

**SĪTĀ AS PORTRAYED BY VĀLMĪKI, KĀḶIDĀSA,  
AND BHAVABHŪTI**

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**For the Degree of  
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### **CERTIFICATE**

This is to certify that the thesis titled “Sītā as Portrayed by Vālmīki, Kālidāsa and Bhavabhūti” is a record of bona-fide work carried out by Suja P under my guidance and supervision, submitted to the University of Calicut for the award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Sanskrit. It is also certified that this thesis has not previously formed the basis for the award of any Degree, Diploma or Fellowship or other similar title or recognition in any University or institution.

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## DECLARATION

I, Suja P, hereby declare that this thesis “Sītā as Portrayed by Vālmīki, Kālidāsa and Bhavabhūti” submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Sanskrit in the University of Calicut has not been previously formed the basis for any Degree, Diploma or Fellowship or other similar title or recognition in any university or institution.

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# CONTENTS

PREFACE

CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION

1-9

CHAPTER – II

SĪTĀ IN LITERARY DISCOURSES

10-139

- i. Etymological meaning of Sītā
- ii. Sītā in various versions of Rāmāyaṇa in India and other regions
- iii. Sītā in other Literature: Sanskrit Kāvyaś and plays – Folk Theatre

CHAPTER - III

SĪTĀ AS PORTRAYED BY VĀLMĪKI

140-266

- i. Birth of Sītā
- ii. Marriage
- iii. Sītā's life in the forest
- iv. Abduction of Sītā
- v. Sītā's sorrows in Jaṭāyu's death
- vi. Sītā's sufferings in Lanka
- vii. Abandonment of Sītā
- viii. Sītā in Vālmīki's Hermitage
- ix. Sītā's decent
- x. Sītā's identity

CHAPTER - IV

SĪTĀ AS PORTRAYED BY KĀḶIDĀSA AND  
BHAVABHŪTI

267-329

- i. Sītā in *Raghuvaṃśa*
- ii. Sītā in *Uttararāmaçarita* and *Mahāvīraçarita*

CHAPTER - V

THE CHARACTER OF SĪTĀ :  
COMPARATIVE AND PERSPECTIVE VIEWS

330-359

CHAPTER – VI

CONCLUSION

360-364

BIBLIOGRAPHY

365-380

APPENDIX

i-xii

## PREFACE

The present thesis is titled as ‘Sītā as portrayed by Vālmīki, Kālidāsa and Bhavabhūti’. Sītā is one of the splendid female characters in the whole world literature. In his legendary epic ‘*Rāmāyaṇa*’ Vālmīki portrays the multifaceted life experiences of Sītā. Sītā’s life enlightens the social, cultural and political environment of that era. The essence of *Rāmāyaṇa* is the life of Sītā from her childhood till her disappearance. The epic gains more meaning when we term it as ‘*Sītāyana*’ instead of ‘*Rāmāyaṇa*’. On analysing the history of human life and social circumstances of India we can understand that women were always victims to male dominance and social discrimination. Sītā, who was also a victim of such oppression, dependence and marginalisation, shows the plight of women in that period. Sītā is also the victim of a society which denied her the rights of equality, humanity and social justice. This thesis tries to understand how Sītā has been portrayed by Vālmīki, Kālidāsa and Bhavabhūti and how she is depicted in the varied interpretations of *Rāmāyaṇa*.

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# CHAPTER I

## Introduction

*Rāmāyaṇa* has been recognized as the initial source of Indian poetic legacy. It was Vālmīki who presented the story of Rāma to the world in the form of an epic with poetic beauty. There are not many works which are as popular as *Rāmāyaṇa* in world literature and culture. “*Rāmāyaṇa* is an epic which clarifies weakness and also the significance of human race”<sup>1</sup>. In *Rāmāyaṇa* the basic human nature is pictured along with ‘*Nītiśāstra*’, ‘*Arthaśāstra*’, ‘*Sāmūhikaśāstra*’, and ‘*Soundaryaśāstra*’. Majority of the regions in Asia has been described in different types of *Rāmāyaṇa*.

There are various forms of *Rāmāyaṇa* such as poems, folklores, dramas, poetic stories, puppet shows which still exists. Philippines, Tailand, Indochina, Tibet, Burma and different regions of India where appears as epic and folklores. All these different types got evolved according to the development of society. There are various adaptations of *Rāmāyaṇa* in different parts of India. According to changes in factors of each age such as politics, Society, and Culture there were modifications in *Rāmāyaṇa*. It’s an exceptional work that was born

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<sup>1</sup> *Sāhityaloka, Traimāsika*, volume-3, Lakkam -3 nov-dec 1990. page-9

from human imagination. It is a great example of Indian family relationships. The depth and width of *Rāmāyaṇa* is unimaginable. There is no literary work that is not influenced by *Rāmāyaṇa* in India.

A man's basic problems, mannerisms and experiences have not changed much from the beginning of Age. If we infer in depth we can understand that purity and sincerity were the qualities that were strongly held up by Sītā. She is one of the most powerful epic heroines who still lives in millions of hearts.

Sītā's life was complicated with difficulties and hardships. In such an environment how a lady can overcome these without losing her truthful nature is portrayed beautifully by Sītā. Being a women Sītā coped up with all the weakness and unlawful things her husband did with tolerance, even though she knew it was wrong. Sītā's purity is portrayed as an excellent example by Vālmīki. Sītā has been mentioned in many other folk stories as well. This is an investigation regarding why the character Sītā has been under rated, even though the character has its own significance. We can see research works based on Sītā in Fr. Kāmilbulka's book "*Rāma Katha - origin and growth*". There were studies based on Sītā in various languages, but in-depth researches in Sanskrit or other languages are very less. From the beginning of *Veda* till the end of *Rāmāyaṇa* the name of Sītā is familiar. Sītā according to



imagination of Vālmīki, Kālidāsa and Bhavabhūti is closely examined in this study. The mentions of Sītā's character in available books, the inference regarding comparison and analysis will be utilized according to situation. Available books in Sanskrit and other languages are referred for the same. Field works, interviews, self-investigation are also done for gathering information for the work.

### **Scope of the Study**

Definitely there is a vast scope of study for modern day women to understand and get some lessons from Sītā, about the ethical decision making and choosing the right side even though it is considered to be bold and courageous by society. Sītā was also viewed as a strong role model for women. She had to overcome many difficulties in her life and made tough decisions in keeping up with Dharma. The strength and courage that Sītā showed at that era proves that women power is still growing and that women will never give up. Sītā the heroine is the noblest flower of Indian womanhood, devoted to her lord in thought, word and deed. The tell tales of Sītā and her worship and festivals widely exist even to this day and this opens up new scope for further research.

## **Aim and Objective**

The study aims at various concepts of leadership behaviour, types of leadership models and characteristics of a leader etc. which will be generated after the critical study of *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*. To show the extent to which the leadership elements contained in *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* can be relevant and meaningful to our society. To study and understand the spiritual based leadership as reflected in *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*. *Rāmāyaṇa* still serves as a purpose of knowledge and cultural heritage in education system. The study aims at an in-depth analysis on the character of Sītā based on *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Raghuvamśa*, and *Uttararāmaçarita*. It explores the vivid personalities and behavioural traits of Sītā. Sītā demonstrates how a woman, in the social circumstances, can overcome the predicaments that she faces. She makes tolerance her weapon, by overlooking her husband's injustice and weakness, though she had her individual opinion about the same. The study also aims at discovering all these literary works that have brought the clandestine character of Sītā in to limelight and have made efforts to pinpoint her diligent personality.

## **Review of Literature**

The character study of Sītā in this thesis is based on *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Raghuvamśa* and *Uttararāmaçarita*. Translations of *Rāmāyaṇa* by

various eminent authors were available for the study. Father Camile Bulcke in his comprehensive thesis has explicitly mentioned about Sītā, *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* Sanskrit text and English translation Gīta Press Goraghpur, *Bhārata Strī* by Dr.M. Līlāvaty, *Ayodhyayile Śrīrāman* by Aḇārya Narendrabhūṣan, *Ṛgveda Samhita* by F. Max Mullar, *Raghuvamṣam* by Mādhavan Ayyappatt, *Uttararāmaḇarita* of Bhavabhūti by R.D. Karmarkar, *Purāṇa Samjnāgamakoṣam* by C.Prasād, *Upaniṣad Sarvaswam* by Śrīmān Nambūtiri were also referred for the study. It is learnt that in 2018 a thesis entitled ‘Saving Sītā the Rāmāyaṇa and Gender Narratives in Postcolonial Hindu Nationalism’ by Suvarna Vāriyar was published from university of Sydney. Besides these various thesis in inflinet Shodhganga, Sudhodhana, various research papers and articles in various journals and books have also been used as source of information.

### **Hypothesis**

1. Are there any allusions available about Sītā as a character and as a symbol before *Rāmāyaṇa*?
2. The character of Sītā might have been portrayed differently in various versions of *Rāmāyaṇa*.

3. Folk lores and folk art forms are filled with the story of Sītā and common populace celebrate her story. This may be the result of Sītā's influence over these people.
4. Sītā's tale has a great influence on the social and cultural spheres of Indian life.
5. Vālmīki, in his *Rāmāyaṇa*, portrays Sītā as an extra-ordinary woman.
6. Kālidāsa portrays Sītā as a competent woman. Sītā's independence and status are enlightened through her story in the time period of Kālidāsa.
7. Bhavabhūti in his plays *Uttararāmaçarita* and *Mahāvīraçarita* portrays Sītā without giving her any considerations as a woman. As he was part of a male-centred social system, he prefers Rāma over Sītā.
8. Sītā is depicted as an embodiment of Indian social, cultural, art and literary spheres.

### **Plan of the Thesis**

The thesis "Sītā as portrayed by Vālmīki, Kālidāsa and Bhavabhūti" analyses how Vālmīki, Kālidāsa and Bhavabhūti have characterized Sītā, and attempts to reveal the character of Sītā. Sītā is a very predominant character in *Rāmāyaṇa*. The radiance and vitality

seen in the character of Sītā is the result of Vālmīki's style of writing. *Raghuvamśa* by Kālidāsa is another significant text that helps in the in-depth study of the character of Sita. One of the most relevant works that has evolved based on Uttarakāṇḍa is Bhavabhūti's *Uttararāmaçarita*, It also consists an assessment of Sītā's character. The present study is a critical analysis of Sītā's personality and the many perspectives involved in her character. In the academic circle there are not many studies conducted in this regard. The methodology adopted is a comparative analysis of all available literary works that mention Sītā. The mention of Sītā's character in available books, the inference regarding comparison and analysis will be utilized according to the situation. Available books in Sanskrit and other languages are referred for the same. Field works, interviews, self- investigation are also done for gathering information for the work.

