his body so fiercely in so many places that he was turned into a mass of bleeding flesh. Jatayu's beak and widespread wings hurt Ravana a great deal and humbled his pride. As a last resort, Ravana drew his wheel-sword, and with its sharp edge, he cut off the wings of Jatayu, felling him helpless on the ground. Wings are as the very breath to eagles. So, he cried out in his agony the name of Rama and fell on the ground.

“I fought, with no reservations, in the cause of my Master; but, my struggle was of no avail. This too is the will of Rama. Rama must have planned all this, in order to confer some benefit on the world. Or else, can Sita be taken away by force by anyone, without His will designing the act? I have now only one prayer to Him. I must hold my breath at least until I meet Him and am able to convey this news to Him. I have nothing greater to do in this life.” So saying, he closed his eyes and was lost in prayer. Meanwhile, Ravana had placed Sita again in the chariot, and started off in great haste and with much commotion. Jatayu saw him moving past. He heard Sita crying out for help. Jatayu was sunk in anguish that he could not offer further resistance. He lay in a pool of his own tears, his heart yearning for Rama and his tongue whispering His Name.

“When death draws near, when calamity is a few steps off, nature behaves in an unexpected manner to warn and teach. Things behave topsy-turvy. This Ravana too, is behaving in this manner, since his end is near, and his kith and kin are about to be wiped off the face of the earth.” Jatayu realised this truth and lay there,

keeping himself alive by his own will, awaiting the approach of Rama. (RKR V Part II, pp. 57-60)

Rama and Lakshmana meet the wounded Eagle:

In order to discover some clue about how Sita left or why or when or where to, Rama and Lakshmana forsook the hermitage, armed with weapons. They examined every tank and looked over every hill in the region. They could not come across any sign. While proceeding thus, they saw before them branches of trees that had been pulled asunder lying across the track. There were other evidences of a combat that had taken place like broken arrows and patches of blood. Rama drew the attention of his brother to these.

He said, “A fight seems to have taken place here,” and looked around for information about who had engaged whom. He found an eagle of truly regal mien lying on the ground, gasping for breath, but still repeating reverentially with eyes closed the Name it adored, “Rama, Rama.” The brothers walked straight to the bird and lovingly stroked its head and body. When the hand of Rama blessed it with the tender touch, the bird recovered some little strength. It opened its eyes and looked around. It saw the beautiful form of Rama that could captivate all the worlds. Suddenly it was overpowered by a flood of both joy and sorrow. The incapacitated bird could not move its limbs, nor could it turn on its side. So it crawled a little forward and raising its head, placed it at the Feet of Rama. Rama placed the head on his lap and gently fondled it into awareness and activity.

Jatayu said in feeble accents, “Lord! While the wicked Ravana—yielding to maleficent motives, forsaking justice and uprightness, casting away powers acquired by years of asceticism—by carrying

away Mother Sita, in a chariot, through this forest, as a dog goes in stealth and as a fox goes cunningly, the Mother of all the Worlds, the Daughter of Janaka wailed aloud, ‘Rama,’ ‘Rama,’ covering the entire forest in gloom. I heard the wail, but did not know who it was that raised the sad cry. I flew near and discovered to my great surprise and sorrow that Mother Sita was the person in distress! I could not remain quiet. Though old and decrepit, I pronounced your Name, and derived strength thereby and courage to give him battle. I pecked at him so furiously, that his body streamed with blood all over. He placed Sita in the shade of a tree and fought ferociously.

He drew his wheel-weapon and slashed my wings into shambles. I could not do anything to stop his onward journey with Sita. I lay here, weeping over my defeat, and waiting for your arrival. I am most unlucky, for, though I saw Mother being taken away by that ruffian, I could not save her.”

Rama Praises Jatayu’s help:

Jatayu shed tears of despair, as he spoke those words. Rama too displayed great interest and anxiety, and he addressed the bird thus: “Oh Chief of Birds! I shall never forget your help. The good deed you have performed will give you Bliss in the next world. Do not feel sad.” Thus saying, Rama dusted its wings with his own matted hair³⁴, while Lakshmana hurried to bring some water to slake its thirst and refresh it. Rama poured the water drop by drop

³⁴ Rama showed compassion to the dying eagle Jatayu, which had fought with Ravana when he was carrying Sita away to Lanka (SSS Vol.20, pp. 54-55)

into the bird's mouth. Jatayu was delighted at the good fortune and his face glowed with ecstasy.

Jatayu breathes his last:

Jatayu said, "Rama, I am luckier than even your father, for he did not have this chance of drinking water from your hands when he left this world. I could get my last sip from your golden hand! I could rest on your lap. I could drink nectar from your fingers. And while drawing my last breath, I could fill my eyes with the picture of your charming Lotus Face. I am certain I will be merging in you. Oh, I am indeed blessed." Then, Jatayu spoke in feeble tones: "Rama! That vicious demon proceeded in the southern direction. Most probably, he must have reached Lanka. Therefore, go straight to Lanka, destroy that wicked fellow and then bring the Mother to your presence." Jatayu could speak no more. (RKR V Part II, pp. 66-69)

Rama placed Jatayu's head on His lap and poured cool water down its throat³⁵. Drinking water from Rama's hand, *he cried "Rama" just once and drew his last breath*³⁶.

Rama performs the last rites:

Rama allowed the vital breath of Jatayu to merge in Him. He performed the obsequies to the body of the bird and took the

³⁵ Dasaratha did not have the good fortune of drinking water from Rama's divine hands at the time of his death. But Jatayu was fortunate enough to be the recipient of such an act of grace in his last moments. (SSS Vol.32 Part I, p. 194)

³⁶ (RKR V Part II, pp. 66-69)

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valedictory bath. After these rituals, he moved towards the south³⁷ picturing in his mind the regions of the South and the ordeals of Sita. (RKRV Part II, pp. 66-69)

³⁷ While dying, Jatayu told Rama to seek the help of Sugriva, who lived on Mount Matanga. Rama performed the last rites of Jatayu and started toward the Matanga Mountain. (SSB 1996, p. 47)

Sita in Lanka

In Ashokavana:

Ravana took Sita to Lanka and kept her in confinement under a tree in the *Ashokavana*. Sita then lamented for her indiscreet act of becoming crazy about a golden deer and the consequences that followed. She lamented, “Oh! Why did that sinful animal (golden deer) come to the vicinity of our hermitage? Why did I develop a fascination for that golden deer? Why did I request Rama to catch that deer and bring it to me?” Of what use is all this repentance at this stage? She found herself in captivity in Lanka. (SSS Vol. 41, p. 114) Sita too felt very sorry that she had to encounter this pitiable situation because she did not pay heed to Lakshmana’s words. Sitting in *Asoka Vana* in Lanka, she was pondering,

“Will I ever move out of this prison?

Will I ever be able to see Rama?

Oh! My dear brother-in-law Lakshmana!

I hurled several abuses at you, Oh! Noble one!”

She was repenting, “Lakshmana! I am undergoing this punishment for having hurt your feelings.” Sita, however, was spending her time with courage and confidence constantly contemplating on Rama. She assured herself that her own conscience was her witness and none could do anything to her (SSS Vol.39, p. 239)

Sita was imprisoned in the Asoka gardens. There was none there whom she could call her own. She was a helpless and weak woman. She gave up food and sleep. Though in a weak condition, she did not give in to the mighty Ravana³⁸. (SSB 1996, p. 111)

Ravana kept three ladies to guard Sita during her incarceration in the *Ashokavana*. One was Sarama, the wife of Vibhishana, younger brother of Ravana. The other two ladies were Ajata and

³⁸ **Virtues—the true wealth**

Her innate strength protected her from any harm. Ultimately, Ravana's strength turned out to be highly inferior in comparison to Sita's inner strength. Her strength was associated with Divine effulgence. That strength is inherent in everyone and not merely in Sita alone. That is the reason it is said, "*Mamatma sarva bhutantaratma.*" Starting from the millionaire to the pauper, everybody has this power latent in him. Why must not man utilise this power?

When the lamp is shining in your own house, how foolish it is to go for the light in your neighbour's house! You would be called a fool. Similarly, you need not conduct any investigations. You need not banish yourself to the forests. You need not perform meditation. All you have to do is to turn your vision inward. Follow the divine command. There is no greater wealth than that. Good virtues alone are the true wealth in this world.

*Good virtues, good intellect, dedication, devotion, discipline,
And duty consciousness—these are the qualities taught by true education.
These are the things that a student ought to learn.*

Where are these good qualities? What is this body that you are so proud of?

*The bowels are full of excreta, the support is entirely by bones;
All this is covered by the dirty skin.
At every moment, it gives foul odour.
Never does it generate pleasant smells.*

This is the body you are so proud of! What is your true Self? It is not this body. Do not consider the *swarupa* (form) as the reality. It is the inner nature (*swabhava*) that is important. If the inner Self is developed, the outer body will enjoy happiness by itself. (SSB 1996, pp. 111-112)

Trijata, who were none other than daughters of Sarama. They were very considerate towards Sita, keeping up her sagging morale all the while by their comforting words. Sita wondered whether such good people also existed in Lanka. In fact, it was due to their consoling words and protection that Sita could bear her ordeal courageously. (SSS Vol. 41, pp. 114-115)

Hanuman sees Sita

At that time, Sita was in the company of Sarama, the wife of Vibhishana, and her two daughters, Ajata and Trijata³⁹. Hanuman found that these three ladies were the only friends of Sita in Lanka.

