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Dr. Manoranjan Senapaty

Head of the Department

P.G. Department of Sanskrit

Utkal University, Vani Vihar

Bhubaneswar, Odisha, India

Sita, the idealistic woman

Dr. Manoranjan Senapaty

Abstract

If we shall put a glance towards Indian traditional and cultural heritage it becomes clear that ancient Indian society gave more emphasis on women empowerment because the, the then people knew that if women will be worshipped then only all sort of prosperities can be expected. The ancient woman was able to change the society in a positive way. Such things are just an example for the present society. Among the ancient glorious and truthful women Sita can be considered to be the fore most one. We can get this idea when we shall cover the whole research paper. In the entire paper we can find out the truthfulness, devotion, dedication, and affection, etc of Sita towards her elders and youngers. She never hesitated to sacrifice her life for the benefit of the entire humanity. Putting her in number of problems and obstacles she devoted her life for the establishment of righteousness in the universe.

Keywords: Rāmāyaṇa, Vālmiki, Dharama, Incarnation, Ayodhyā, Rāma, Daśaratha, Sitā, Kaikeyi, Viṣṇu, scholastic, idealistic, devotional, immortal, society, women community, emotion, worship of husband, Brāhmaṇas, Sāvitrī, Satyavān

Introduction

Ramayana, the great epic is read all over the world with great reverence and love as it contains the most authentic story of Lord Sri Rama, one of the two most incarnation who lived amongst us thousands of years ago, but have left an indelible impression on our lives, which is as fresh today as it was during the time of Valmiki, a contemporary of Sri Rama. It is one of the world's most remarkable classics and excels all in its moral appeal. It is full of lessons for all and deserves to be read with interest and profit by all lovers of healthy literature. It is not only noted for its poetic excellences and oldest specimen of epic poetry but also enriched with the value of social, moral and spiritual significances.

By simple reading and chanting the verses of the Ramayana, nothing is going to happen for the benefit of the society. One has to think of, how he is going to grab the essences of Ramayana and in which way it will be helpful to the society in present scenario. Each and every character of the Ramayana has certainly some contribution to the society in sense of social, moral, economical, political, or spiritual. Among them we can take the character of Sita, what a fantastic character and sacrificial personality. Sita through her devotional and sacrificial nature has taught a lot to the humanity, and proved her chaste fullness as well as inspired the entire women community about the duties and responsibilities of a wife to her husband. If such an ideological attitude can be adopted by house holders then definitely at least up to some extent the good understanding can be there among them. By which the idea of a smooth and healthy society can be brought into to our knowledge.

Context of the Research Paper

As per the Epic, everybody knows that for the survival of Dharma (virtue) Lord Vishnu took incarnation as Sri Rama. And when king Dasaratha is about declare Sri Rama as the next successor of Ayodhya, just before that Kaikeyi asked two boons to be fulfilled as it was promised by king Dasaratha that Rama has to go to forest and Bharata to be sworn in as the king of Ayodhya. Therefore it is of questionable that the order was given to Sri Rama to go on exile, not for Sita. But why Sita urged Rama to accompany her. What made Sita to do so? She is born and brought up in a royal family, and also even though Rama is going to forest, she could have maintained the same royalty in Ayodhya. But instead of doing so she also started to accompany with Sri Rama.

Corresponding Author:

Dr. Manoranjan Senapaty

Head of the Department

P.G. Department of Sanskrit

Utkal University, Vani Vihar

Bhubaneswar, Odisha, India

In this regard many questions are obviously raising in our mind, whether Sita is unable to adjust with family members in the absence of Rama or she also wanted to share the same thoughts as her husband will do in forest or it is a social compulsion to follow the path of husband or is it a divine destine to be fulfilled by Sita's accompany with Sri Rama.