The topic is divided in to six chapters followed by a conclusion and appendix. The introductory chapter includes Scope of study, Aim and objective, Review of Literature, Hypothesis and Plan of the thesis. The second chapter titled "Sītā in literary dicourses" evaluates the etymological meaning of Sītā in Veda, Amarakośa and Upaniṣads. This chapter deals with 'Various versions of *Rāmāyaṇa* in India and other regions, apart from India, *Rāmāyaṇa* has different versions in other

foreign countries. Each region believes that their version is accurate. According to the famous historian M.G.S Nārāyaṇan, Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Kannanda, Kashmiri, Maratti, Malayalam, Odiya, Chinese, Combodian, Japanese, laosian are different languages in which *Rāmāyaṇa* is found. It has been a part of culture and lifestyle of people in these respective regions. Sītā in *Rāmāyaṇa* from different regions is explained in this chapter. The story and the characters vary according to the regions. Sītā's birth, marriage, and her disappearance into earth are described differently in each book. There were modifications based on the region and period of occurrence. Sītā in other verses and plays related to *Rāmāyaṇa* and in folk theatre are analysed. It also evaluates how the writers of Sanskrit literary works, describe Sītā in their works. In addition to this there is an evaluation of the depiction of Sītā in other Sanskrit dramas like that of Bhāsa's Pratima Nāṭaka, Abhiṣeka Nāṭaka, Āścaryaçūḍhamāṇi, Kundamāla etc. The third chapter "Sita as Portrayed by Vālmīki" focuses mainly on how the female protagonist Sītā has been narrated by Vālmīki. From Bālakāṇḍa till Uttarakāṇḍa the character evolves according to various situations. Each level of the evolution represents feminine nature of unique characteristics. Evaluation of Sītā, along with her difference from other characters and her identity in various contexts of *Rāmāyaṇa*

is done in this chapter. The fourth chapter is titled as “Sītā as Portrayed by Kālidāsa and Bhavabhūti”. Kālidāsa portrays Sītā in *Raghuvamśa* as a daughter, wife, mother, friend and sister. There are many women characters in *Raghuvamśa* but Sītā stands alone among them. Kālidāsa portrays varied emotions of man through his portrayal of prakṛti, the nature. Sītā is a character with tolerance is well depicted by Kālidāsa. This chapter also discusses character of Sītā in *Mahāvīraçarita* and *Uttararāmaçarita* of Bhavabhūti. The fifth chapter is titled as the character of Sita: comparative and perspective views. The last chapter contains the conclusion, a discussion of the major findings of this study, selected Bibliography and Appendix.

## CHAPTER II

### SĪTĀ IN LITERARY DISCOURSES

#### Etymological Meaning of Sītā

The name Sītā was in vogue from the period of ‘*Vaidika*’ till epic era. One can find what is meant by this name in ‘*Sītapaniṣad*’, ‘*Purāṇasamjñāgamakośa*’ and other works. The name Sītā first appears in one of the most ancient works in world literature ‘*Ṛgveda*’. Sītā is mentioned as the goddess of agriculture. ‘*Kalappaççāl*’ which is referred as ‘Sound of Sītā’. Other works related with agriculture also mentions Sītā being born in plough line which is the sign of agricultural heredity. The fourth *Maṇḍhala* fifty seventh sūkta of *Ṛgveda* describes Sītā as goddess.

“अर्वाची सुभगे भव सीते वन्दामहेत्वा ।  
यथा न सुभगा ससि यथा न सुफला ससि” ||<sup>2</sup>

(Oh blessed Sītā, come towards us, we worship you in the same way as you are blessed)

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<sup>2</sup> *Ṛgveda Samhita Vaḷḷattol Transilation Vol-2*, Vaḷḷattol Sāhitya Academy, India 1956. p.321- 322



“ इन्द्रः सीतां निगृह्यतु तां पूषानुयच्छतु ।  
सानः पयस्विनी दुहामुत्तरामुत्तरा समां ॥”<sup>3</sup>

(Let Indra hold the plough, and *Pūṣa* control and fix the sky higher and let the sky shower us with plenty of water in progressing years)

In the fourth *Maṇḍhala Kṣetrapati*, *Śūnasīra*, and *Sītā* are Gods. There are explanations that say *Kṣetrapati* is *Agni*, *Rudra* also the god with former name. *Ṛṣi* here refers to *Vāmadeva*, and *Śūnam* refers Ox, also *Sīra* refers the plough. “Oh ploughed path come towards us we praise you in same way as you are blessed”, All these *sūktās* makes sure the name *Sītā* may have been used as the alternate name for plough which was later on used to name a lady.

In the book *Sītopaniṣad* the gods enquire what form *Sītā* has, and who she was. The answer to the same was:

“ देवा हवैः प्रजापति अब्रूवन् का सीता किं  
रूपमिति सहोवाचा प्रजापतिः सा सीतेति ।  
मूलप्रकृति रूपत्वात् सा सीता प्रकृतिः स्मृता  
प्रणव प्रकृति रूपत्वात् सा सीता प्रकृतिरुच्यते ॥  
सीता इति त्रिवर्णात्मा साक्षात्मायामयि भवेत्

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, *Rgveda Samhita* p.322

विष्णु प्रपञ्ज बीजं च माया ईकार उच्यते ।

सकारः सत्यममृतं प्राप्ति सोमः कीर्त्यते

तकारस्तार लक्ष्म्या च वैराजः प्रस्तरः स्मृतः ॥”<sup>4</sup>

In this *Upaniṣad* Sītā is referred as ‘*Śaktiswarūpiṇī*’, ‘*Mūlaprakṛti*’, ‘*Yogamāya*’ and ‘*Mahālakṣmi*’.

“ईकाररूपिणी सोमामृतावयवदिव्यालङ्गारस्रङ्ग

मौक्तिकाद्याभरणलङ्गृता महामायाअव्यक्तरूपिणी व्यक्ता भवति ।

प्रथमा शब्दब्रह्ममयी स्वाध्यायकाले प्रसन्ना उद्गावनकरी

सात्मिकाद्वितीया भूतले

हलाग्रे समुत्पन्ना तृतीया ईकार रूपिणी अव्यक्तस्वरूपा भवतीति सीते

त्युदाहरन्ति शौनकीये ॥”<sup>5</sup>

The bejeweled Sītā who is ‘*Śabdabrahmamayī*’ primarily bless with conscience in form of wisdom. Secondly she appears in tip of the plough at Janaka’s ‘*Yāgabhūmi*’. The third form of Sītā is yet not clarified. All these three form combined to coin the name Sītā. The origin and destruction of all creatures is done by Mother Nature. Sītā

<sup>4</sup> D.Śrīman Nambūtiri, *Upaniṣad Sarvaswa* Malayalam Translation, Sāmrat Publishers, Thrissur. p.519

<sup>5</sup> Ibid *Upaniṣad Sarvaswa* Malayalam Translation p.520

is also described as Mother Nature and also goddess. In the end Sītā is also described as ‘*Vīralakṣmi*’.

In ‘*Amarakośa*’ by Amarasimha the name Sītā is described as:

“सीता लाङ्गल रेखा स्याद्योम गङ्गा च जाहन्वी ।

सीता जनकजा गङ्गा भेदयोर् हल पद्धतौ ॥”<sup>6</sup>

“The term Sītā has been used as ploughed path, as combination of two paths, also as the name of ploughed path. Sītā got the name because she was found on ploughed path”<sup>7</sup>. “Sītā was also called ‘Mythili’ since she was the daughter of Janaka who was the king of Mithila”<sup>8</sup>. “She is also called Vaidehi as she is the daughter of Videharāja. Sītā is described as Videhi in 11<sup>th</sup> śloka of 96<sup>th</sup> sarga in ‘*Uttarakāṇḍa*’ of *Rāmāyaṇa*”<sup>9</sup>.

“मुहुर्मुहुश्च वैदेहीं परिदाय महायशा स्वाम् ।

आश्रमं शिष्यवृतः पुनरायान्महातपाः ॥ ”<sup>10</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> T C Parameśwaran Mūsati, *Amarakośa, Pārameswarī Vyākhyāna*, National Book Stall, P.600.

<sup>7</sup> ,C.PrasādP urāṇaS,amjñāgamakośa E tymologicalE,ncyclopedia .D.CB,ooks K.ottayam,2000

<sup>8</sup> ,V.Bālakṛṣṇan HaindavaV ijñana,kośa Ārṣa śrī publishingC,o, T.V.M .2004 p.1032.

<sup>9</sup> ,K.S Chandran *Mahābhāratakathāpatrangalilū,de*,Authentic books T,rivandrum 2010, p.439.

<sup>10</sup> Vālmīki, *Śrīmad Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*, Part II, Gītā Press, Gorakhpur, India, 2011, p.832.

In *Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa* Sītā was born in 66<sup>th</sup> *sarga*

“न्यासभूतं तदा न्यस्तमस्माकं पूर्वजं विभौ ।  
 अथ मे कृषतः क्षेत्रं लङ्गलादुत्थिता ततः ॥  
 क्षेत्रं शोधयता लब्दा नाम्ना सीतेति विश्रुता ।  
 भूतलादुत्थिता सा तु व्यवर्धत ममात्मजाम् ॥  
 वीर्यं शुल्केति मे कन्या स्थापितेयमयोनिजा ।  
 भूतलादुत्थितां तां तु वर्धमानं ममात्मजां ॥”<sup>11</sup>

Once in Mithila while a Brahmin ploughed the land he received a cascade, in which Sītā was found by Janaka according to sources such as ‘*Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa*’ and ‘*Pratimā Nāṭaka*’. The word ‘*Siram*’ means plough and ‘*dwajam*’ means one who symbolize it. *Siradwaja* was the king of farmers. According to studies Sītā also meant plough path and also clarifies the name is closely related with Agriculture. Sītā was a name that echoes in the heart of farmers for centuries as per the legend. The importance of Sītā has surely influenced *Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa*. The name Sītā was in vogue even in theocratic era and the synonym for the same was ‘plough path’. In ‘*Sītapaniṣad*’ Sītā was referred as goddess Mahālakṣmi’s incarnation. In *Amarakośa* name is referred as plough path and also convergence of two sub paths. In other

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, *Śrīmad Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa* p.167

books such as ‘*Purāṇasamjñāgamakośa*’ and ‘*Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*’ Sītā is named after *Sītām* (mud) in which she was believed to be born. She is considered as the goddess of agriculture according to these reasons.