³⁹ **The Services Of Vibhishana's Wife And Daughters:**

They were very considerate towards Sita, keeping up her sagging morale all the while by their comforting words. Sita wondered whether such good people also existed in Lanka. In fact it was due to their consoling words and protection that Sita could hear her ordeal courageously. Though Sita was imprisoned in Lanka, Ravana did not dare to touch her. He knew that he would be reduced to ashes if he touched her without her consent. He was all the while pleading with her to accept him. When Ravana stooped to the level of denigrating Rama and threatened her, she even without even looking at his face, plucked out a blade of grass and threw it before him saying, "You are a mean fellow. You are not worth even this blade of grass. How dare you denigrate Rama in front of me, you vile and vicious wretch!" (SSS Vol. 41, p. 115)

Vibhishana's wife Sarama took upon herself the task of serving Sita. She had several conversations with Sita and tried to give her strength. She said, "Mother! I am indeed fortunate to serve such a holy person like you. Your pure character alone can lend some peace to Lanka. Ravana's no ordinary king. He is exceptionally wicked and it is our misfortune that you have fallen into his clutch. Sarama did her best to thus console Sita and lift her spirits. (SSB 2000, pp. 115-116)

Sarama, wife of Vibhishana, said to Sita: "Mother, there is none in the world who can slay Sri Rama. Ravana has many magicians who resort to

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It was due to the solace and assurance provided by them that Sita survived. (SSB 1996, p. 58)

Trijata's Dream

Trijata was deeply attached to the Lotus Feet of Rama. She was a pious devotee, who had both worldly wisdom and spiritual experience. She spoke to her companions keeping watch over Sita, "Comrades, last night, I had a dream, which I must relate to you. But first, let us serve and revere Sita and win her grace. For listen to the story that revealed itself to me in my dream. A monkey entered Lanka, slaughtered the Rakshasas and set the city on fire! Ravana had no clothes on. He was riding, of all animals, a donkey and moving fast in the southerly direction. And his head, I noticed, was shaven close. Besides, I found that his arms were severed from the body. Vibhishana was crowned the emperor of Lanka. Throughout the length and breadth of the land, the name of Rama

trickery and deceit. The head of Rama is not the real head. Ramachandra is safe and happy. This is simply an artificial head and you should not worry." She then placed her hand on the artificial head of Rama; the head vanished instantly. (SSB 1996, pp. 64-65)

Sarama feels blessed to be of service to Sita:

One day, Sarama approached Sita, fell at her feet and prayed, "Mother! This has been a unique good fortune that I have had. My daughter also has been blessed by this opportunity. My husband is a person of sound character. He is also a devotee of Rama. He has surrendered himself to Rama at the seashore. I am thrilled that our entire family has had this unique opportunity of being at Rama's service." Sita felt a little consoled when she heard this from Sarama; she realized that she had someone she could trust, near her. (SSB 2002, pp. 115-117)

was resounding. Then Rama sent for Sita. Sisters of the Rakshasa clan! Take note. I never get dreams. I haven't seen any so far. So if I dream at all, know it will certainly come true. It will happen just as in the dream. Moreover, the realisation, in actual fact, of this dream will not take long. Things must happen just as I dreamt, within four or five days." (RKR V Part II, pp. 131-132)

Ajata too counselled Sita, saying, "Oh! Mother! It is true. I too had a similar: dream. You need not be sorry any more." Both of them gave a lot of love and kindled faith in Sita. In fact, their father Vibhishana was a devotee of Rama. Hence, his daughters too developed devotion towards Rama. (SSS Vol.39, p. 240)

The Rakshasa women were amazed at the revelation. They forthwith prostrated at the feet of Sita and silently resumed their routine duties. Seeing the behaviour of Trijata, Sita addressed her, "Trijata! Rama Himself must have sent you here to be one of this group that is around me. Truly, it is because there are a few women like you in this Lanka that unfortunate persons like me are able to sustain our chastity and virtue. Or else, what will be the fate of women like me? You heard didn't you, the expressions Ravana used just now? He has given a month's respite. If Rama does not come within that month, I, or rather, this body, will be cut to pieces and it will be plucked and eaten by vultures and crows. Being the consort of Rama, I can never tolerate that horrid fate for this body. Tell me some plan through which I can get rid of this body sooner."

Hanuman heard these words from the branch of the tree. He was overcome by sorrow, when Sita spoke in that strain of despair. At

this, Trijata fell at Sita's Feet and assured her, "Mother! Do not lose hope, Rama is no ordinary being. His might and majesty are unequalled. It will ever be so. You are certain to be saved by him. He will arrive very soon and hold your hand in his. Do not lose courage." She consoled her by loving words and left for home. (RKR V Part II, p. 132)

Hanuman then dropped Rama's ring⁴⁰ in front of the lady under the tree, to further confirm whether she was Sita. The lady grasped the ring with great ecstasy and showered a volley of questions at Hanuman. She asked him, "Are you the messenger of Rama, or are you a trickster sent by Ravana to deceive me?"

The demons here assume strange forms and indulge in strange deeds." (SSB 1996, p. 58)

⁴⁰ **Sarama and her daughter are shown the ring brought by Hanuman:**
Sarama, the wife of Vibhishana and her daughter, Trijata, came to the tree and fell at the feet of Sita sitting disconsolate thereunder. They enquired about her health. Since they were partial towards her, Sita spoke to them about how the dream of Trijata had come true, and how a monkey had actually entered Lanka in accordance with it. Sarama and Trijata showed extreme enthusiasm and excitement when they heard the account of what had happened. They plied Sita with questions, in their eagerness to know all details. Sita showed them the monkey perched on the branch and the Ring it had brought. They both pressed the ring on their eyes in reverent adoration. (*RKR V Part II p. 137*)

Hanuman found that these three ladies were the only friends of Sita in Lanka. It was due to the solace and assurance provided by them that Sita survived. (*SSB 1996 p.58*)

“Is this true, or am I dreaming? Can it be true? How can this golden ring worn on the golden finger of my Lord be found in Lanka? Is this Rakshasa magic or mere hallucination? No, I should not hesitate any longer, after recognising it as my Lord’s, to take it in my hand. It will be a sin if I refrain from handling it.” So saying, she took it and placed it on her eyes in reverence. Tears of gratitude flowed from her eyes. “Rama! Are you granting me your Darshan, the joy of your presence through this ring?” she said and raised her head. There she saw a small monkey sitting on a branch of the tree and reciting in deep devotion, “Rama, Rama,” continuously.

In a flash, she remembered the incidents in Trijata’s dream as related by her. “Ah! Good days seem to be fast approaching. For ten long months, I have not heard the name of Rama pronounced in this Lanka. This day, I am able to see a living being reciting the holy name. I also received the dearly loved ring of my Lord,” she exulted. (RKR V Part II, p. 133) The sight of Hanuman, as a messenger from her Lord Rama, gave her great joy because all her thoughts were centred on Rama and Hanuman sang glories of Rama and described how he came to adore Rama. (SSS Vol.22, p. 116) Inner Charm is the genuine Beauty. Sita interned in *Asoka Vana* in Lanka, was suddenly confronted by a monkey; but, that ugly creature struck her as full of beauty⁴¹, when it brought her the

⁴¹ Beauty is not present in creation; beauty is present in us, in the nature of atma. There is one example: Sita’s mind was filled with sorrow when she was in Ashokavana and Ravana tried to show her many beautiful things and attract her. However, all that beauty caused no attraction to Sita. To make Sita forget her sorrow, he created several attractive things. But on the last day, looking at a monkey who was sitting on a tree and uttering the name of Rama, she found great beauty and attraction and she began to

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long awaited message from Rama! The loveliness of the *Vana* (garden), the appealing scenery, the bright beautiful ware that Ravana spread before her could not win her heart; but, the one word, Rama endeared her to the strange monkey crouched on top of the tree under which she was encircled by ogresses. (SSS Vol.8, p. 128)

Hanuman pleaded in many ways with Sita to come with him to Rama sitting on his back... **Sita** smiled and said, “Hanuman, if I was to sit on our back and go back to Rama, you would be accused of committing the same sin of abduction as Ravana. I do not want you to get such a bad name. Rama himself must come. (SSB 2002, p. 119)

Without wasting any time, Hanuman instantaneously leapt across the ocean to convey the message of Sita’s whereabouts, to Rama. While the monkeys were busy eating fruits in Madhuvana; Hanuman, forsaking food and sleep, hurried to Rama to convey the good news. He said, “Sri Rama! Sita is verily a jewel amongst women, chaste and virtuous. Her plight is like that of a parrot confined in a cage of arrows. She was surrounded by many

enjoy the beauty of the monkey. Is a monkey beautiful at any time? But the name of Rama which was enshrined in the mind of Sita, joined with the name of Rama uttered by Hanuman, and the two together created the attraction and beauty and the beauty was not in the monkey. When there is *prema*, whatever we may look at, it will be beautiful and good. The young cow looks attractive to the old crow. We will be disgusted with the sight of a crow but mother crow will always be happy when looking at young crow. It is only a contact with our own *prema* that will make appreciate and be happy. **Viswamitra always proclaimed that these two aspects, beauty and happiness, really come out of our own mind.** (SSB 1977, p. 141)

demons, who were brandishing their swords to kill her. I found Sita trembling at the sight of these terrible women.” Hearing these words of Hanuman, Rama, overcome with emotion, wanted to rush to Lanka to fight Ravana at once. Hanuman and Sugriva restrained Rama and told Him that it would take some time to make arrangements for the battle against Ravana. All the great warriors then rallied together to hold deliberations and devise strategies to defeat Ravana. (SSB 1996, pp. 58-59)

Ravana, the trickster

Meanwhile, Ravana made great efforts to inflict more pain on Sita. He commanded Vidhyut Jihva, an expert in magic, to make an artificial head like that of Rama, so that he could subject Sita to great anguish and sorrow. He also ordered him to make arrows that were of the exact make as those of Rama. Vidhyut Jihva did as he was told. The head and arrows were placed in front of Sita. Ravana then went to Sita and said, “Sita, see the fate of Rama. You have always set your hopes high on Rama. He is dead now.” Sita could not endure all this. She was filled with deep agony.