Another question also comes to our mind that Rama knew very well that the absence of Sita in forest won't fulfill the destination for what he has taken incarnation. Hence in this context Rama could have approached Sita to follow him. But he does not do so. Hence in this we have to notice that Rama might have left the choice on Sita. Therefore the freedom is given to Sita to take her decision. Therefore exhorted by Sri Rama to stay in Ayodhya to look after his parents, Sita submits in reply that she being his counterpart, her exile is implied in his and insists on her being taken with him since she would not be able to bear separation from him. Sita's such scholastic, idealistic and devotional decision even today stands immortal, which teaches idealism, chastity and morality to the entire women community.

Whether Sita's Claim is Reseanable

Sri Rama might have reluctantly ignored Sita to accompany her to the forest. The reasons for thus may be left on Sita to expose her idealistic view for the guidelines of the women community. And being the incarnated one let her teach the world the sense of devotion, chastity, truthfulness and ethics. Then only Sita might have developed such sentiments in her mind. Now the question is, Sita's claim to accompany Rama is for her personal gain or universal one. If we shall see the later one, it is obvious that for universal benefit she has to accompany Sri Rama, otherwise the creation won't be able to be free from the clutch of Ravana. When we come to the former one we can be able to find out that the divine benefits and social benefits which are bound within personal benefit and this personal benefit has been becoming a source of encouragement and inspiration for the women community since time immemorial.

The circumstances that made Sita to Accompany Rama

Here we can notice that not only the husband but also wife as a matter of her right can show the sense of anger on her husband, and that anger is considered as a product of love and affection towards him. When being deprived by Lord Sri Rama not accompany her to the forest, the great sage Valmiki expressing Sita's emotion –

प्रणयादेव संकृद्धा भर्तारमिदमब्रवीत्॥¹

Sita's claim to accompany Rama is not reasonable but seems to be very logical. What she wants to speak that father, mother, brother, son and daughter-in-law, reap each his or her destiny, enjoying their own merits (earned in previous life). A wife alone actually shares the fortune of her husband. And for this very reason I too stand enjoined that I should as well take up my abode in forest. In the case of women neither father nor son nor their own body nor mother nor their female companions serve as an asylum here or here after. The husband alone is their refuge at all times.

Here in this context one has to realize the sense of devotion of Sita to Sri Rama. And it seems Sita wants to prove that once a daughter is given in marriage, for her the only shelter is the husband, with whom she can live happily. Apart from that there is no other source for her. And the same has been narrated by Valmiki in Ramayana –

आर्यपुत्र पिता माता भ्राता पुत्रस्तथा सृष्टा।
स्वानि पुण्यानि भुञ्जानाः स्वं स्वं भाग्यमुपासेत॥²
भर्तृभाग्यं तु नार्येका प्राप्नोति पुरुषर्षभा।
अतश्चैवाहमादिष्टा वने वस्तव्यमित्यपि॥³
न पिता नात्मजो वाऽऽत्मना न माता न सखीजनः।
इह प्रेत्य च नारीणां पतिरेको गतिः सदा॥⁴

In order to make her claim smooth and put the status of husband at the top, Sita's devotion is uncountable. She says that protection under the feet of one's husband under all circumstances is preferable (for a woman) to residence at the top of a palace, or living in aerial cars or coursing through the heavens (by virtue of mystic powers acquired through proficiency of Yoga). Hence Sita's opinion of 'protection under the feet' reflects the worship of husband's feet is the greatest virtue for a woman. As Valmiki says –

प्रासादाग्रे विमानैर्वा वैहायसगतेन वा।
सर्वावस्थागता भर्तुः पादच्छाया विशिष्यते॥⁵

One of the main aspects of Sita's claim to forest is reflected by Valmiki saying that Sri Rama may think that Sita is born and brought up by king Janaka and till marriage she might have not struggled in her life. She had been taken care with so much love and affection by her parents. Yet no difficulties have been met by her. But if Rama will now take her to forest, she may not adjust herself there. That is also getting clear, when Sita tells caring not for the sovereignty of the three worlds and concentrating my thought on the vow of serving my husband; I shall live happily in the forest as I would in my paternal home. Here lies the exact meaning of chaste fullness and truthfulness that any sort of prosperity is inferior to the husband, and such a moral view has been beautifully narrated by Valmiki thus –