## **Sītā in Various Versions of *Rāmāyaṇa* in India and Other Regions**

Apart from India, *Rāmāyaṇa* have different versions in other foreign countries. Each of them is unique and characterizations also vary. Each region believes that their version is accurate. “*Rāmāyaṇa* means the fall of night and beginning of dawn”<sup>12</sup>. According to famous historian M.G.S. Nārāyaṇan “Assamise, Bengali, Gujarathi, Kannada, Kashmiri, Maratti, Malayalam, Odiya, Prakrt, Sanskrit, Santali, Tamil, Telungu, Pali, Greece, Chinese, Combodian, Javanese, Cotanese, Lavosian, Malaysian, Simhalis, Tai, Tibet” are the different languages in which *Rāmāyaṇa* was found. Hence *Rāmāyaṇa* is also known as ‘*Śatakoṭipravistara*’ also. Burma, China, Malesia, Vietnam, Tai, Cambodia, Indoneṣia, Java, Sumatra are the regions outside India where *Rāmāyaṇa* is found. It has been a cultural part of the lifestyle of people in the respective regions. “It has been about thousands of years since we see *Rāmāyaṇa* either in the form of Poems or in the form of

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<sup>12</sup> Eyyenkode Śrīdharan, *Etra Etra Rāmāyaṇaṇal*, Spring Books, Deśabhimāni Books, Thiruvananthapuram, 2002, p.115.

stories. There are ancient poems and stories based on *Rāmāyaṇa* in various parts of Asia”<sup>13</sup>.

There are various *Rāmāyaṇa*’s found in India which include *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*, *Vāsiṣṭharāmā yaṇa*, *Agastyarāmāyaṇa*, *Ānandarāmāyaṇa*, *Adhyātmarāmāyaṇa*, *Atbhutarāmāyaṇa* and *Samvṛtarāmāyaṇa*. Among these *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* is most popular and significant. There are numerous other types of the Epic in various regional languages. There are also tribal versions as well.

*Rāmāyaṇa* has in popularity widely spreading in various parts of Asia. Apart from that other art forms such as pictorial representations, songs, poems, poetic stories, Puppet show, Shadow dance, dance, and drama were the other forms from which the Epic gained popularity. First reconstruction of *Rāmāyaṇa* takes place in somewhere in Medieval India through worshiping culture. During this period Lord Viṣṇu and his Incarnation were beloved to the people.

*Rāmaçaritamānasa*, *Ranganātha Rāmāyaṇa*, *Kṛtṭyabhāsa Rāmāyaṇa*, *Pamba Rāmāyaṇa*, all of these belong to same period of time. *Rāmāyaṇa* does not belong to any Religion or country. The *Rāmāyaṇa* has varying features in different countries, even the

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<sup>13</sup> Sunil P Eļayıtam, *Deśābhimāni*, August 30, 2017, Thrissur, p.6

characterization is not the same. In some countries places, stores, streets and cities are named based on *Rāmāyaṇa*.

Many other forms of *Rāmāyaṇa* from Cambodia, Tibet and Thailand are evolved from Buddhist Jātaka tales. These *Rāmāyaṇa*'s does not end in war of Rāma and Rāvaṇa, but it ends when Rāvaṇa regret his deeds and become a Buddhist namely 'Śrāvaṇ', he even give up the crown and throne. In this study the main concern is how Sītā is being depicted in each of these versions of *Rāmāyaṇa*

### **1. Sītā In *Adhyātmarāmāyaṇa***

*Rāmāyaṇa* has immensely influenced the development of Indian social culture. During the progress of Indian society it brought about huge changes in *Rāmāyaṇa*. Recreating *Rāmāyaṇa* in spiritual aspects was the main focus of Ezhutṭaṇṇan. He also intended to establish a base to advaita philosophy for worshipping Rāma. He wanted to change the society which was impure with caste discrimination. He recreated a better society by banishing all anti-social activities.

The whole *Adhyātmarāmāyaṇa* is in the form of conversation between Lord Śiva and Pārvatīdevi. In this Rāma and Sītā are pictured as Viṣṇu and Mahālakṣmi respectively. While Nārada questions Brahma how the sins will be banished in kaliyuga, the answer was

*Adhyātmarāmāyaṇa*. Hence Spiritual thoughts are purposefully added in many situations of the saga. After *Adhyātmarāmāyaṇa* was born Rāma and Sītā became deities of various temples and were widely worshipped as god and goddess.

*Adhyātmarāmāyaṇa* is split into seven ‘*Kāṇḍās*’ which are ‘*Bālakāṇḍa*’, ‘*Ayodhyākāṇḍa*’, ‘*Āraṇyakāṇḍa*’, ‘*Kiṣkindhākāṇḍa*’, ‘*Sundarakāṇḍa*’, ‘*Yuddhakāṇḍa*’, and ‘*Uttarakāṇḍa*’. The *sarga* has a total of three thousand poems.

The variations from *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*:

In *Ayodhyākāṇḍam* Nārada informs Rāma the purpose of his birth, following which Rāma takes oath go to the forest. There Vālmīki chants name of Rāma in reverse and becomes a sage. Vasiṣṭa informs Bharata that Rāma is the incarnation of Viṣṇu. From abduction of Sītā by Rāvaṇa till ‘*Agniparīkṣa*’, she was hidden inside fire according to this version of *Rāmāyaṇa*. All these events happen in presence of Māya Sītā (virtual form of Sītā).

The story of *Kālanemi*, Swayamprabha visits Rāma, She goes to Badrīvanam as per Rāma’s orders. The proposition about ‘*Gandamādana*’, ‘*Droṇaparva*’, The offerings conducted by Rāvaṇa being spoiled by monkeys by hurting Maṇḍoḍari, Crowning of Rāma



followed by which Hanumān sets out to Himalaya for meditation, The origin of Bāli and Sugrīva, and Conversation between Rāvaṇa and Sanal Kumāra almost all of these situation shows the divine nature of Rāma and Sītā. After the creation of this piece of literature Sītā became incarnation of Goddess Lakṣmi, Rāma was also worshipped. A belief that they both were gods started spreading in the minds of people from everywhere. Hence in the time of abduction of Sītā, Rāvaṇa himself could not touch Sītā as it was Māyā Sītā. Similarly during *Agniparīkṣa* and *Parityāga* the poet has created formula where Rāma is portrayed as ideal man. The glory of *Rāmāyaṇa* in *Ānandarāmayāna*, *Rāmaçaritamānasa* and *Marāṭṭi Rāmāyaṇa* are evident.

## 2. Sītā in *Atbhutarāmāyaṇa*

*Atbhutarāmāyaṇa* was composed by after *Adhyātmarāmāyaṇa*. 1532-1629 was the period when *Rāmaçaritamānasa* was created. The first portion of the book shows influence by *Atbhutarāmāyaṇa*. It is based on the conversation between Vālmīki and Bharadwāja. There 27 *sargās* and 1353 *ślokās* in this. The story revolves when Nārada and Parvata curses Śrīhari to incarnate as Rāma. He also curses Mahālakṣmi to reincarnate as the daughter of Maṇḍōdari. It's because she did not react when Nārada was being humiliated. This story can be also seen in *Rāmaçaritamānasa* and *Śivapurāṇa*. Apart from the

story of Nārada's curse, 'Parabrahmapratipādanam', 'Ambarīkṣa Varapradānam', 'Harimitraupākhyānam', Nārada's Excellency in music and meeting of Rāma and Paraśurāma are all described in detail in *Atbhutarāmāyaṇa*. The ślokās from 19-27 very peculiar, as the section describes Rāma as 'Brahma' and Sītā as 'Śakti'.

This shows how much respect is given to a woman in Indian culture. *Atbhutarāmāyaṇa* is actually 'Sītāyanam'. In other works the glory of Rāma made significance of Sītā to fade away. But as per *Atbhutarāmāyaṇa* describes Sītā as goddess of power ('Śaktiswarūpiṇī'). It is one of the unique creations in Sanskrit literature that gives more importance to Sītā. In this the central character is Sītā, and the story revolves around her.

The cause of most of the reincarnation stories is based on curses by sages or about getting freedom from a curse. But birth of Sītā is totally a different story. Once Rāvaṇa was in asceticism by which he pleased Brahma and asked for a boon such that "if he approaches his own daughter for making love and she rejects, that is the time when he wish to die"<sup>14</sup>. Brahma grants his boon. Rāvaṇa being proud of gaining the boon starts to exploit all the three worlds. Finally he reaches

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<sup>14</sup> ,Vidwān K. Kṛṣṇankuṭṭy *Atbhutarāmāyaṇam* ,Devi Bookstall Kodungallu,r .2005 p.58

*Dandakāranya* forest where he wounds sages with arrows. He also collected their blood and stored them in pots to symbolize his victory.

The pot used by Rāvaṇa actually belongs to Sage called Gr̥tsamadan. He used to fill the pot with of grass in order to be blessed with a girl child. Rāvaṇa had no idea about this and he collected the blood in the same. He gave the pot to his wife Maṇḍōdari saying that it is highly poisonous. He then left the kingdom for making love with young helpless children of *Yakṣās*, *Kinnarās* and gods. Knowing about this out of wretch Maṇḍōdari drinks the liquid from the pot Rāvaṇa previously gave to her.

Once she drank from the pot she became blessed with an offspring. Scared of how her husband will react, she decided to get rid of the offspring. She lied that she was going to holly waters; instead she went to *Kurukṣetra* and aborted herself. The fetus was then buried there.

Later when Janaka ploughed the same land for performing rituals, a baby rises up from there. At once the baby was rained by flowers. Saraswati appeared and said “oh king take her with you, she has divine powers, protect her, she will bring good things to you and your territory, Love her like your own daughter, Name her Sītā as she

was found at the tip of plough.” After saying these Saraswati disappeared. Janaka happily took away the baby. This story was narrated to Bharadwāja. Meanwhile Śrīhari has reincarnated as Rāma due to curse of Nārada and Paṛvata. Lakṣmi was forced to be born as the daughter of Maṇḍōdari.

In this *Rāmāyaṇa* apart from Nārada’s curse, the other things covered are ‘*Parabrahmapratipādanam*’, ‘*Ambarīkṣavarapradānam*’, ‘*Harimitropākhyānam*’, ‘Nārada’s *Gānaprāpti*’ and Rāma meeting Paraśurāma are also explained in depth. Rāma appears as in his original form as ‘Mahāviṣṇu’ in front of Paraśurāma and Nārada. The significance of *Atbhutarāmāyaṇa* is that it describes Hanumān’s devotion to Rāma.

When the ocean was dried up by Lakṣmaṇa for ‘*Setubandhana*’, Rāma felt Bleed and filled the ocean with his tears. In this *Rāmāyaṇa* the thousand faceted Rāvaṇa was killed by Sītā. When Viśwāmitra came to praise Rāma for killing Rāvaṇa, Sītā explained it with a smile. All the gods including Indra were captivated by Rāvaṇa. He used ‘*Vāyavyāstra*’ by which he entire soldiers of Rāma flew to Ayodhya. Then in the fight among Rāma and Rāvaṇa, Rāma was killed. Sītā took ‘*Ghorakalirūpa*’. She beheaded all the soldiers and Rāvaṇa, and started dancing violently. Three worlds started trembling in fear. Brahma

appeared and requested Sītā to stop dancing. She refused it. Brahma brought Rāma back to life. Seeing Sītā as *Ghorakalirūpa*, Rāma praised her. She then came back to her original form and flew back with Rāma by '*Puṣpakavimāna*' to Ayodhya. The influence of this *Rāmāyaṇa* can also be seen in Oriya and Bengali.