She joined her hands and said, “Oh Ravana! Do me the favour of chopping off my head and burning my body along with the head of Rama. I cannot survive without Rama. This is my last wish.” Sita started weeping. At that time Ravana received the news from Meghanada that he should see him immediately to discuss an urgent matter, and Ravana left the spot at once. Sarama, the wife of Vibhishana, said to Sita, “Mother, there is none in the world who can slay Sri Rama. Ravana has many magicians who resort to trickery and deceit. The head of Rama is not the real head.

Ramachandra is safe and happy. This is simply an artificial head and you should not worry.” She then placed her hand on the artificial head of Rama. The head vanished instantly.

On the second day, Ravana came to Sita and said, “Sita, Rama is going to die in a few hours. You will be my Queen, and my palace will be yours. No one can satisfactorily describe my wealth, my glory, and my valour. I am omnipotent and omniscient. Make up your mind to marry me.” Sita plucked a blade of grass⁴² under her foot and said, “Ravana, your wealth in comparison with Rama’s opulence is as small as this blade of grass. Rama is Immortal, Effulgent, Wise and Eternal. There is a world of difference between you and Rama⁴³. You are as low as this lowly blade of grass.” At these words of Sita, Ravana became furious and screamed, “Sita, I am giving you only two months’ time; if you do not yield to me, my cook will come here, cut you up into pieces, and serve you as a flavoured dish to me. I will eat your flesh. This is my last warning to you.” So saying, Ravana withdrew. (SSB 1996, pp. 64-65)

⁴² Though Sita was imprisoned in Lanka, Ravana did not dare to touch her. He knew that he would be reduced to ashes if he touched her without her consent. He was all the while pleading with her to accept him. When Ravana stooped to the level of denigrating Rama and threatened her, she without even looking at his face, plucked out a blade of grass and threw it before him saying, “You are a mean fellow. You are not worth even this blade of grass. How dare you denigrate Rama in front of me, you vile and vicious wretch”. (SSS Vol. 41, p. 115)

⁴³ The demon king Ravana used to coax her frequently to become his queen. However she flatly refused to submit herself to his overtures, saying, “You are in no way comparable to Rama, the embodiment of Truth and Righteousness. “Your might and power cannot be compared to that of Rama.” Such was her intense faith in Rama. One has to develop such strong faith in Divinity. (SSS Vol. 41, p. 250)

Sita spent ten months thus in Lanka. But, she never looked at the face of Ravana. Ravana donned several kinds of vestures, played several tricks and made several promises to Sita during those ten months. But, Sita was unrelenting. She abhorred his very presence castigating him, “Fie on you! You don’t even match the nail of the foot of Rama.” When Ravana started abusing Rama, she lost her temper and declared, “Rama is a man of supreme valour. He is courageous and profound in character. You are a mean fellow and trivial in nature. You don’t deserve to utter even the name of Rama.” Unable to make her submit to his overtures, Ravana left that place giving her time of ten days to bow to his wishes. (SSS Vol.39, p. 239)

The good tidings

After Ravana had been killed in the battle, Rama bade Hanuman to convey the glad tidings to Sita. Hanuman reached the Asoka gardens in one mighty leap. He was eagerly awaiting the day when he could communicate such joyous news to Sita. Upon his arrival, he placed before Sita this news. (SSB 1996, p. 91)

Sita pleaded with Hanuman, “Get me the boon of meeting the Embodiment of charm and compassion, my Lord, Rama. Do you not know that all this fighting and killing in war was for my sake, for the sake of restoring me to my Lord? Take me soon to the Lotus Feet of Rama,” she said plaintively. Hanuman could not bear the anguish that was patent in the words of Sita. He leapt into the sky and reached Rama in a trice. He narrated all that happened during the meeting. Rama gathered Angada, Vibhishana and others and told them to proceed to the place where Sita was and directed

them to bring Sita respectfully to his presence. They went to the Ashokavana where she was so long interned. (RKR V Part II, p. 263)

Vibhishana directed that Sita may take bath, wear fine silk clothes and bedecked in jewels, when she moved out of the Ashokavana. But Sita cast aside the suggestion. She said, “Rama is the most precious jewel I have. That one jewel is enough for me. Seeing him is the bath I shall be satisfied with. The prostration I shall do for him is the silk cloth for me. I do not like to wear anything that was once Ravana’s property.” Vibhishana was moved by the depth of her yearning. He asked the maids to respect her wishes. They also said that Sita was desperately wishing for darshan of her Lord. (RKR V Part II, pp. 263-264)

Vibhishana said, “Mother! You must prepare yourself to see Rama. I shall get the aerial chariot ready for you.” So saying, he left to make all arrangements. His spouse Sarama and daughters Trijata and Ajata made Sita wear various ornaments and decorated her. Sita was shedding tears. Though this was a happy moment, she recollected all the events of the past. She was looking forward to seeing Rama again and thought:

*I am being released from this prison and am going to see
Rama with my eyes.*

I am going to see Sri Rama with my eyes soon.

*Lord Rama, who had wedded me, could not keep me with
Him.*

It has been ten long months since we were separated.

I am now being released from this prison. I shall be seeing Rama again.

O my dear Lakshmana. How much I had derided you, virtuous one!

How deep must have those words hurt you, my son that you had to leave me.

These thoughts made her feel very sad. At such a time, the news of Rama's victory came like a cool shower. She was struck dumb with joy and could not even speak to Hanuman. She could hardly move. She did not know what to do. She had been waiting eagerly for this good news for ten months. (SSB 1996, p. 91)

The Vanaras bore the palanquin on their shoulders. The Rakshasa women who had survived, the Vanara warriors, and others were jumping with excitement, on both sides of the road, when Sita passed through. They stood on tiptoe and even jumped high to get a clearer and nearer view. But Sita did not turn to right or left. She bent her head and was sunk in one single thought—Rama. When a little distance had yet to be covered, Sita came down from the palanquin, for, she felt that she should go to her Lord in humility, walking the distance⁴⁴. She walked slowly towards Rama. As she neared Rama, the Vanaras standing along the path fell at her feet

⁴⁴ Hanuman bowed before Sita and got a vision of Lakshmi rising out of the waves of the ocean of milk. He felt that, that Vision was enough compensation for all the births he had to undergo. While the palanquin neared the camp, there spread everywhere a sublime splendour from it, which astonished the *Vanaras* (sub-human or monkey) hordes. Rama sent word that Sita may alight and walk the remaining distance, so that they may fill their eyes with her glory. This is not mentioned in the books. (SSS Vol.4, pp. 15-16)

and cheered, “Jai, Jai Sita Ram.” When she came within a short range, Rama declared that she should not be brought to him immediately, but that she had to go through the Ordeal of Fire!⁴⁵ (*RKRV Part II p.264*)

Fire Ordeal:

But, Rama did not even look at her. He said, “I cannot look at Sita. I have taken birth to redeem this world. I have to set an ideal to this world. People may point an accusing finger at Me for taking back Sita, who had spent ten months in Lanka. I cannot take her back without first putting her to a test.” Sita was shattered. She looked at Hanuman and said, “Oh Hanuman! Had you conveyed this news to me, I would have gladly taken my life there itself. Why did I have to be brought here amidst these *vanaras* (monkeys) and *rakshasas* (demons) to be humiliated thus?” (SSB 1996, p. 92)

Meanwhile, Rama sent word through Lakshmana to light a fire into which Sita was to jump. She was to be affirmed by the God of fire himself as a precondition for Him to take Sita back to Ayodhya. At these words, Lakshmana flared up. He had never

⁴⁵ **Two purposes of Sita's fire ordeal**

When Sita was about ten yards away, Rama, who is butter when He melts and steel when He hardens, said, "Stop, I can accept you only after you pass through Fire." Lakshmana swooned at this thunderbolt; the monkeys who had to bring the fuel for the Fire bent under the weight of even twigs. The Fire Ordeal served two purposes- to scorch the slanderous tongues, which haunt the tracks of *Avatars* (Divine Incarnations) at all times; and, to retrieve from the **Fire the real Sita who had entered into it, prior to abduction by Ravana.** (SSS Vol.4, p. 16)

spoken against Rama before. Now he said, “Rama! Have You gone mad? Has Your intelligence dwindled? What are You saying? You might have been affected by some fault, but there is none in that great lady Sita. She is a highly chaste lady. She is an ideal for all women, and You are talking so degradingly about her! If this is what You had in your mind, why did she suffer for ten months? Have You considered that?”