सुखं वने निवत्स्यामि यथैव भवने पितुः।
अचिन्तयन्ती त्रींल्लोकांश्चिन्तयन्ती पतिव्रतम्॥⁶

Sita might have thought sincerely, when my husband in forest have to live with roots and fruits, how can I enjoy myself being in kingdom. So she made clear that food even is not a problem for her. She urged that oh my dear even if you think about my food, it is of no use. I shall without doubt live on fruits and roots alone from day to day and shall not cause any annoyance to you while living with you.-

कलमुलाशना नित्यं भविष्यामि न संशयः।
न ते दुःखं करिष्यामि निवसन्ती त्वया सदा॥⁷

Sita gives guarantee to Rama that I shall have not any sort of fearness from the wild animals or the flowing rivers. And more over spending with you in forest for thousands years or a even hundred thousand years I shall never experience any sorrow. Heaven too will not be acceptable to me otherwise. Even if an abode devoid of you is vouchsafed to me in heaven, I shall never find pleasure in it without you. From such point of Sita it is clear that for a wife the husband itself is the heaven. And the heavenly pleasure can be obtained only from him. So that she urged Rama to take to forest. As Valmiki says –

स्वर्गेऽपि च विना वासो भविता यदि राघव।
त्वया विना नरव्याघ्र नाहं तदपि रोचते॥⁸

Sita's claim to go forest was not only based on arguments, but also it was too much devotional and a product of mind. That's what she told Rama to please accept her prayer and take her to the forest. A wife's mind should be fondly attached to the husband at any circumstances and at any context it should not be disunited from him. Hence Sita's view to go along with Rama is too much required due to the devotion and prayer. The separation from the husband is just the mental death for the wife. That's why Valmiki has expressed his view in following way –

अनन्यभावामनुरक्तचेतसं त्वया वियुक्तां मरणाय
निश्चिताम्।
नयस्व मां साधु कुरुस्व याचनां नातो मया ते गुरुता
भविष्यति॥⁹

One has to show (woman) great regards towards their paternal parents and in the same way also the parents have to teach the females all sort of reverence s and how they have to show respect to the elders after their marriage. This concept has been exploded by Valmiki in Ramayana, when Sita said Rama while claiming to go to forest, “I have been taught in many ways by my mother and father how I should conduct myself (in relation to you). Hence at this juncture I need not be instructed. In this way Sita shows great responsibility on parents for the formation of conduct of their children.

अनुशिष्टास्मि मात्रा च पित्रा च विधाश्रयम्।
नास्मि सम्प्रति वक्तव्या वर्तितव्यं यथा मया॥¹⁰

Another aspect of Sita's journey to forest is not only personal but also seems to be social. She knows very well that without having the permission of the elders, one should not proceed ahead. And also socially it's untrue. If one does like this, than we are going to hurt the sentiments of the elders, by which one has to earn the sins. Therefore Sita told Rama that in pursuance of the orders of Rama's parents, she too must accompany him, as she is Rama's counterpart. Because as per the sayings of Shruti 'wife is one of the part of husband' (अर्धो वा एष आत्मनो यत्पत्नी). Therefore she is unable to live apart from him. And also she told that life in this world must be cast away by her in the event of Rama's separation. Here we have to see that such a statement by Sita stands bold and made Rama to accompany Sita to the forest. As Valmiki says –

त्वया च सह गन्तव्यं मया गुरुजनाज्ञया।
त्वद्वियोगेन मे राम त्यक्तव्यमिह जीवितम्॥¹¹