### 3. Sītā in *Ānandarāmāyaṇa*

During the advent of devotional institution in 15 AD *Ānandarāmāyaṇa* was written. It comprises more than 10000 *ślokas*. Here the story of Sītā's birth is connected with Vedavati. After years of Asceticism 'Padmākṣa' was blessed with a baby. He named her Padma. While her wedding was decided, in a war her father gets killed. Padma jumps into the fire since she could not bear the pain.

Once when she comes out of the flame, Rāvaṇa sees her and gets attracted. When he extinguishes the fire, he was left with a few gems. Rāvaṇa takes those gems in a cascade to Lanka. But when he reaches there nobody could lift the cascade. When opened they find a girl inside the cascade. Later on according to Rāvaṇā's orders the cascade was buried in Mithila. This was later on found by farmers and they gift it to Janaka. He takes the girl with him to his kingdom, and names her Sītā.

In order to show Kaikeyī's innocence Saraswati was blamed in this book. Also Mandara was reincarnated as Pūtana and gets killed by lord Kṛṣṇa for freedom from the curse. Here Sītā is also described as Agniya as she was born from fire. Janaka became aware the fact that Sītā is incarnation of Lakṣmi only when the 'Śaiṣaṇḍa' was lifted by her. So he decides that she will be married to a person who can do the same. All of these are narrated in the form of conversation among Śiva and Pārvati. And also we can see conversations of Rāmadāsa and Viṣṇudāsa.

In this '*Bālalīlāvarṇanam*', '*Ahalyāmokṣam*', Guha rowing the boat, all those are described. Before marriage of Daśaratha, Kausalya was abducted by Rāvaṇa as per this version. Apart from three wives, Daśaratha was married 700 times according to this story. In *Ānandarāmāyaṇa* after the crowning ceremony it's believed that Rāma along with Sītā to Gaya and bathe in holy water of River falgu. Then they make 108 morsels of sand, suddenly two hands of Daśaratha appears and accepts all the morsels. Frightened by this Sītā didn't share this with anyone.

While Sītā was captivated Pārvati disguises as Sītā to test Rāma. As per the instructions of Brahma, Indra and Nidra went to feed Sītā. Nidra meanwhile makes the demons intoxicated of joy, and Indra

reaches out to Sītā and gifts her a porridge that can vanish hunger and thirst, he also informs her regarding Rāma's arrival.

Rāma asks Sītā to take three forms such as '*Rajorūpa*' in fire, '*Satwarūpa*' beside him, '*Tamorūpa*' in forest. This is described in '*Sārakāṇḍa*' 7<sup>th</sup> *sarga*, *śloka*s 67 and 68.

“सीते त्वं त्रिविधा भूत्वा रजोरूपा वसानले

वमाङ्गे मे सत्वरूपा वस छाया तमोमयी ॥

पञ्चवट्यां दशासस्य मोहनार्थं वासात्र वै ॥”<sup>15</sup>

This description is seen in this *Rāmāyaṇa* alone. Sītā in '*Sātvika*' and '*Rajomaya*' forms were rescued and the shadow of '*Tamorūpa*' alone was captivated by Rāvaṇa. Along with the ring Rāma gifts advices to Hanumān, and narrates the story of how he wrote array of papers to be held on her forehead. Lanka Devi shows the path for Hanumān for finding Sītā. Hanumān meets up with Vibhīṣaṇa while he searches for Sītā. He makes some of the demons nude, he breaks lots of vessels, places Rāvaṇā's clothes on Vibhīṣaṇa's bed, and places Gaya's (a demon) clothes on Rāvaṇā's bed. Maṇḍōdari begs Rāvaṇa to change his decision regarding killing Sītā. She also requests to send Sītā Back to where she belong a couple of times.

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<sup>15</sup> Father Kamil Bulcke, *Rāmakatha*, Sāhitya Academi, Thrisur, 1978. p.437

Trijata is described as Vibhīṣaṇa’s wife in this *Rāmāyaṇa*. She also accompanies Sītā and Rāma while they set out to Ayodhya after their victory. Sītā in wrench decides to commit suicide with her hair under the *Aśoka* tree. She then receives some positive vibes in her body and refrains. Brahma warns her that Rāvaṇa will show her a fake head of Rāma, Rāvaṇa kills Māya Sītā. Rāvaṇa abducts Sītā for salvation according to this *Rāmāyaṇa*. In *Manoharakāṇḍa* Sītā and Durga are distinguished in 12<sup>th</sup> episode.

In *Ānandarāmāyaṇa* even Rāvaṇa take part in wedding ceremony of Sītā, and when tries to lift the bow, he trips and bow falls on his feet. Viśwamitra asks Rāma to help Rāvaṇa. “Rāma was only six when he married according to this book”<sup>16</sup>. Meanwhile Sītā who saw Rāma at the ceremony fell in love with him at once. She also told her friend that she will only marry him; else it is better for her to die. So she prays to gods to reduce the weight of the bow equivalent to flowers. She also takes a vow to live in the forest for 14 years if Rāma succeeds the test.

Rāvaṇa garners ‘*Ātmalinga*’ and also Pārvati. And later he loses both. Irāvaṇa and Mirāvaṇa take Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa to *Pātāla* and

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<sup>16</sup> ,Ibid *Rāma,katha* p.346



Hanumān rescues them according to this story. Since he has followed 'Ekapatnīvrata' the relief is that next incarnation can have more than one wife. In 18<sup>th</sup> sarga of *Manoharakāṇḍa* 'Rāma Upāsana', 'Rāmamāhātmyam', 'Rāmakavaṇa' and other spiritual activities are described. Sītā's top to bottom description, bejeweled Sītā, Routine of Rāma and Sītā, Rāma's journey to *Kurukṣetra* along with Sītā, Rāma's story of sacrificing Sītā, Birth of Lava, and Vālmīki creates Kuśa, the fight amongst the kids and Rāma's army, are described in this *Rāmāyaṇa*. Also the marriage ceremony of all the eight children of Rāma and his brothers are also described. Most of the descriptions in this story are purely imaginary. It also describes about *Rājanīti*. According to this story

Śataskāṇḍarāvaṇa defeats Rāma and later Sītā kills Rāvaṇa. Sītā also kills Mūlakāśura. Due to make the story end in a positive note, it does describe about Sītā taken inside by Bhūmidevi.

Here the story takes different turn. Sītā is not at all sacrificed here, instead she was sent to *Vālmīki Āśrama* for giving birth to Lava and Kuśa. She is advised to stay away until the world stops cursing her, before that, as per Kaikeyī's request she makes a drawing of Rāvaṇa's index finger. She was allowed to return only after giving birth to the children, she has also undergone many painful circumstances even

when she pregnant due to physical torture. She lives in *Vālmīki āśram* for a certain period of time.

After birth of Lava and Kuśa also she doesn't return. When Rāma conducts the *Aśvamedha* offering ritual, the horse somehow reaches *Vālmīki āśram* where Lava captures it. Later on Lakṣmaṇa who came in search of the horse finds it tied up. Fight occurs amongst Lava and Lakṣmaṇa. He defeats and ties up Lava. Kuśa Defeats Lakṣmaṇa after a fight for freedom for his brother later starts fight with Rāma after defeat of Lakṣmaṇa. Nobody wins the fight even after prolonged fighting. Rāma enquires about the identity of those kids. Vālmīki replies their identity will be revealed the next day. On the next day the kids sing the *Bālakāṇḍa* of '*Ānandaramāyaṇa*' and reveals who they are. Later on Rāma takes Sītā and his children along with him to Ayodhya. Eventually Rāma becomes Viṣṇu and Sītā turns Lakṣmi as per the legends.

#### 4. *Sītā in Vyāsarāmāyaṇa*

Unlike *Vālmīki Rāmāyana*, *Vyāsarāmāyaṇa* is very brief and explained in just about 752 *ślokas*. While the Pāṇḍavās were living in the 'Kāmyaka' forest, they set out for hunting. Meanwhile the king of

Sidhu, Jayadratha and his army finds out that Draupati was alone, and abducts her.

Soon after the abduction Pāṇdavās find Jayadratha and his army. They defeat the army and captures Jayadratha. Even though Draupati asks to kill him, Pāṇdavās didn't, as he was their only sister Duśśala's husband.

After this incident Yudhiṣṭhira asks Mārkaṇḍeya muni, if he has seen anyone as unlucky as him. This is the portion where he explains the story of *Rāmāyana*. The *ślokas* are in *anuṣṭupvṛtta*. It belongs to *Vanaparva* of *Mahābhārata*, the sections 273 till 292 depicts *Rāmāyana*. But in this version of story, even though birth of Rāma and his brothers are described there are no records on *Putrakāmeṣṭhi yāga*; And Sītā is described as Janaka's Daughter.

In this while abduction of Sītā and her residing in Lanka, Trijaṭa consoles her. Due to curse of Nalakūbera, Rāvaṇa could not destroy the Sītā's purity. Rāvaṇa tries to kill her, but Avindhya stops him. After Murdering Rāvaṇa, He along with Vibhīṣaṇa brings Sītā to Rāma.

According to this story Rāvaṇa is the son of Viśravas. When he steals the '*Puṣpaka*', Due to curse of Vyāsa Rāvaṇa that *Puṣpaka* will

not hold Rāvaṇa but it will behold his Killer. But no description is given regarding this curse.

Mandara was just a homeless old lady according to Vālmīki. But in this story she is described as Dundubi, a Gāndharvi who was sent in order to give advises for good deeds.

In *Rāmāyaṇa* Kaikeyī's anger forces Daśaratha to full fill the boons she had, due to Mandhara's ill advises. In this the bejeweled Kaikēyi requests her wishes with love. Hearing this, Rāma sets out to forest.

Māriça under compulsion of Rāvaṇa mimics Rāma's voice and cries, Sītā is scared and requests Lakṣmaṇa to rescue him and follows him. Lakṣmaṇa asks Sītā to stay back. She scolds him. Lakṣmaṇa then leaves the place.

Meanwhile Tāra asks Bāli not to pick fight with Sugrīva. Bāli doubts that Tāra has fallen in love with his brother according to this *Rāmāyaṇa*.

In this version there is also a new character called 'Avindya', who happens to be one of the minister of Rāvaṇa who is against the king and supports Rāma instead. On hearing the death of Indrajith, Rāvaṇa tries to kill Sītā. Avindhya stops him. When Rāma rejects Sītā

doubting her purity, all the gods including Vāyu, advises him that he is doing the wrong thing. Hence Rāma accepts Sītā; there is no *Agniparīkṣa*, in this story.