Rama knew Lakshmana’s heart and Lakshmana knew Rama’s heart. Upon hearing Lakshmana’s outburst, Rama replied, “Lakshmana, we are now living as ideal⁴⁶ men. We have to set standards for men to follow. I know her greatness. But her goodness must be brought out. People say that so and so is a great man. But being good is far more important than being great. Hence I must prove to the world that she is a great lady, but more than that, she is a good lady.” (SSB 1996, pp. 92-93)

⁴⁶ Students, householders, elders, and youngsters must look at the ideal here. When Sita got down from the aerial chariot, Angada, Sugriva, and the others sat respectfully with bowed heads. But there were some amongst the monkeys who were of low character and they strained their necks to have a look at Sita. Rama then stated that the behaviour of Angada and the others is the character of the virtuous while that of the other *vanaras* is the character of the wicked. The former is the aspect of the human, while the latter is the aspect of the monkeys. What is the attribute of a human being? He bows his head in respect to the elders.

Sita is the very incarnation of Goddess Lakshmi herself. She is the spouse of Sri Rama. She should not be looked at with open eyes. Even Lakshmana himself bowed his head. Though he had stayed with her for ten years, not once did he look at her face. It is the look that prompts the thought. Today, the vision is full of spite and venom. You must have heard many people say that they have been struck down with fever due to someone’s evil eye. Hence, the vision must be under one’s control. (SSB 1996, p. 93)

The Vanaras were stunned into silence and despair. But they had to go and collect dry sticks and fuel for lighting and feeding the fire for the rite of ordeal. The Vanaras had carried on their shoulders huge mountain peaks and rocks before and during the war with Ravana. Now, those very Vanaras were finding little sticks of dry wood too heavy for their strength, for, their hearts were heavy at the thought of Sita being put through this new trial! Of course, Rama knew that Sita had a spotless character and was the very embodiment of virtue. Vibhishana, Angada, Sugriva and others knew that the fire ordeal was only to convince the world. The fact was, the *Sakthi* that “was” Sita was transmitted and installed in Fire, when they were in the Dandaka Forest. The Sita who was in Lanka was but the Body. The Sakthi or the Vital Core was all the while fostered in Fire by Fire. She had now to pass through Fire so that she might emerge as the real Sita, embodied Sakthi. (RKR V Part II, pp. 264-265)

Sita welcomed the rite. For the world will be convinced that her heart was pure and unblemished. She was happy to see the flames leap up. Lakshmana, however, was overcome with grief, for he himself had to supervise the rite. Sita consoled him with her soft counsel. “Lakshmana! When I was married, the Brahmins lit the Fire on the wedding day and sanctified the function. Today, Fire will give me new birth. After that, I will wed the Lord again. Feed the fire well, for that is the right thing to do.” Lakshmana was moved by her pang of separation, her yearning for reunion, her loyalty to righteousness, her attachment to justice and her intelligent analysis of the situation. He shed tears and folded his palms in reverence and stood silent. For, he could find no words to express his feelings. Fixing his gaze on the face of Rama, he piled

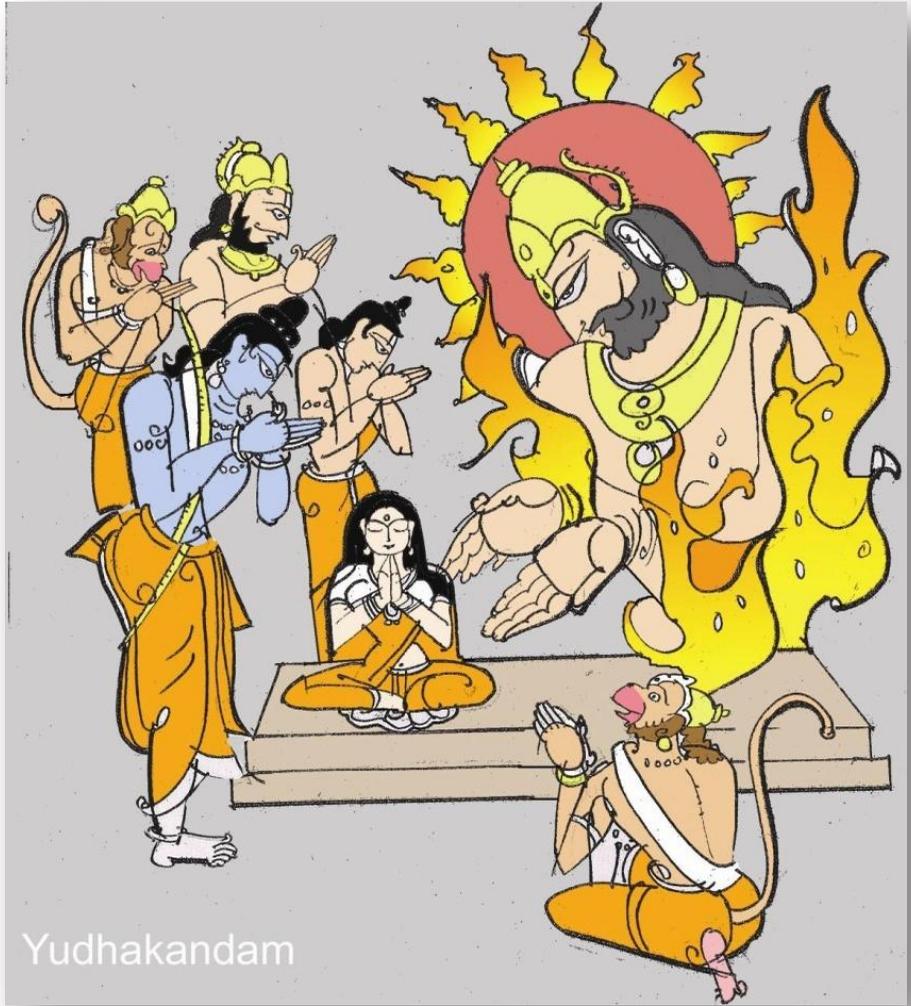


Figure 5: Agni Pareeksha

Source of the Painting:

Painting by Sri K V Bhima Rao exclusively for this book

firewood on firewood and lit the fire till it blazed. Sita was elated when she saw the leaping flames. She had no trace of fear in her mind. She walked towards the fire and standing before it said, “Oh Receiver of Sacred Offerings!

By word or deed or thought I have not dwelt in my mind on anyone other than Rama, my Lord, Oh Purifier. You reside in the heart of every living being. Become as cool as sandal paste to me, when I enter you.” (RKR V Part II, p. 265)

With tears flowing down her eyes, she went around the fire and prayed, “If I am indeed the embodiment of Truth, if at any time there has been no evil feelings in me, may this fire cool down. Except for Rama’s name, at every point of time, I had no other thought or name in my mind. But then, when Ravana was taking me away from Chitrakoota, he had caught hold of me and put me on the chariot. What could I do to prevent him from touching me? Even then, I thought of only Rama. If You have decided to test me after all that, I shall obey Your command.” (SSB 1996, p. 93) “Oh Receiver of sacred offerings! By thought, word and deed I have not dwelt in my mind on anyone other than Rama, my Lord. I am the daughter of earth and the chaste wife of Rama. If that be so, may I come out of this fire unscathed.” So saying, she entered the fire. (SSS Vol.40, pp. 196-197)

*She prostrated before Rama and moved into the Fire*⁴⁷. All the gods and goddesses appeared there⁴⁸. They were critical of Rama’s

⁴⁷ (RKR V Part II, p. 266)

action. They remonstrated with Him for knowing everything and yet doing such a foolish deed. But the fact was that Rama was totally satisfied with Sita's innocence. Otherwise, why would He subject himself to so many difficulties, give up food and drink, come to Lanka and be injured by the Rakshasas?

Once, after a battle with Meghanada, Rama's body was covered with blood. Lakshmana fainted unable to bear the sight. Such was the love that bound the two. Why would the two face so many obstacles together? Why would they have built the bridge across the ocean? Was it not for Sita? Rama knew Sita's purity. He said, "I may know your nature. But people are like crows that keep cawing about imaginary things."

Then Sita said, "Will the koel bird give up its lovely singing just because the crow would caw in between. O Rama! People may gossip like crows. But You are the koel. Why must You be wary of what the people say?" Everyone present supported Sita by saying, "She speaks the truth!" People never spot the defects within themselves, but the defects of others appear magnified to them. Rama was not like that. Rama had absolutely no faults within

⁴⁸ Dasaratha also came there, to assure Rama that Sita was Purity itself; and also, to satisfy his parental craving to see his son. He appreciated the steadfastness of Rama in the respect he had for his father's wish; he also saw the *Vanaras* rise again from the battlefield and gather around Rama. The *Rakshasas* (demonic persons) had already attained liberation for they had the vision of God when they drew their last breaths. "The *Vanaras* came down to be My instruments and so they have no death, neither are they born, except at My Command," said Rama. Man too must become His instrument in order to escape death and birth. (SSS Vol.4, p. 16)

Himself. But He had to behave thus to set an ideal to the people. (SSB 1996, pp. 93-94)

The God of Fire, Agni, appeared in the form of a Brahmin bringing with him the real Sita, and offered her at the feet of Rama, just as the Lord of the Ocean of Milk offered Lakshmi at the feet of Lord Vishnu. (RKRV Part II, p. 266) The lord of fire appeared when Sita jumped into the fire, and handing over Sita to Rama, said, “Sita is a lady of the highest chastity. She is the very embodiment of the Goddess Lakshmi (goddess of wealth). She possesses a heart which is spotless and free of all defects and blame.” (SSB 1996, p. 94)

The fire god offered *Sita* at the feet of Rama, saying, “Oh Rama, You are the omniscient Lord. You know very well the pure heart of Sita. How then could you not recognise her purity?” Rama declared, “It is true that I am aware how pure and chaste Sita is. Yet, I have a responsibility to make her purity known to the world. It is only to prove her unblemished character to the world that I ordered her to enter the fire and come out unscathed.” (SSS Vol.40, p. 196) Rama accepted Sita. (SSB 1996, p. 94)

She shone on the left of Rama, like a golden lily by the side of a full-blossomed blue lotus. The gathering of gods expressed their joy by sounding heavenly drums and trumpets. (RKRV Part II, p. 266)



Figure 6: Sri Rama's Coronation

Summary of the Photo

Painting by Sri K V Bhima Rao exclusively for this book

Happy Ayodhya

After killing Ravana, when Rama returned to Ayodhya along with Sita, the people of Ayodhya welcomed them enthusiastically hailing their return with great festivity Saying, “Rama has come. Mother Sita has come. Ayodhya is shining in the effulgence of their glory. This is a great day for Ayodhya.” There were many great celebrations on their return to Ayodhya and the people were overjoyed to see Rama and Sita whom they revered as Lord Narayana and Lakshmi.