In another context Sita's claim to accompany Rama seems to be divine. When she says that while living at her father's house, was heard from the mouth of Brahmanas that, well-versed in astrology that she must dwell in the forest. Hence having heard such from the Brahmanas, she has been ever cherished a longing for forest life. In this regard she claimed that the truth of that prediction must be realized by her. Therefore it is essential for her to a accompany Sri Rama to

the forest. Such claim has been expressed by Valmiki in following way –

यद्यपि च महाप्राज्ञ ब्राह्मणानां मया श्रुतम्।
पुरा पितृगृहे सत्यं वस्तव्यं किल मे वने॥¹²
आदेशे वनवासस्य प्राप्तव्यः स मया किल।
सा त्वया सह भर्त्राहं यस्यामि प्रिय नान्यथा॥¹³

In one more circumstances Sita's view also regarded to be most spiritual. She has instructed that the relation of husband and wife is immortal and imperishable. So she claims that by remaining united with Rama, even in her union with Rama will continue forever and will be a source of blessedness for both even here after. In this way she proved the relation to be immortal. And to stand smooth in this regard she has taken the assistances of Shruti and said that ‘ Even in the other world a woman continues to be the wife of that very man to whom she given away in this world by her parents with water in their hands according to the moral code binding on them. Hence nothing wrong in me to accompany with you to the forest was the version of Sita. As Valmiki says –

इहलोके च पितृभिर्या स्त्री यस्य महाबला।
अद्धिर्दत्ता स्वधर्मेण प्रेत्यभावेऽपि तस्य सा॥¹⁴

To prove the chastity, a woman never hesitates to give up her life having being separated for a long period. To convey this message, Sita told Rama being very much affectionate that if Rama does not feel inclined at all to take her, she will resort to poison, fire or water to hasten her life. It shows Sita's devotion to Rama and that is what she urged Rama to accompany along with him, and this is narrated by Valmiki in following manner –

यदि मां दुःखितामेवं वनं नेतुं न चेच्छसि।
विषमग्निं जलं वाहमास्थास्ये मृत्युकारणात्॥¹⁵

Even though Sita knows, Rama to be the incarnation of Lord Vishnu, still she also started questioning Rama's ignorance saying ‘supreme velour is lacking in sri Rama, even though he blazes like sun in order to enhance the willing power to take to forest. She also never neglected herself to be identical to Savitri, who was devoted to the valiant Satyavan –

अनृतं बत लोकोऽयमज्ञानाद् यदि वक्षसि।
तेजो नास्ति परं रामे तपतीव दिवाकरे॥¹⁶
द्युमत्सेवसुतं वीरं सत्यवन्तमनुव्रताम्।
सावित्रीमिव मां विद्धि त्वमात्मवशवर्तिनीम्॥¹⁷

In this way Sita made so many logical arguments with Rama in order to be accompanied with Rama to the forest. And she was so much bold in her decision that she never hesitated to consume poison also. It is better even if I don't go to forest, she will die in Rama's presence. –

पश्चादपि दुःखेन मम नैवास्ति जीवितम्।
उज्जिताया स्वया नाथ तदैव मरणं वरम्॥¹⁸

Concluding Stanza

Here with it may be concluded that Sita's claim to forest was to prove her chastity, devotion and truthfulness. And the impression behind such fact of Sita was not only personal but also for universal benefit. She wanted to show the equal sharing of thoughts of the couple. And more over she brought out the idea that the relation of husband and wife is not only physical but also divine. Hence we can be sure that Sita urged Rama to go forest from personal aspect, social aspect and divine aspect. As a wife she has to show the personal right on Rama. And also she mentioned that with the prior permission of elders she will accompany with Rama to the forest. In this manner she has showed high respect to the parents. In no work family members should be ignored was the essence of Sita's idea. She also has justified the divine or spiritual justification of husband and wife. When one is suffering the other should not simple sit and enjoy the worldly happiness was the ideology of Sita. A true couple must share the thoughts equally. By performing such, a wife can prove her chastity, devotion and moral code of conduct towards the husband. Hence all such issues and reasons made Sita conscious to claim in order to accompany with Rama to the forest.

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