### **5. Sītā in *Tatvasaṁgraharāmāyaṇa***

This *Rāmāyaṇa* mainly focuses on the theories established through the main characters in *Rāmāyaṇa*. The narration is very unique that it says Rāma himself is the Ultimate power Brahma. It also portrays Rāma as Śiva, Viṣṇu, and Brahma also as combined power of all these gods.

The story develops in the form of conversations among Śiva and Pārvati. It also describes the presence of Śiva at Sītā's wedding. During abduction Sītā herself comes out of *Lakṣmaṇarekha* for palm reading.

While she is in conversation with Rāvaṇa, Hanumān appears and beats up Rāvaṇa; Meanwhile *Mṛtyu* takes form as Sītā. Original Sītā hides under Rāmā's shoulder.

The fight amongst Rāvaṇa and Jaṭāyu is also described. Rāma shows his original form to Sugrīva. In this Pārvati is considered as Hanumān's mother. This story also describes that Rāvaṇa was killed by Sītā.

Before marriage, Rāma and Sītā were involved in *Rāsakrīda* along with Sītā's friends; Rāma draws his picture and sends it to Sītā via a bird. Seeing the picture Sītā was eager to marry Rāma. Later on they get married, and in a *swayamvara*, Rāma also marries another girl Sahaja. But this *Rāmāyaṇa* is not very popular in Indian culture.

## 6. Sītā in *Agastyarāmāyaṇa*

This is written by Agastya. It includes 16000 ślokās. It illustrates the story of Bhānupratāpa and Arimardana, and also the story about how Kuntalarāja and Sindhumati reincarnates as Daśaratha and Kausalya. 700 years of Rāma's *Swargārohaṇa* are depicted here.

Mahāviṣṇu cursed to be born as Rāma, Similarity among Sītā and Maṇḍodari are also described in this. Story about Hanumān's son is also described. The story also says no one knows Rāma better than Agastya.

There are many questionable deeds in other *Rāmāyaṇa*'s; all the answers to those questions can be found in this *Rāmāyaṇa*. Was it the right thing to shoot Bāli from behind?, Kaikeyī helping Daśaratha in the battle by placing her finger instead of bolt in the chariot, while the bolt fell off. Many theories and facts that help one in social life are

explained in *Agastyarāmāyaṇa*. It also describes the origin and reason behind Sītā's birth.

There was a king named Patmanābhan who meditated to please Lakṣmi. Later when goddess Lakṣmi appeared he asked for his wish which was to get goddess Lakṣmi to be his own daughter, but Lakṣmi denies and tells him to please Viṣṇu for granting the wish. Hearing this the king begins to meditate to please Viṣṇu. And when Viṣṇu appears he asks the same wish. Viṣṇu blesses him accordingly, he also gifts the king with a fruit saying that it's difficult to maintain Lakṣmi.

Later Patmanābhan has a daughter, he names her Padma. She grows into a beautiful woman. The king decides to conduct her marriage. He has a groom in mind with color of the sky. But he did not find any person with such a quality. This was an insult to all the princes who were present at the ceremony. This led to a war between the other kings and Patmanābhan. Patmanābhan defeats everyone except for *Asurās*, they defeat Patmanābhan. Meanwhile all the ladies in the kingdom hides in fire in order to protect their purity, including Padma.

Later when Padma comes out of fire Rāvaṇa saw her by chance. He instantly fell in love with the lady. But even after putting out the

fire Rāvaṇa could not find her. Instead he finds five diamonds in the fire. He took the diamonds with him and kept it inside the prayer room.

While he was conversing with Maṇḍodari he tells her about the diamonds. But when Maṇḍodari opens the box of diamonds, diamonds were missing. Instead, Padma was seen inside the box. The box was very heavy as well. Seeing this Maṇḍodari says that the box is the reason behind all the bad things happening in the kingdom. She also advises to get rid of it, including Padma.

Hearing this Padma says that Maṇḍodari is right, she also adds that she will return back even if she is sent out of the kingdom, for destructing the same. This made Rāvaṇa angry and he tries to behead Padma. But Maṇḍodari stops him.

The story also explains that Sītā was not just a princess but Goddess Lakṣmi herself. Later the same box was found by Janaka, and the girl was adopted and named as Jānaki, Who later on kills thousand faceted Rāvaṇa.

The other story is that after Rāvaṇa's victory he collects blood of many Sages in a clay pot. The pot was already used by Gṛtsamadan a sage who longed for Lakṣmi to be his baby. Rāvaṇa told his wife Maṇḍodari that the pot contains poison.



Later he left the kingdom and slept with other ladies. Maṇḍodari could not bear the pain. So she drank from the pot Rāvaṇa give her assuming it to be poison. But she gets pregnant. Scared of Rāvaṇa she aborts he baby at Mithila.

According to this story Sītā and Maṇḍodari has similar looks, as they are the actual mother and daughter. Sītā has various other names, such as Mythili as she is born in Mithila, Mātangi as she is related with “*Mātaḷa*” (a citrus fruit) fruit, Agnigarbha as she hide inside fire, Ratnāvati, since born from diamonds, Bhūputri since found on land and the list goes on.

While Sītā was abducted by Rāvaṇa, She warns him that his family and his kingdom will be destroyed by Rāma. Hearing this Rāvaṇa gets scared, and goes back to his court. Later his servants start irritating Sītā by various means; only Trijaṭa comes to support Sītā. Sītā tries to commit suicide, at the same time Hanumān appears to the scene with Rāma’s message. Sītā give him ‘*Çūṭāmaṇi*’ in return.

## **7. Sita in Jain Rāmāyaṇa**

The story of Rāma of the Raghu dynasty ambushing Lanka and killing Rāvaṇa existed even before the origin of Buddhism and Jainism. When Siddhārtha left the kingdom, and lead the life of a Sage, he was

questioned regarding this. He explained about the Ikṣvāgu king Rāma who declined the request Bharata for him to accept the kingdom. He stated his action was right according to the story. This verse can be seen in Aśvaghōṣa's *Buddhaḥarita*.

And also the story of Rāvaṇa is separately described in another work known as *Lankāsūtra*. There are no specific stories of Rāma among Buddhists. *Rāmāyaṇa* and other related stories are still in vogue at the regions such as Jāva, Sumātra and Malaya. But still those works are so much different from *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*.

In *Jain Rāmāyaṇa* Rāma is not explained as incarnation of Viṣṇu, neither he is characterized as a person for world wellness, also Rāvaṇa is not described as an antagonist and god hater. Here Sītā is daughter of Rāvaṇa, during her wedding ceremony Rāma wins swayamvara by breaking the bow. Rāvaṇa is considered as a central character as per the *Jain Rāmāyaṇa*.

The story progresses through the incidents such as Rāma going to the forest, Sītā getting abducted, war for rescuing Sītā and so on. The names of Daśaratha's wives are slightly different from *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*.

Knowing about own death, Rāvaṇa sends Vibhīṣaṇa to kill Daśaratha. Instead Vibhīṣaṇa breaks a copper statue. The boons given to Kaikeyī are also different in *Jain Rāmāyaṇa*. Here Kaikeyī asks for the boons during her wedding ceremony, when garland was put on Kaikeyī other kings became furious, and begins a war. Finally he wins the war, and he happily gives the boon to Kaikeyī to make her son the next king.

“कुरुप्रिये सारथित्वंयथा मन्थाममून द्विषःइत्यवोचत कैकेयीं तदैकाकी  
हि राघवः ।

कैकेयि रश्मिमादाय ध्यारुरोह महारथाद्वाससावपिकलां स्वाभिज्ञासा हि  
धीमती ॥”<sup>17</sup>

Bharata on the other hand refuses to become the king saying that ruling has to be done by his elder brother. He also begs to bring Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa back to the kingdom. Following that, Daśaratha and Kaikeyī along with Bharata meets up with Rāma at the forest.

There are variations regarding Rāvaṇa’s character as well. His dynasty is different according to this work. Kubera is son of Kaikeyī’s sister named Kauśika. Kubera is the rightful ruler of Lanka. Rāvaṇa is a person with good morale according to *Jain Rāmāyaṇa*. For showing

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<sup>17</sup> Mejorsardār K M Paṇicker, *Mangalodaya*, Laḷḷam-3 1940, July, p.135.

this are various incidents described as well. When Rāvaṇa was approached by Kubera's wife Uparamba, he rejects her proposal.

The work is so different from the version that is popular among the regions of the country. The reason behind sacrifice of Sītā according to this book is a picture of Rāvaṇa. Kākeyī ask for a boon which can send Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā to forest. There is no 'Uttararāmaçarita' as per this work is concerned. In *Jain Rāmāyaṇa* Lakṣmana kills Rāvaṇa. Rāvaṇa defeats Indra by himself.

### **8. Sītā in Svayambhu Rāmāyaṇa**

In this *Rāmāyaṇa* there are 18000 *ślokās* in the form of conversation among Brahma and Nārada. In this work Sītā is born from the fetus of Maṇḍodari.

### **9. Sītā in Malayalam Literature**

There are multiple works in Malayalam literature based on *Rāmāyaṇa*. Ancient among those are;

- Çīramā 's *Rāmaçarita*
- *Kaṇṇaśarāmāyaṇa* by Rāma Panicker
- Pūnam Nambūtiri's *Rāmāyaṇaçampu*
- *Keralavarma Rāmāyaṇa*

- *Rāmaçandravilāsa*
- *Rāmānāṭṭa* by Kottāraḱkara Tampurān
- *Bālarāmāyaṇa* by Kumāranāśān
- *Āṭṭakatha* by Maṇḁhala Nīlakāntan Mūsatu
- Nalukettil Kṛṣṇan menon's *Tuḷḷalkadakaḷ*
- S.K Nair's translation for *Kambarāmāyaṇa*
- Vennikuḷam's translation for *Tuḷasīdāsa Rāmāyaṇa*

There are various follow ups for *Rāmāyaṇa* in the form of drama' s namely; *Sītāsvayaṁvara*, *Maṇḁodari*, *Atbhutarāmāyaṇa*, *Sītāharaṇa*, *Rāvaṇaputran*, , *Rāmarājābhiṣeka*, *Puṣpavrṣṭi*, *Kāñjanasītā* , *Lankālakṣmi*, and *Sāketam*

The poets of 20<sup>th</sup> century have also adapted the storyline of *Rāmāyaṇa* as well. Kumāranāśān's "*Çintāviṣṭayāya Sītā*", P.Kunḱirāman nair's "*Sītā Devi*", Sugatakumāri's "*Innatte Sandhya*", Punalūr Bālan's "*Samarpaṇam*", Pālā's "*Tamasākānanaṇaḱil*", Viṣṇunārāyaṇan Nambūtiri's "*Lakṣmaṇan*", Bālāmaṇiammā's "*Vibhīṣaṇan*", Vayalār's "*Rāvaṇa Putri*", Ayyappapanicker's "*Śabari*", Saççidānatan's "*Ahalya*" and "*Jānakīppōrū*" are the works to be noted.