Sita counselled Rama, “Transform this kingdom into a kingdom of joy where everybody can lead their life happily.” (*SSS Vol.40 p.112-113*)

Andalu chinde Ananda Rama

(O' Blissful Rama who is always displaying matchless beauty)

Ananda Rama Atmabhi Rama

(Ever Blissful Rama whose abode is the hearts of devotees)

Atmabhi Rama Sri Sai Rama

(O' Sai Rama who is the Living Principle of each and every soul)

Karunanu vedajallu Karunya Rama ||

(O' Merciful Rama who is always showering grace and compassion)

- ***Inspired Composition by Tumuluru***
- ***Translation by Sai Prabhakar Balanthrapu***

Uttara Kanda - Exile for Sita

The Uttara kanda is regarded to be a later addition to the original story by Valmiki and concerns the final years of Rama, Sita, and Rama's brothers. After being crowned king, many years passed pleasantly with Sita. However, despite the Agni pariksha (fire ordeal) of Sita, rumours about her purity are spreading among the populace of Ayodhya. Rama yields to public opinion and reluctantly banishes Sita to the forest, where the sage Valmiki provides shelter in his ashram (hermitage). Here she gives birth to twin boys, Lava and Kush, who become pupils of Valmiki and are brought up in ignorance of their identity.

Valmiki composes the Ramayana and teaches Lava and Kush to sing it. Later, Rama holds a ceremony during Ashvamedha yagna, which the sage Valmiki, with Lava and Kush, attends. Lava and Kush sing the Ramayana in the presence of Rama and his vast audience. When Lava and Kush recite about Sita's exile, Rama becomes grief-stricken, and Valmiki produces Sita. Sita calls upon the earth, her mother, to receive her and as the ground opens, she vanishes into it. Rama then learns that Lava and Kush are his children. Later a messenger from the gods appears and informs Rama that the mission of his incarnation was over. Rama returns to his celestial abode. (Wiki)

Departs to Vaikunta in her Subtle Body:

It was the practice for messengers from the Court to travel.... all over the empire, and report personally to the Ruler the information they had gathered during their secret wanderings..... A messenger who had come on this duty approached Rama with a hesitation that a washerman was admonishing his wife..... The words struck the heart of Rama like an arrow... He went near Sita and spoke to her pleasantly.... “Janaki!Go to your holy Home.” That very moment, Sita fell at the Feet of Rama and went to Vaikuntha (Heaven) in her subtle body. No being, anywhere, nothing, was aware of this fact. Sita in her gross physical frame only was standing before Rama on Earth.

Maya Sita asks to spend her days in Hermitages:

Rama asked the Earth-Sita (Maya Sita) “Pray for a boon” and Sita replied, “Lord! I have a desire to spend some happy days in the hermitages of *Munis* (ascetics).” Rama said, “Be it so” and told her, “Start on your journey tomorrow morning.” She collected and packed many articles of clothing and utensils for the daughters and wives of ascetics of the hermitages. Rama woke up early. Servitors and favour-seekers were singing praises of his virtues and excellences. His lotus-like face bloomed. Lakshmana, Bharatha and Satrugna paid homage to him prostrating at his feet. But Rama did not converse with his brothers. He kept silent. His face was flushed with emotion. His body showed signs of tension. Every limb was shivering with excitement. The three brothers were lost in fear and anxiety, not knowing the reason for his grief. They shuddered at the sight of Rama’s sadness. They could not fathom the feelings that agitated him.

Rama asks his brothers to leave Sita in the forest:

At last, Rama found words to express his wish. Between sighs, he said, “Brothers! Don’t say no. Take Sita into the forest, leave her there and return.” On hearing this, they were stunned. They were caught in the flames of despair. Their hearts were scorched. They doubted whether Rama was serious or was only joking. Satrugna sobbed aloud. Lakshmana and Bharatha stood motionless, tears streaming from their eyes. They were speechless. Their lips were quivering. Their hands were shivering.

Rama said, “Brothers, as I have ordered, take Janaki into the forest this very morning.” Rama addressed Lakshmana himself directly, “Lakshmana!” he began, “Grasp the implications of what the people are saying. Take Janaki in a chariot and leave her to herself in a deserted place with no human habitation on the bank of the Ganga and then return.”

Lakshmana heard the command of the Lord... Stocking the chariot with provisions and clothing, he made Janaki sit in it and then, drove off. They reached the bank of the Ganga. *Leaving Sita there*, Lakshmana... remembering his duty to follow the commands of Rama, made his heart as hard as rock and drove fast until he reached the City. (RKR V Part II, pp. 305-311)

Meanwhile, Sita fainted in despair. Of course, it was all playacting. She recovered consciousness after a little while, sat up and poured out her grief in words. “Oh Ramachandra! From birth, my life has been filled with sorrow. Alas! Life clings to my body, however much I am invaded by grief.” She cried out like this for a long time, bewailing her fate. That moment, the sage Valmiki was

passing through the forest on his way to his hermitage from the Ganga where he had gone for his ritual bath. Her words fell on his ears. He was surprised that a woman's voice was calling out for help from the recesses of the forest. He followed the voice to its source, searching all round, and at last, came to her very presence. She recognised him as the sage Valmiki⁴⁹ and related to him all that had happened to her. "Oh Monarch of Monks," she appealed, "I am daughter of Emperor Janaka. I am the wife of Sri Ramachandra. The whole world knows this. I do not know why he has deserted me and cast me away. Can the dictates of destiny be escaped from? Great among Sages! Lakshmana brought me here and left. He did not tell me why he had to do so."

Valmiki listened to her tale of woe. He consoled her and comforted her; "Oh Daughter! Your father, the Emperor of Mithila, Janaka, is my friend, my disciple. He has reverence and faith in me. Dear one, do not worry at all. Feel that my hermitage is your paternal home. All will be well with you. You will certainly re-join Rama. You will achieve that desire." Taking Sita to be his own daughter, he directed her to have a bath in the Ganga and return. After the cleansing bath, she prostrated before Valmiki, and the sage led her to the hermitage, giving her affectionate assurances. He offered her roots and fruits and pressed her to eat a few. She could not refuse the pleadings of the great elder. Thereafter, Sita spent her days at the hermitage, in constant meditation on Rama and his glory and in sharing peacefully with the pupils and disciples of Valmiki the tasks incidental to the upkeep and maintenance of that spiritual household. The residents

⁴⁹ The saint-poet who wrote the Ramayana. (Glossary for the Vahinis)

of the hermitage as well as Valmiki regaled her with interesting and wondrous stories and entertained her with humorous anecdotes and incidents. (RKR V Part II, pp. 311-312)

Sita Mothers Twin Boys:

Sita who fostered the charming twins, Lava and Kusa, (SSS Vol.7, p. 463)

Sita gave birth to them in the hermitage of Sage Valmiki. (SSS Vol.21, p. 232) Sita brought up Lava and Kusa to be great. (SSS Vol.36, p. 158)

Ending the Play:

Sita was desirous of fulfilling the “vow” if that was the wish of Rama. So she accompanied Lakshmana to the presence of Rama. Seeing the Group she made this pronouncement as the Truth: “Oh Gods! Oh Elements Five! I have not dwelt even in my dream on anyone other than Rama, in mind, speech, body or deed. Oh Mother! Goddess Earth! Take me into yourself.” Immediately, the Earth sundered where she stood, with a great rumbling and from the trench so formed, there arose a Divine Lion-Throne, with the Goddess Earth seated therein. As She came to the surface, She held out Her Hand, and lifting Janaki from the ground, She blessed her thus. “Oh Janaki! From birth until today, no day passed without your sorrowing therein. You streamed tears always. Come! In My Home, be happy.” The next second, they were both out of sight. Her glory spread over the three worlds. This was clearly seen by Lakshmana and others.

They shed tears. Rama acted the role of a saddened person. He thought within himself. “Janaki has gone in consonance with the inclinations of my mind. She was always moving in accordance with the plans I had in mind. Now, we should also proceed to our Vaikunta residence.” But to others, he appeared sad and grieving a little. Soon he left for the Capital City with his brothers and sons. (RKR V Part II, pp. 332-333)

Remember always that it is easy to do what is pleasant; but it is difficult to be engaged in what is beneficial. Not all that is pleasant is profitable.

Success comes to those who give up the path strewn with roses, and brave the hammer-blows and sword-thrusts of the path fraught with danger.

- ***Bhagawan Sathya Sai Baba***

Interpretations and Characterisation - Divine Masterplan In Every Act In Ramayana:

There are several inner and subtle meanings in the story of Ramayana. In fact, Sita was not the sister of Rama, as has been portrayed in some texts. If she were to be the sister of Rama, how could King Janaka offer her as bride to Rama? Unfortunately, people do not realise these inner meanings (SSS Vol. 41, p. 115)

The main characteristics of Sita are chastity, tranquillity and good character. When necessity arises she is also able to teach Rama the path of Dharma (SSB 1972, p. 195)

Sita was the daughter of Mother Earth. She was the daughter of the Universal Mother who supports the *chara* (moving) *achara* (unmoving). She was gem among women who demonstrated by her own example, the principle that a married woman shall walk in the footsteps of her husband. (Beacons of Divine Wisdom, Part 1, p. 108)

Meaning of the name, Sita:

The name Sita consists of four sounds or letters 'Sa' stands for the *Brahma Thathwa*; 'E' for *Srishti Thathwa*; 'Tha' for *Preethi* (delight and 'Aa' for *smahara* (destruction). The inner meaning of the word 'Sita' is Supreme power that is associated with the creation, sustenance and destruction. Sita was not merely 'Bhoojatha' (daughter of Mother Earth), but '*Para Sakthi*' (Supreme Power) associated with *Srishti* (creation), *Srishti paripaalana* (sustenance) and

Sita: the Embodiment of Purity

dusta samhara (Destruction of evil-minded). That is the reason why the epic Ramayana has been extolled as “*Sithayascharitham mahath*” (It is life history of Sita, that is glorious). In fact, it is Sita who was responsible for one of the chapters in Ramayana being named “Sundara Kanda”. All the demons in Lanka right from the King Ravana down to an ordinary citizen were queer in form, nature and thoughts as well. The chapter ‘Sundara Kanda’ contains details as to how Sita who was divinely beautiful in form, nature and thoughts cleansed the queerness of those ugly demons. That is the reason why the chapter was named “Sundara Kanda”. (Beacons of Divine Wisdom, Part 1, p. 109)

Sita’s Other Name ‘Raamaa’

Sita has another name, ‘Raamaa’. It is natural to find variations in form, attributes, thinking and behaviour in case of a wife and husband. However, in the case of Sri Rama and Sita there is absolutely no difference in their names and, attributes, thoughts and feelings as also their behaviour. Once, Hanuman had an opportunity to have the darshan of Mother Sita during the absence of Sri Rama Himself took on the form of Sita, a lady. There was absolutely no difference in their forms, especially in the eyes, ears, nose, teeth and lip movement. That was the manifestation of the “Raamaaa Rama” form (a form in which both Sita and Rama were included). (Beacons of Divine Wisdom, Part 1, p. 110)

The Story of Sita

Sita is an ideal woman possessing all the qualities that an Indian woman should possess, such as chastity, purity and so on. Because the *Ramayana* describes all these qualities perfectly, it is called “The Story of Sita”. Sita is the embodiment of all the *dharmas* that are found in the world. She is called Bhoojatha, daughter of the Goddess of earth and she has the qualities of her mother. The main characteristics of Sita are chastity, patience and virtue. When necessity arises, she is also able to teach Rama the path of *dharma*. As an illustration of this, we may consider the situation when Rama said to Sita: “You are very delicate and cannot face the conditions in the forest. I shall return soon and I request you to stay in Ayodhya and take care of your mother-in-law and father-in-law.” Prior to that, Rama went to his mother and told her that he was going into the forest for fourteen years to vindicate the promises of his father and asked her to give

him her blessings. The mother then said that she could not leave him for a moment and she too would follow him into the forest. Rama taught some principles of *dharma* even to his mother saying, “Mother, father is old. Stay and serve him. I am going into the forest for his sake and will be back after fourteen years. Serve my father who is like a God to us. To you, your husband is greater than everyone else and must be looked after. While I am away, look after his health.” Recalling this, Sita said, “You have taught some principles of *dharma* to your mother and you have asked her to stay and look after her husband. Does not the same apply to me, your wife? Should I not follow you and serve my husband? Looking after one’s husband is as important to Kausalya as it is to me. Husband is God to a wife. I consider you as God and I must follow you to the forest.” Rama tried then to pacify her in another way. He said, “You may be able to bear all the conditions in the forest but if you come with us, you will be a great responsibility on our shoulders because the forest is full of wild animals and we will have to protect you as well as ourselves. Stay at home and do not cause us trouble.” Sita replied, “You say that there are many cruel animals in the forest and the most cruel animal amongst them is the lion, the king of beasts. When the lion of my husband is with me, how can other animals harm me?” He said, “Even if there are no animals that may harm you, I will have to leave you at times to go and get something to eat. If at that time, some harm comes to you, it will be very difficult for me or my brother to protect you.” At once, Sita replied, “Rama, you are a great warrior, a great hero and a very capable person. This fact was proved when you broke the bow of God Siva. I know your abilities fully. The words you spoke to me just now are not befitting your dignity. If Rama is not able to protect one person, how will he protect the whole world? Even to protect you from such infamy, I should follow you into the forest.”

Rama could not say much more. He quietly said to her, “My mother will be stricken with grief at my going away. It would be better if you stay behind and console her.” Sita then said, “You are Rama and I am Sita. You are the moon and I am the moonlight. If the moon is in the forest how can moonlight be in Ayodhya? Where there is moon, moonlight will always be there.” Rama could not reply. Rama tried to tell her to stay in Ayodhya but Sita did not listen to those words. She said pitifully, “Rama, I am very young. You will be away for

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fourteen years while your brothers enjoy the company of their wives, and the maids of the palace enjoy the company of their husbands. Seeing this, I will get jealous and bad ideas will form in my mind. To rid me of such thoughts, take me with you.” There is no possibility of such bad thoughts ever entering Sita’s mind. Rama said, “Your heart is pure, your character is perfect and I know that such bad ideas will never enter your heart.” She then fell at his feet and said: “You are going into the forest where there will be many thorns on the way. Because my mother is the goddess of the earth, she will be very kind to me. I can request her to let you go happily on your way. At least for this take me with you.” I have narrated this sequence of incidents leading to Sita falling at the feet of Rama because Rama’s heart melted only when she fell at his feet. (SSB 1972, pp. 195-197)

Sita is the daughter of the king of Mithilapura whose name was Videha. Videha means one who has no body or one who has no consciousness of his human body. Sita can be identified with wisdom, and Sita marries Rama or becomes one with Rama who is *dharma*.

When wisdom comes together with *dharma*, in the ordinary course, such a good event will meet with some obstacles. It is customary and quite natural that every good thing is met with by some obstacles. Sita is the embodiment of wisdom and she had been taken away by Ravana, who symbolises selfishness and ego.

If one wants his little wisdom to disappear, all that one has to do is to promote his selfishness, jealousy and ego. Ravana symbolises selfishness, jealousy and ego. To make a search for Sita, who had been taken away by the bad qualities, selfishness, jealousy and ego, Rama, in the form of *dharma*, along with the other *Purusharthas*, i.e., *artha*, *kama* and *moksha*, makes a journey. (SSB 1977, pp. 81-82)

During the course of their journey, Rama and Lakshmana had to inflict much violence on the demons. Though Sita had tried to restrain them, eventually she herself became a victim of the evil ways of the demons. Sita had rightly said to Rama that the three evils, namely, untruth, lust, and violence, are the causes of all the evils in the world. Sita, the symbol of *Prakriti* and the embodiment of truth and righteousness, possessed noble conduct. Her example is worthy of

emulation by every woman of India. That is why the *Ramayana* is also described as the story of Sita. (SSB 1996, p. 47)

Insisted on accompanying Rama to forest

Sita too, insisted on accompanying her husband to the forest, since the true wife can keep alive in the company of the husband; she had never before exposed herself to sun and rain; but she spent her days in terror –striking forest, as in duty bound, and unsullied joy. (Bhag Vahini, pp. 179 Chapter 35-) She renounced everything that she thought would give her comfort in the palace of her father –in- law and preferred to follow Rama into the forest. She secured the Proximity and Presence of the Lord. (SSS Vol.9, p. 204)What is the reason? Sita thought, believed and put into practice the ideal that to a wife, her husband is of utmost importance. This is the essence of the culture of our land. (SSB 1973, p. 231)

Desires Keep One Away From Divinity

Sita, who was wanting to be close to Rama, was willing to sacrifice all her ornaments, sacrifice all her wealth and every one of her possessions⁵⁰. Because of this supreme sacrifice, it is possible for her to go close to Rama. (SSB 1977, p. 20) However, the enticement of *Maya* at times is irresistible.. If you want Rama to be with you, *Kama* has to be given up. If you have worldly desires, then Rama will not be near you. You have to choose between Rama or *Kama*, that is, either you cling to God or to his *Maya* . (SSB 1973, pp. 231-232) When desire for evanescent overcomes man, he is doomed; he becomes distant from the goal. But, alas, when she saw the false golden Deer, she yearned for it, and sent both Rama and Lakshmana after it, so that she might fondle it and feed it and have it as a pet. What was the result of this fatal desire? She was forced to live far away from the Lord and pine for Him in great anguish. (SSS Vol.9, p. 204)

⁵⁰ Before going to the forest, Rama distributed his wealth to the poor. Sita also followed Rama and distributed clothes and jewels. Thus, she attained Rama by leaving her worldly desires. . (SSS Vol.33, p. 134)

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When Sita thus developed a desire for a worldly object, the very next moment she was separated from Rama, the Divinity. It is common knowledge that the more you develop desires for worldly things, the greater you become distant from Divinity. Less luggage more comfort, makes travel a pleasure. Therefore, we have to reduce our luggage of desires. Sita had all along reduced her desires in order to be in close proximity to Rama. But the moment she developed a desire for golden deer, Rama moved away from her⁵¹. She could not bear the agony of that separation. (SSS Vol.40, pp. 183-184) If our worldly desires and worldly attachments become stronger, we move further away from God. If we cut out the worldly desires more and more, we get closer and closer to *Paramatma*. (SSB 1977, pp. 20-21)

Today's man likewise is bound by desire. When you give up desire, you can attain God.