## 10. Sītā in *Kamba Rāmāyaṇa*

This is the oldest *Rāmāyaṇa* ever created in South India written by Kambar. It's based on 12<sup>th</sup> śataka. It's adapted from *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* But still the descriptions and the story line are very unique. There are other small stories added along with its former version. It is more similar to *Adhyātmarāmāyaṇa* and *Ranganātharāmāyaṇa*.

There are so many exaggerations on the story in this *Rāmāyaṇa*. While Hanumān arrives at doorstep of Lanka, his way is blocked by Lankākṣmi who is a form of Sītā too. Hanumān slaps her with his left hand. She vomits blood and faints. When she came back to senses she get to know who she really is, so she appreciates Hanumān for his act, and helps him to find the way to kingdom.

She was a form of Kālī. Later she sets out to *Kailāsa*. Once she reaches *Kailāsa*, her complaints was that she could not see Rāma-Rāvaṇa war. Śiva consoles her saying that “You stay at the temple where you find *Swayambūliṅga* in Tamilnadu, where I will reincarnate as Kambar and write *Kambarāmāyaṇa* which will be conducted as play on the same temple; this will clearly explain the complete story of Rāma”. Hearing this Kālīdevi sets out to *Tiruvaṅṅanellūr* temple and stayed there.

Meanwhile there lived a scholar named ‘Sankaranārāyaṇan’, whose wife was a devotee of Lord Śiva who longed for a baby or years. As lord Śiva told Kālī he incarnated as the baby for widowed wife of Sankaranārāyaṇan.

She was scared about the cursing world which forced her to leave her baby under the flag pole in the temple. Later Kaundapramāni adopted the baby and took good care of him. He named the baby Kambar as he got him under Kambam (Flag pole).

Even if Kambar was lazy by nature, he was very brilliant for a kid. Later when he grew, He became a great Tamil poet and Scholar. He also became one of the great poets in Çolarāja’s court. Once the King gave Kambar and Oṭṭakūttan an assignment. It was to write *Rāmāyaṇa* in two sections. Oṭṭakūttan got to write upto *Setubandhanam*. The remaining portion was assigned to Kambar. Oṭṭakūttan completed the given job by 6 months, whereas Kambar has not done anything.

He had to submit his work the next day. Kambar slept while he was writing; when he woke up he saw a divine light writing. He says “Vaiti Vedidiñute Amba”, the light replies “ezhuti mudiñute Kamba” which means “have completed writing”. Kambar opens up his eyes to

find the light disappear, as well as completely written *Rāmāyaṇa*. The next day he narrates from the written book, which leaves the courtiers and the King spellbound. The portion of the Rāma-Rāvaṇa war is presented as Pāvakūttu (doll play), a drama using dolls of the characters for Kāḷī to watch. This was the famous Epic about the origin of *Kambarāmāyaṇa*<sup>18</sup>.

Sītā's disappearance from the kingdom is explained differently as well. After the return of Sītā to Ayodhya, Kaikeyī enters Sītā's room and enquire about her life in the forest. Sītā describes everything. Kaikeyī asks about Rāvaṇa and also persuades Sītā to draw his picture. After refusing for a long time, under compulsion she finally draws Rāvaṇa in a wooden plank. Sītā's extraordinary drawing skills made the picture lively. Kaikeyī asks Sītā for the plank so she can show others the picture.

When Rāma sat on the plank his legs started shaking when he turned it on the back he found Rāvaṇa's picture. He asks who did it with anger. Kaikeyī says ironically that his beloved wife did it. Rāma enquires about this to Sītā. He adds that she must be punished with death. Sadness engulfs Ayodhya. Sītā cries "ha ambe" (oh mother) and

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<sup>18</sup> Vidwān Srīdharan Uṇṇi, *Kambarāmāyaṇa*, Devi bookstall, Kondungallur, 2011, p.10.



faints. Earth rips apart, a holy light appears and grabs Sītā inside. The story is also different during her pregnancy. She stays at *Gautamāśram* in *Kambarāmāyaṇa*, whereas in *Vālmīki āśrama* according to *Vālmīkirāmāyaṇa*.

## 11. Sītā in *Kannaḍa Rāmāyaṇa*

From 11<sup>th</sup> century onwards *Kannaḍa Rāmāyaṇa* came into existence. It was written by Nāgaçandra who was also known as Abhinavapamban. *Jainarāmāyaṇa* also have great significance in Kannada. The divine *Rāma Vijayaçarita*, *Jaina Rāmāyaṇa* and *Rāma Kathāvatāram* by Devaçandra are popular works. These are all different from *Vālmīkirāmāyaṇa*

In *Kannada Rāmāyaṇa* Sītā has more importance than other *Rāmāyaṇa*. *Jaiminībhāratam* is one such work in Kannada that gives importance to Sītā. It comprises of Yudhiṣṭhira's *Aśvamedha*, Lava-Kuśa's *Rāmāyaṇa* recitation, Sītā's separation and Reunion of Sītā with Rāma.

## 12. Sītā in Oriya Literature

The beginning of 18<sup>th</sup> century is when *Rāmāyaṇa* came into existence in Oriya. The most ancient writer in Oriya was Siddeśvara Parida. His famous works include *Çandipurāṇa* and *Mahābhārata*.

*Rāmāyaṇa* is included in *Mahābhārata*. It shows a peculiar *Rāmāyaṇa* was written by Saraḷadāsa. The characters of *Rāmāyaṇa* are depicted as characters in *Mahābhārata*, such as: Sītā as Draupati, Anjana as Kuntī, Sugrīva as Arjuna, Bāli as Karṇa and so on. This is so much similar to *Kṛtivāsa Rāmāyaṇa* written in Bengali language.

Most important among *Rāmāyaṇa* in Oriya is by Balarāmādāsa. It is written in the form of conversation between Śiva and Pārvati. It's related with Gaudīya Pāda. *Kāntakoyili* and *Kakapoi* are written by Bālarāmādāsa. These two works are related to *Rāmāyaṇa*, But narrated differently. In *Kakapoi* Sītā chose a crow as messenger, *Kāntakoyili* the messenger was a Cuckoo. Nīlāambaradāsa's *Tika Rāmāyaṇa*, *Raghunāthavilāsa* by Dananjaya, Kalhudāsa's *Rāmarasāmṛutasindhu*, and Haladāsa's translation for *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa* are some popular works in Oriya.

There were so many translations for *Rāmāyaṇa* in Oriya. Also we can find some folklore in Oriya. An example for that is *Haliya Rāmāyaṇa* which is sung while the land is ploughed. Salvation of Ahalya is the theme used.

## ***Rāmāyaṇa* in Foreign Countries**

### **1. *Sītā* in *Cambodian Rāmāyaṇa***

Majority of the scriptures in Sanskrit seen in Cambodia are based upon *Rāmāyaṇa*. There are pictures from *Rāmāyaṇa* can be found in south-east part of Asia. The scriptures in Cambodian temple show *Rāmāyaṇa*'s influence. It brings good thoughts even among common people. The scriptures related to *Mahābhārata* can also be seen. *Uttarakāṇḍa* was famous in Cambodia. It comprises of the following incidents such as, Rāma's Crowing ceremony, Sītā's wedding, Fight between Lakṣmaṇa and Indrajith and Rāvaṇa's anger are all explained. This *Rāmāyaṇa* is highly influenced by *Thai Rāmāyaṇa* named *Rāmākīrtti*. It has its roots in *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*.

In *Cambodian Rāmāyaṇa* Sītā is actual daughter of Janaka. The bow doesn't break when Rāma took it according to *Rāmākīrtti*. Rāvaṇa does not take part in Sītā's wedding. Rāma sets out to forest after persuasion of Kaikeyī. Sītā takes shelter at Vālmīki āśram when Rāma avoids her.

Viśvāmitra faces difficulties in offerings mainly due to demons disguised as crows.

The ring of Sītā, slips and Jaṭāyu grabs it, this leads to fight among Jaṭāyu and Rāvaṇa. A goldfish comes to help while searching Sītā. Fight occurs among Hanumān and Lakṣmaṇa occurs. Rāma chops seven Sāla trees using single arrow. With the help from Snake emperor, Rāma gets ready for the war.

The main cities of Cambodia are decorated with *Rāmāyaṇa* scriptures and paintings. The pictures of Sītā's wedding, conversation of Sītā with Hanumān and the fire test can also be seen. These pictures show *Rāmāyaṇa*'s influence. These are the peculiarities of Cambodian *Rāmāyaṇa*.

## **2. Sītā in *Lavos Rāmāyaṇa***

The *Lavos Rāmāyaṇa* gains popularity in the form of art forms such as dance, drama and songs. It is also popular as folk lore. This has similarity with *Thai* and *Cambodian Rāmāyaṇa*'s. It is recited during most of the festive occasions. It is published by Indian embassy in 1973 at Vientiane. Another copy was published in 1976 at Guaidverābi. This was written in Yuan language.

Kaśi was once ruled a king Tapaharameśan who had three wives. Three of them became pregnant at the same time. Meanwhile Rāvaṇa disguised as Indra and misbehaves with Indra's wife Sujāta. Sujāta who

later realizes it was Rāvaṇa becomes furious and hatred grows within her. She curses Rāvaṇa, as a result of which Rāvaṇa becomes pregnant. While consulted with an astrologer he gets to know that the child will become the reason of his destruction. So he ties the baby inside a box and decides to throw the box in a sea.

The box later reaches an island called Jambu. A sage name Kāśyapan gets the box from there. On opening the box he finds the baby, he took care of the girl as his own daughter. He named her Sītā. This was how birth of Sītā was described in this *Rāmāyaṇa*. Here before marriage, Sītā fell in Rāma at first sight.

According to this Sītā was abducted by Indra not Rāvaṇa. Indra disguised as Mārīça the golden deer, which in turn leads to abduction of Sītā.

The birth of Hanumān is described differently in this *Rāmāyaṇa*. When Rāma was travelling alone in the forest he finds a tree called Māṇikod. He climbs up the tree for the fruit. He turns into an ape at once. He then goes to his wife Foṅsi, and makes out with her. This leads to Foṅsi giving birth to Hanumān.

Sacrifice of Sītā is written differently. Sītā asks her maids for Rāvaṇa's picture. Once she gets the picture she gazes it with love. Later

out of fear she hides the picture under Rāmā's throne. When Rāma sat on the throne he hears a voice mumbling 'We both are kings, then why do you sit on my head'. Hearing this Rāma checks his throne and finds Rāvaṇa's picture. He assumes this has been done by Sītā. He gets doubts about her. He loses trust, and he orders his servants to kill Sītā.