*Na Karmana Na Prajaya Dhanena Thyagenaikena Amrutathwa
Manasu*

(Immortality can be attained only through sacrifice; neither wealth nor progeny nor good deeds can confer it).

You can attain Rama only through sacrifice. From the *Ramayana*, you have to learn the lesson of sacrifice. You have to install the principle of Rama in your heart. Rama practised *Sathya* and *Dharma* all His life. You should firmly adhere to these principles in your life⁵². (SSS Vol.33, p. 134)

⁵¹ In the first place when she removed *Kama* (the desire for possessions) she became one with Rama. The meaning of this episode is, so long as you are tied to *Kama*, you cannot hope to get Rama or God. (SSS Vol.27 p.108)

⁵² The *Ramayana* is replete with many lessons for mankind. It tells us that worldly tendencies lead us to sorrow, whereas spiritual tendencies lend contentment and happiness to mankind. Sensual pleasures are like passing clouds. These pleasures give temporary joy, whereas *Atmic* realisation bestows eternal Bliss. There is no sorrow for those people who live in the Bliss of God. But unfortunately, people today do not wish to follow the example of the great devotees of God, who live in eternal Bliss. To people, *abheesta* (desire) has become dearer than *adarsha* (ideal). Desires are ephemeral, whereas ideals are eternal. (SSB 1996 p.47)

Law of Karma:

But Sita's words at that time exceeded all reason. It looked as if she was not thinking clearly at all. She started uttering very harsh words. Lakshmana could no longer bear those harsh words. Therefore, he unwillingly left the place because he had no alternative. The words that Sita uttered while urging Lakshmana to go were such an innocent person like Lakshmana did not deserve them at all. Sita was not an ordinary woman. She was the consort of Narayana Himself. She was the incarnation of Lakshmi Devi. In spite of all that, the inevitable law by which one has to experience the results of one's own karma was to be demonstrated here in that situation.

After the death of Ravana, when Sita was asked to go through the ordeal of having to walk into fire to prove her purity, Rama uttered several harsh words because He wanted to test her and set an example to the world. For ten months, Sita had been waiting for the vision of Rama and when Rama appeared, He never showed any compassion, but was even using very harsh words. When Sita was in tears, Rama would show no kindness and no compassion. On the other hand, He was so harsh so harsh that he said, "Sita, I will not show any grace to you. You can choose to remain and live with Lakshmana or Bharatha." Sita was not an ordinary person, The moment she heard such words from Rama, she realised that this was the result of the harsh words she had used when talking to Lakshmana. The result of one's own Karma is so invincible that one can never escape it This situation in Ramayana illustrates the law of Karma very well and sets an example to human beings. It teaches human beings always to be good, to do good and see good. (SSB 1977, p. 30)

The source of joy

During her separation from Rama and her captivity in the Asoka gardens, Sita was feeling despondent. Ravana had decorated the gardens in a most pleasing manner, in the foolish hope that by seeing these decorations, Sita would accept him. Sita did not succumb to this worthless and temporal beauty around her. However, when a small monkey sat on the branches and sang the glory of Rama:

*Rama, Rama, Rama, Sita;
Having taken birth in the Solar race and earning*

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*the love of Sita,
Releasing Ahalya from the Rishi's curse and
blessing His devotees
This is Lord Sri Rama...
Rama, Rama, Rama, Sita.*

Sita heard it with great delight. She was anxious to know who was singing the glory of her Lord in this land of *rakshasas* (demons). She lifted her head and looked around. Is a monkey a pleasing sight? Does it have any beauty? It has a funny appearance. But at that time, the monkey looked most beautiful to Sita⁵³. That beauty lay in the singing of the name of Lord Rama. When she heard the name of her beloved, she was delighted. That is why it is said that 'Beauty is joy.' That joy lends substance to life. Beauty without joy is of no use. In this way, the *Ramayana* teaches the value of beauty and joy.

What was it that gave Sita and Rama enormous joy? It was nothing but the happiness of the people that gave extreme joy to them. The practice of Truth and Righteousness by the people gave joy to Sita and Rama. They never asked anything else from the people. They were always giving away to people several things and looking after them with much love. It was always down the ages; this has been the feature of all Avatars. (SSB 1996, pp. 106-107)

Great Pathivratha:

Day in and day out, she was contemplating only on Rama and none else. No other thought developed in her mind. That is how she became a great *pathivratha*. Finally when Rama killed Ravana and released her from captivity, He subjected Sita to a test, before taking her back into His fold. He directed her

⁵³ Sita was interned by the cruel King Ravana in the most beautifully laid-out garden in Lanka called Ashokavana, the forest of No-sorrow. The flowerbeds, lawns, trees and creepers, bowers and groves were most pleasing to the eye and refreshing to the mind. But, Sita derived no joy there from! She found therein only empty vanity, lust for power and foul pleasure. She felt real Ananda when an ugly monkey started repeating the name of Rama from the branch of the tree under which she sat! That name was for her the source of unfailing Ananda. (SSS Vol. 6, pp. 40-41)

to enter the fire and come out unscathed. The god of fire appeared before Rama and testified, “Sita is a great *pathivratha*. She does not at all think of any other matter but constantly contemplates on Your name.” Why did Rama put Sita to such a test? It is only to make the world know about her chastity. Later, when Rama returned to Ayodhya and started ruling His kingdom, a washerman engaged in a quarrel with his wife commented, “Sri Rama took back His wife Sita who lived for ten months in Lanka in the captivity of Ravana. I am not so foolish.” The news reached Rama. Again Rama put Sita to test by forsaking her. He knew that she was a great *pathivratha*, but he took decision to make the world know about her chastity. There is no other individual who can equal the chastity of Sita. Rama wanted to prove the chastity and devotion of Sita to the world. (SSS Vol.40, p. 184)

Sita too kept up the *Dharma* of women. She declined to return to Rama on the shoulders of Hanuman for she said, she would not of her own will contact another male; nor would she deny Rama the chance of proving his prowess by destroying the wicked person who stealthily carried away His Consort. That is the *dharma* of a *pathivratha* (chaste woman)⁵⁴. (SSS Vol.4, p. 293)

Ideal Wife

Sri Rama was accompanied by Sita in *Treta Yuga*, who led the life of an ideal wife and set an example to mankind in chastity. Sita in spite of the great difficulties she encountered while living in exile and spending ten long months in captivity in Lanka, never lost her poise. She steadfastly held on to Ramanama with single - minded devotion. She never wavered even. She gave up food and sleep totally and constantly contemplated on Ramanama. She could not visualise any other form except that of Sri Rama, who was *Ekatma sarva bhutantaratma* (one *atma* that dwells in all beings) Even in birds and beasts, she was seeing

⁵⁴ These ideals have weakened now; women as well as men are tempted to yield to the convenience of the moment; they do not attach importance to the deeper springs of righteousness. Tree shade or tent, what we want is sleep, they seem to say. The end justifies the means, that is the philosophy. Fair ends through foul means, how can this be right? He who has to instal Rama in his heart is sheltering a beast therein. What a tragedy! (SSS Vol.4, p. 293)

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only the form of Sri Rama⁵⁵ That one *atma principle* is referred to *Hiranyagarbha*, which is pure gold. Pure gold is always referred to as 24 carat gold. (SSS Vol.40, p. 182)

Sita was prepared to face any trouble and make any sacrifice for the sake of her husband. She sought no comfort for herself. She dedicated her life to the service of Rama. (SSS Vol.21, p. 87)

Hanuman said to Rama: Sita is verily a jewel amongst women, chaste and virtuous. (SSB 1996, p. 58)

Sita's wise counsel to Rama

Sita also tendered wise counsel to Rama and advised Him not to destroy all the demons. She suggested that only those who committed the evil deeds should be punished. Justice does not lie in destroying the entire clan. Women are great because they show the right path to men. They are in fact the light of wisdom in the world. They, therefore, deserve protection and reverence. Sita symbolises *Jnana Thathwa* (principle of wisdom). Sita told Rama that goodness was universal, irrespective of caste, creed and community. It is because of women like Sita that men have made progress in life. (SSS Vol.37, p. 103)

Feelings depend on our possessions, be it arms or wealth. Sita once told Rama: "Lord! These animals living in the forest have done no harm. Is it not a great sin to harm these creatures when they have not disturbed You in any way? The Rakshasas are moving about in the Dandaka forest. None of them have crossed Your path. Then why have You taken upon Yourself to harm them? These thoughts of killing and harming are fostered in You because of the weapons You

⁵⁵ **Dharma of the wife – Prapatthi**

When Sita was fixed in the Dharma of the wife, she saw Rama in all beings. Though she was surrounded by frightful female monsters, she did not notice them; though she was interned in charming garden, named Garden of No-grief (Asoka), she did not see any flower around her. Her eyes, her mind, her thoughts were filled with Rama only. This is the condition of Prapatthi, surrender of all faculties to the Lord. (SSS Vol. 6, p. 98)

carry. If You keep these weapons away, such thoughts would not occur. In You are present Truth and Righteousness; but there is also the quality of violence that appears to negate the good qualities. Keep violence at a distance You will then become an embodiment of non –violence.”

Sita illustrated this point with a good example. Indra once saw a sage meditating. He wanted to test if the mendicant was in deep meditation or was just pretending superficially. He transformed into a soldier and appeared before the sage with a huge sharp sword. He said: “O sage! I am going on an urgent mission. The sword is highly valuable. I propose to leave it in your custody. I shall collect it upon my return. Please keep it safe till then.” The sage agreed and gave his word to guard the sword. From that moment, his entire mind was only on the sword. He had to take the sword wherever he went! This was because he had given his word to protect it. However, because he had the sword with him, certain violent thoughts started invading his mind. Gradually, the good effect of all his penance was diminished. What is the reason? It is the effect of the object. (SSB 1996, p. 122)

Glorious Example of Sita’s Noble Character

Lakshmana set out on a journey to a *Munipalle* (a place where hermits reside) to leave the pregnant Sita there, as per the command of Sri Rama. Sita told him “Oh! Lakshmana! There is reason in Rama sending me to the forest for fear of getting a bad name in society. The duty of the king is to provide good governance. He has to lead an ideal life so that others can emulate his qualities. He had to work for the welfare of all people in his kingdom irrespective of whether one belongs to him or otherwise., in a spirit of total sacrifice. I don’t feel sorry even if Rama forsakes me. His glory and reputation keep me happy. Long live His divine glory!’ This is glorious example of Sita’s noble character. (Beacons of Divine Wisdom, Part 1, p. 120)

Noble Mother

Lava and Kusa could become powerful and famous due to their noble and virtuous mother Sita. Amma (mother) is the first word that man picks up in life. The first letter of the word ‘Amma’ also happens to be the first letter of the alphabet. (SS June '99, p. 141)

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Every person, man or woman, should respect the parents, install the Divine in the heart and pray to God constantly. It is everyone's duty to bring a good name to the parents. It was because of the noble behaviour of Lava and Kush that their mother, Sita became renowned. When Lava and Kush were engaged in a battle with Rama, Lava aimed an arrow at Rama with a prayer that if their mother Janaki was a *Sadhvi* (a supremely noble woman) the arrow should render Rama unconscious. Rama became unconscious when the arrow hit him. See what happened. The mere thought of his mother lent so much power to his arrow!

This shows that when you cherish the mother and seek God's grace, the blessings of the mother become more powerful. (SSS Vol.30, p. 109)

Sita's compassion

Here, there is another story. When Hanuman went to Sita to convey the glad news, he said, "Mother! I have to convey glad tidings to you. But I must also seek your permission to carry out a task. These demons, who had troubled you so long, must also be killed. I shall tear them to pieces. Pray, grant me permission to do so." Sita then said, "Son! There is nothing to blame them for. They have only been executing the command of their master. So, it is the fault of their master, not theirs." (SSB 1996, p. 94) *In fact, I suffered not because of these demons, but because of separation from Sri Rama.*⁵⁶

She then narrated a story to Hanuman. A hunter once went shadowing a tiger. But it caught sight of him and started to chase him. The hunter ran and climbed up a tree. The tiger kept a patient vigil below while the hunter waited for it to move away. The hunter then looked up and saw a bear on the higher branches. The tiger addressed the bear, "O bear! This is my prey that I have been chasing for such a long distance. It has now climbed the tree. Send my prey down to me, so that I may feed on it. The bear then said, "O tiger! This tree is my residence. The hunter has sought shelter here as a guest. It is my bounden duty to protect him. Hence I cannot push him down." But the tiger still did not give up and leave. Soon, the bear fell asleep. The tiger then addressed the hunter, "O hunter!

⁵⁶ (SS June '98, p. 143)

I am interested only in my meal. It does not matter if it is you or someone else. I shall spare you and let you go, provided you push down that sleeping bear to me. I shall eat him and then go my way.” This hunter was infested with evil feelings. Out of sheer selfishness, and in order to save himself, he pushed down the sleeping bear. The poor bear, while tumbling down, managed to hold on to a branch and saved itself from death. This is the protection that good people are always given. The bear was a kind soul, and its goodness saved it. It is not good to repay kindness with harm. The bear slowly climbed back. The tiger then told the bear, “O bear! Despite your having shown such kindness to this man, he has repaid it by harming you. He is one without any sense of gratitude, having forgotten the good done by you. Hence, it is wise to send him down.” Then the bear answered, “Son! Each man’s sin is his own, his merits are his own. He will reap the consequences. Doing good is my nature, doing bad is his nature. He will suffer for his sin. I shall reap the benefits of my goodness. I cannot push him down (SSB 1996, pp. 94-95)

Narrating this story, Sita said: “No doubt these demons put me to a lot of suffering without knowing what in truth and what is Dharma. Being the consort of Rama, I cannot stoop down to their level and seek revenge. I do not want to cause harm to anyone.” (SSS Vol.32 Part I, pp. 190-191)

Sita then continued, “Similarly, my nature is that of compassion. Hanuman, though they have put me to much trouble, I cannot wish to put them to death for that. Giving trouble is their nature. Suffering with tolerance is my nature. Hence, do not punish them.” Hanuman was thrilled on listening to this⁵⁷. (SSB 1996, p. 95)

Hanuman said, “O mother, it is but natural that you, being the consort of Lord Rama, are broad – minded and noble hearted. You are the embodiment of Dharma. It is a mistake on my part to think that you would permit me to punish these helpless demons,” Then Sita said, “Hanuman, not only me but all the

⁵⁷ In this world, there are several who have obtained kindness and yet repaid kindness with harm. Such people are demons. But he who returns good for harm is the very embodiment of Divinity. (SSB 1996, p. 95)

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women are endowed with noble qualities like compassion and love.” (SSS Vol.32 Part I, p. 191)

Sita Principle

Sabari⁵⁸ replied, “No woman who knows the Rama- principle will be ignorant of the Sita-principle, that Gem of womankind, that Crown of virtue, that Light of femininity. my Guru told me ‘Sita, Rama and Lakshmana have entered the forest as exiles.’ He said, they would visit hermitages and bless the ascetics and that Rama would kill the demons who obstruct their rituals and disciplines. He said that Rama would devise a plan by which Ravana, who is knit strongly with the Rakshasa clans, will be tempted to enact a role in a dream centring around the ‘abduction’ of Sita! He assured me that the Sita abducted by Ravana is only a pseudo-Sita and not the real, genuine Mother. He had told me that Rama would come into this forest, while searching for the Sita who has been abducted and that, I would be rewarded as never before by that visit. My Guru also told me that Rama would cultivate an alliance with Sugriva, who had taken refuge in the Rishyamuka Hills (adjacent to this hermitage) from the deadly depredation of his elder brother, Vali. Rama would accomplish the task of seeking out Sita through Sugriva. Rama! You are the Director of this Cosmic Drama, which you have designed. The incidents of your Drama were known to my Guru and he has revealed them to me. Your stage is the entire Cosmos. Your will decides the future of the Universe. It ensures the stability and progress of the Universe. All that happens is the unrolling into action of your Will; without it, nothing great or small can ever happen.

“Lord, you are acting in this play, as if you are unaware of your own plot. You are pretending to be grief-stricken at separation from Sita! Only those who are foolish, or who have no faith in the Atmic reality, or who are atheists can take it as true. Those who are aware of Divinity and its mysteries, those who are devotees and Sadhakas seeking to know God as their own Reality, will not be led away into the belief that it is genuine. You are the Doer of all that is done. No one however powerful can hinder or oppose your Will. You *will* the reactions of people to all happenings as good or bad. They are not the authors

⁵⁸ A woman ascetic living in the hermitage of her teacher, Sage Mathanga; Rama gave her salvation.

thereof. The ignorant may assert that they are the executors of their deeds. Rama! Pardon my impertinence. I have spoken too much in your presence.” Thus saying, she fell at the feet of Rama.

Sita Sanctified the Entire Earth

Sita always used to contemplate upon Sri Rama’s divine name and form. When Rama decided to abandon her in the forest giving weight to the words of an illiterate villager in a remote corner of His kingdom even though Sita was pure and unblemished, she never found fault with Him. On the other hand, she considered Sri Rama’s happiness and welfare as her own. She could bear her separation from Sri Rama with fortitude and quiet dignity and got her twin sons Lava and Kusa educated in the Royal disciplines of Astras and Sastras (arrows and weapons). She demonstrated her noble character to the entire world upholding the Truth and Righteousness so assiduously followed by her husband Sri Rama. She gave birth to two sons, Lava and Kusa who were Embodiments of *Jana* (wisdom) and through them she spread the *Rama Katha* (The story of Sri Rama) to the whole world. Thus Sita sanctified the entire earth. (Beacons of Divine Wisdom, Part 1, pp. 108-109)

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