Lakṣmaṇa tries to stop them by saying Sītā is pregnant, and the act is unfair. Later he was forced to abandon Sītā in forest. On his way back he kills a dog, and brings back the weapon to show his brother. He informs Rāma that Sītā has been killed.

In *Asian Rāmāyaṇa's*, Rāvaṇa is not a demon; instead he is described as a handsome gentleman who is immensely rich. In a book named 'Homchak' the story is based on Buddha, it claims Rāma to be Buddha himself.

### **3. Sītā in *Malaya Rāmāyaṇa***

*Rāmāyaṇa* in Malesia is a literature that has some Philosophical lessons in it. This came into existence from tribes in Philippines. This has similarities to Indian *Rāmāyaṇa*. In this *Rāmāyaṇa* the names of characters are different. Rāvaṇa is known as Hārādhyalāvaṇa. Agāmāniyog sultan has two children named Rādia Mangantiri (Rāma) and Rādia Mangavarnan (Lakṣmaṇa). They sets out for a voyage of 10

years for meeting Pulunabāndiya Sulttān. The intention behind the trip was to marry sulttan's daughter 'Tuvan Potri Malano ti Hayya' (Sītā). But in the middle of the sea their ship drowned due to wild storms in waves. After a long period they escaped somehow and reached their destination.

Later the wedding happened. The Groom takes the bride to his hometown after a few days. Meanwhile during this they see a golden deer which attracts the lady very much. She asks for it to her husband. The deer was actually Lāvaṇa disguised for abducting the lady.

He finally captures Sītā using a net, and takes her away. Rāma struggles a lot to rescue Sītā. Rāma also gets some dreams about an ape named Lakṣmaṇa who helps to find Sītā and rescue her. Later these dreams come true. They finds out that Lāvaṇa is a eight headed man with short temper and bad behaviour due to which he was banished from the country by the Sulttān, who is also Lāvaṇa's father. Later after persuasions Lāvaṇa gets to enter the palace with the Sulttan's permission.

The book is inspired from *Vālmīkirāmāyaṇa* It also describes the presence of Rāvaṇa during Sītā's wedding ceremony where he gets defeated and ridiculed.

During Sītā's pregnancy some stranger lady sneaks into the room and hides Rāvaṇa's picture under the pillow. Later the picture reaches Rāma which makes him furious enough to abandon Sītā. A sage named Kālī looks after her. She gives birth to the baby and names him Lava. The sage makes a baby out of grass and names it Kuśa.

After 12 years Rāma realizes Sītā was innocent. He apologizes to Sītā and asks her to return to the palace. She agrees and takes their children with her.

#### **4. Sītā in *Khotani Rāmāyaṇa***

This came into existence in the 9<sup>th</sup> century, brought to public by Prof. A.W. Blaine. This is based on Buddhism and the philosophies related to same. Sahasrabāhu is prince with pride and bad behaviour who happen to be the son of righteous king Daśaratha. Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa are the children of Sahasrabāhu. Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa sets out to forest and spent 12 years there. On returning, they find out that their father has been killed by Paraśurāma.

They decide to kill their father's murderer and finds Paraśurāma. On the war Paraśurāma gets killed. Later the story progresses from Daśagrīva's empire. A group of astrologers were busy shaping the horoscope of Daśagrīva's daughter. Every demons including Daśagrīva



was listening to the astrologers. Hearing the prediction everyone became startled. It said that due to this daughter their empire will get destroyed.

Daśagrīva decided to put an end to the fore coming disaster. So he boxed the baby girl and threw the box into the sea. Later this box was found by a sage. He took care of her. According to *Khotani Rāmāyaṇa* she was Sītā. She lived in a garden. She also had a pet eagle, which always protected her. Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa who passes by the garden see Sītā and get attracted in her beauty. Later after they left Daśagrīva reaches the garden, finds Sītā and tries to attack her. The eagle tries to protect her and bits Daśagrīva with its beak; But Daśagrīva chops the bird's wing with a sword and abducts Sītā.

Later when Rāma along with his brother returns to the garden to see Sītā for second time, they find ripped plants and the dead eagle in a pool of its blood. They know that Sītā is in danger, so they decide to find her. On their way, they find two apes fighting with each other. They were Sugrīva and Nanda. According to this story, Sugrīva is Bāli in *Vālmīkirāmāyaṇa* and Nanda is Sugrīva.

Rāma agrees to help Nanda in the fight, and Nanda in return will help Rāma to find Sītā and rescue her. Nanda sends his army in search

of Sītā. The army gathers information about Sītā by hearing conversation among crows. They inform Rāma about what they heard. Rāma kills Daśagrīva and rescues Sītā since Rāma and his brother both were in love with Sītā, The trio lived together. Later Sītā could not lead a life as she was living; she jumped into the depth of earth split in front of her.

Story of Khotan Rāma ends on this note. The characterization of Sahasrabāhu shows the selfish, cunning and greedy nature of kings. The death of Rāvaṇa is described differently when compared to *Vālmīkirāmāyaṇa*.

### **5. Sītā in *Japanise Rāmāyaṇa***

The *Japanise Rāmāyaṇa* came into existence as an adaption to *Rāmāyaṇa* from Tailand. It is the ti sho copy of Chinese *Tripīdika*. The story has similarity to Daśaratha's curse from *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* The significant portions of this *Rāmāyaṇa* are presented as dance forms. Dorāgāgu is the name given for the dance form. It is presented as four sections. First section is known as Bāri-Māyi. The second section is known as Sītāmayi which covers the sessions from Sītā's birth till her marriage. The third section is Ja-Kin-Jo-No-May, which describes the prison life of Sītā in Lanka. The final section known as Kan-Tu-Onna-

Vu-Uban-May describes the Rāma-Rāvaṇa war. *Japanise Rāmāyaṇa* existed from 9<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> century.

## 6. Sītā in Thailand Rāmāyaṇa

*Rāmāyaṇa* in Thailand were known in two different names such as Rāma kīrtti and Rāma kiyan. It is different from *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*. The king of Ayodhya Toeserat had two children named Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa. Hanumān was their courtier. Rāvaṇa was killed by Aṅkada according to this *Rāmāyaṇa*. Hanumān's victory is the main story line of this *Rāmāyaṇa*.

When Toeserat conducts holy offering for children, he gets sweet fritters, which was stolen by a demon disguised as a crow. This was done under persuasion of Toesakanta for Maṇḍodari. The demon who disguised as crow was named as Kākanāsūn. Kākanāsūn is the counter part of Tātaka in *Vālmīkirāmāyaṇa*. Eating the fritter made Maṇḍodari pregnant. Hearing this Lakṣmi prays to god that may the baby be a girl, and also a reason for destruction of Rāvaṇa the demon.

After a few months when the baby was born, the horoscope was read, which says that it will cause fatal disaster to the father. Afraid of this the baby was left inside a box and abandoned in a sea. The sea goddess Maṇimekhala rescues the baby and safely sends it to island.

Janaka was meditating at the same island, on opening the box he was surprised to see the baby, he adopted the baby and named her Sītā. When Sītā turned older and reached youth, Lord Śiva gifted a bow to Janaka and Agastya. This bow is later passed on to Rāma during Rāma-Rāvaṇa war. War between Sugrīva and Bāli is also described in this *Rāmāyaṇa*. When Bāli tries to grab arrow from Sugrīva it pierces through him, because of which he dies. After Bāli's death Sugrīva becomes the king. Meanwhile Rāma was in pain of separation with Sītā

Sugrīva did not do any help at this time. A peacock appears as a messenger before Rāma. It informs about Sītā. Lakṣmaṇa informs this to Sugrīva. Sugrīva prepares his army for rescuing Sītā. He sends Hanumān to gather information about Sītā. On his way he finds an Apsarās Puṣpamāli, who recognizes Hanumān have special powers. She shares all the information. Later after seeking advice from Nārada, Hanumān reduces his size so that it will be easy for him to hide.

Hanumān finds out Sītā's shelter, and starts destroying everything else. Daśakandan (Rāvaṇa) orders his son Indrajith to capture and kill the monkey. He spilled ghee over Hanumān and lit it with flame. But Hanumān starts to spread the fire everywhere with his tail.

Rāvaṇa sends a spy to collect information from enemies. But the spy return duff. Then an old sage comes to meet Rāma. Rāma finds out that it was Daśakantan in disguise. Here earth also comes in favor for Rāma. While Hanumān enters Rāvaṇa's land the guard at the entrance is swallowed by earth so that Hanumān can get inside. Sugrīva shows his bravery by presenting Rāvaṇa's crown at Rāma's foot. Kumbhakarna kills Lakṣmaṇa, he gets salvation when he discovers Rāma is actually Mahaviṣṇu. He leaves to heaven.

Hanumān and Aṅkad tricks Rāvaṇa to get his secrets. Rāvaṇa foolishly opens up to both that he is going to disguise as Indra and kill Rāma. Rāma knowing this kills the fake Indra. From here *Sītāyaṇa* begins in *Thai Rāmāyaṇa*.

After the war the couple lives peacefully for some time, which did not last longer. As people started blaming Sītā saying that she is impure, this made her life more miserable than in prison and forest. She has proven her purity through fire test. Things become even worse when Śūrpaṇakha hides a picture of Rāvaṇa under Sītā's blanket. The distrust in Rāma grew and he wishes to kill Sītā. Lakṣmaṇa stops him by saying that she is pregnant.

Lakṣmaṇa was forced to kill Sītā; instead he abandons her in the forest and brings heart of a deer as a proof. The comparison of Sītā's heart to a deer shows her tenderness and innocence in *Thai Rāmāyaṇa*.

Sītā stays at an *āśrama* rest of her days from where she gives birth to Mangut and Lobha from there. They were taught martial arts and Vedas from the aśram. Years passed, the knowlege of these children surprised everyone in Ayodhya. Rāma did Aśvametha offering, the horse was scared off by the children Magut and Lobha. Even Rāma was surprised by this.

He started fighting against Magut. Loba informs Sītā about this. Receiving Indra's message passed by Ramba disguised as village girl, Sītā creates a magic sphere of water that shields her son from Rāma's arrows. It also returns the arrows to Rāma in the form of flowers.

Rāma understands that the boy has some unbreakable bond with him, later realizes it's his own son. Rāma regrets for blaming Sītā and doubting her.

He apologizes to Sītā, and pleads for his children. Sītā on the other hand was not ready to forget all the pain she had undergone, she prays to mother earth which splits in front of her and takes Sītā. This is how painful story of Sītā ends in *Thai Rāmāyaṇa*.

The *Thai Rāmāyaṇa* is the combination of diversities. The king Śivraj's era was when *Rāmāyaṇa* became popular Java, Malay and Thailand. It was in the form of book sometimes performing arts such as dance and drama. It was also conducted as drama using masks of the characters. The mural arts on ancient temple are very attractive. It includes Janaka getting

Sītā from ploughed the land and Hanumān's powers. These two are the most significant among the paintings.

### **7. Sītā in Tibet Rāmāyaṇa**

*Rāmāyaṇa* is very much popular in Tibet. There are six handwritten copies of the same. This was written in same period as Tur-Huan ruled China, when Tibetans migrated. But the works are incomplete. *Rāmāyaṇa* became popular in Tibet by 800 A.D. the story begins by describing the prosperity of Lankāpuram. The kingdom is ruled by Yagaśakori. He was famous and powerful. None could kill him even the gods. The gods were not pleased by his deeds. So they asked help from Vaiśravaṇsi and Śrīdevi. They presented the gods with a baby They told the gods that only this baby will be able to kill Yāgaśakori. The name of the baby was Vaiśravaṇa. Vaiśravaṇa grew strong and killed many demons. The gods were pleased by this. But

Vaiśravaṇa fails to kill Yāgaśakori's son Malhyapāṇḍa. Malhyapāṇḍa was blessed by Brahma's son Biśurasenan and also married his daughter Meghasena. Meghasena gave birth to three sons who killed many gods and humans.

One among those sons was Daśagrīva. He had a daughter who was boxed inside a silver box and abandoned because of the astrologer's words. This box was found by a farmer. He took good care of the baby. Meanwhile Daśaratha had two sons called Rāmaṇa and Lagśena.

In the war between gods and demons Daśaratha got injured. He was in need of rest. He crowned Rāmaṇa as prince. Rāmaṇa transfers the responsibilities of the kingdom to his brother. He was in love with farmer's daughter. He asked his parent for permission. After the marriage the girl got her name as Sītā.

Meanwhile Daśagrīva's sister Parpaḷa was also in love with Rāmaṇa. She conveyed her love to Rāmaṇa which was only to get rejected. Later from advices of Daśagrīva she approaches Sītā disguised as golden deer. Sītā longed for the deer. Rāmaṇa sets out for catching the deer. Unfortunately Sītā gets abducted while Rāmaṇa was away.



Rāmaṇa and his brother search Sītā everywhere. But they could not succeed. They meet up with Sugrīva on the way who offers them for help. Rāmaṇa kills Bāla as a return of help. During this time he hears bad things about Sītā. He believes everything. He abandons Sītā.

Hanumanta reaches Lanka in search of truth as he was hurt by the happenings. He finds Sītā meditating about Rāmaṇa. Hanumanta returns to Rāmaṇa and informs him about the truth he saw. This left Rāmaṇa in pain. He realized his mistake. He sent Hanumanta to Sītā for informing about his apology. Hearing Rāmaṇa's apology consoles Sītā She comes to see Rāmaṇa along with Hanumanta. Seeing them unite Hanumanta was pleased, assuming his work completed he returns to heaven.

Sītā in *Rāmāyaṇa*'s from different regions are explained in this chapter. The story and the characters vary according to different regions. Sītā's birth marriage and her disappearance into depth are described in differently in each book. There were modifications based on the region and period of occurrence.

## **Sītā in Other literature: Sanskrit Kavyas, Plays - Folk Theater**

### ***Bhaṭṭikāvya or Rāvaṇavadha***

Bhaṭṭi is a Sanskrit poet who lived in the 7th century CE. Bhaṭṭi is the writer of *Bhaṭṭikāvya*. *Bhaṭṭikāvya*, based on *Vālmīkirāmāyaṇa* along with its grammar rules, has been portrayed over 7 kāṇḍās after making some modifications in the narrative substance of *Rāmāyaṇa* story parts. The summary of *Bhaṭṭikāvya* includes the parts from *Rāmāyaṇa* story beginning from Rāma's birth through *Rāvaṇavadham* until his return to Ayodhya. Sītā's test of fire after Rāvaṇā's death has also been described in this work. The poet has portrayed Sītā to have startled having heard the news on Rāvaṇā's death. Sītā has been described in this poetry as follows,

“अहल्या द्रौपती सीता तारा मण्डोदरी तथा ।

पञ्चकन्या स्मरेनित्यं पञ्चपातक नाशनम् ॥”

The poet concludes the poetry by describing Rāma's preparations for *Aśvamedha* after coronating Bharata as the new king. This poetry has more than 20 readings. This poetry is also exceptional by its poetic aesthetics. Sītā and Rāma's marriage has been described in *sargas* 2, 3 and 4. *Bhaṭṭikāvya* is a model for the scientific poetry. This work has

been divided into four parts namely *Prakīrṇakāṇḍa*, *Adhikāarakāṇḍa*, *Praśnakāṇḍa* and *Thiṅantakāṇḍam*. This poetry has been written to describe the figures of speech and usage of grammar. The portrayal here is of the story of Rāma through 22 *sargas*. The alternate name of this work is '*Rāvaṇavadham*'. The poet named Bhaṭṭi has existed during the 7th century. But it has been assumed that the poet who created the renowned poetry named *Bhaṭṭikāvya* is Bhartrhari:

“महान्तः कवयः सन्तु महान्तः पण्डितास्तथा |  
महाकविर्महाविद्वान् एको भर्तृहरिर्मतः ॥”<sup>19</sup>

The theme of this work is that Śrīrāma chanted the *Adityahṛdaya stotra*, given by Agastyan, thrice praying Sūrya in his mind. And turned towards Rāvaṇa. He was red with rage, and all the living things were scared to death watching the furious expression on his face.

Rāma looked at the demon in a way which would burn him into ashes.

And sent an arrow, as powerful as Indra's bow, towards Rāvaṇa.

### ***Jānakīharāṇa***

*Jānakīharāṇa* is a superior poetry with 20 *sarga*. The writer is Kumāradāsan. This has been written during the ruling period of the

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<sup>19</sup> V.Bālakriṣṇan, *Hindu Encyclopedia*, Ārṣā Śrī publishing, company, Kunnumpuram, Tvm, 2004. p.887.

Sinhalese poet and emperor, Kumāradāsan Mānavarmma. The storyline of this story is just not Sītā's marriage. The entire *Rāmāyaṇa* story except the *Uttarakāṇḍa* has been portrayed in this work. The poetry starts with the description of Ayodhya. The main theme here is Sītā, Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa returning to Ayodhya in *Puṣpakavimāna* after, the coronation ceremony of Vibhīṣaṇa as the next king succeeding Rāvaṇa's death, and Rāma's coronation ceremony. Apart from *Vālmīkirāmāyaṇa*, the *Rāmāyaṇa* story in *Raghuvamśa* has also been a source for Kumāradās in his work. Such a poet who created a great essay twice as massive as *Yudhiṣṭhiravijaya* in the form of *Yamaka* (a figure of speech) is exceptional and brilliant. This stands first among the poetry dominant of *Yamaka*. In this poetry, we can see the story of the early romance of Sītā and Rāma in the *śloka* 1<sup>st</sup> till 34<sup>th</sup>. The details of the intercourse between Sītā and Rāma after marriage at Mithila has been portrayed in the 8th *sarga*. This description is similar to that of *Kumārasambhava* by Kālidāsa. The most important part is Rāma's description while returning to Ayodhya, after the assassination of Rāvaṇa, of every place enroute as spoken to Sītā.

### ***Rāmāyaṇamañjari***

*Rāmāyaṇamañjari* has been written as an abridged form of *Vālmīkirāmāyaṇa* by the great poet Kṣemendran. This was written in

C.E 1037. *Daśāvatāra* is another poetry written by the same poet. Kṣemendran is from Kāhmīr. This work has been written by keeping Rāvaṇa as the central character. There are depictions of Rāvaṇa's meditation, receiving boons, chivalry etc. This is a great work. In this work, Sītā has been portrayed as Rāvaṇa's daughter. Śūrpaṇakha approaches Rāvaṇa and informs him about the stories of her mutilation and the death of Khara Dūṣaṇa. Then Rāvaṇa meets Marīça and listens to the story of Rāma, the incarnation of Viṣṇu, from his birth to the exile in forest. Later Rāvaṇa abducts Sita with the help of Mārīça. After that his spy Suketu narrates to Rāvaṇa about the story from the assassination of Mārīça to *Lankādahanam*. Suketu and Vibhīṣaṇa advises Rāvaṇa to return Sītā. Vibhīṣaṇa finds refuge with Rāma after seeing the criminal mind of Rāma. Succeeding this Rāvaṇa comes to know of the coronation of Vibhīṣaṇa and the building of the great bridge. He also listens from Pratihārapati, about the capture of Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa with the help of *Nāgapāśa* (a celestial weapon) and that of waking up of Kumbhakarṇa. The complete story by Vālmīki, from *Kumbhakarṇavadham* till Rāma's ascent to heaven, after the conversation between Pratihārapati and Rāvaṇa, has been briefly included.

### ***Rāmalinkāmṛta***

*Rāmalinkamṛta* was written by a poet named Adwaitan, hailing from Vāraṇasi, in the year 1608 C.E. In this poetry, after the benediction in the 1st *sarga* a conversation between two *gopikās* from Gokula has been included. One of them has been born into Raghu's dynasty and is well versed about *Rāmāyaṇa* who describes the story of Rāma. The story begins from the story of Rāvaṇa. Jaya and Vijaya are reborn into the race of demons as Rāvaṇa and Kumbhakarna as cursed by Bhṛgu. There is also statement of Prahlādan turning into Vibhīṣaṇan. Later there is also description of the Śiva worship and receiving boons of Rāvaṇa and Kumbhakarna. There is also a description of the gods requesting Viṣṇu to take incarnation, in this *sarga*. In the 2nd *sarga*, there are descriptions of the birth of Rāma and his brothers, the birth ceremony, drinking mother's breast milk, Rāma showing his original form to her mother, childish plays, games in the forest, education, the rites of *Yajñopavīta* (the sacred covering on the body), Viśwamitra taking away Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa. Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa arriving along with Viśwāmitra succeeded by Sītā *swayamvara*, Sītā's friends describing the beauty of Rāma during that time, Rāvaṇa attempting to strike the bow, Rāma breaking the bow have been described in the 3<sup>rd</sup> *sarga*. In the 4<sup>th</sup> *sarga*, the festival of

marriage has been detailed after the arrival of Daśaratha, Kausalya etc. The arrival of gods like Indra and the declaration on a divine city built by Viśvakarma. In the same *sarga*, Lakṣmi tells Sītā about the story of Rāma incarnation. In the 5<sup>th</sup> *sarga*, the age of Rāma has been suggested as 15 and that of Sītā as 6. But in the 4<sup>th</sup> chapter, during the time of exile to forest, it has been described that Sītā is 16 years old. The main story in the 6<sup>th</sup> *sarga* is Rāma's arrival in the forest. Here the description is the life of the Lord, divine human, Hari at Pañcavaṭi. After the mutilation of Sītā, there is also a part about Nārada reaching near Rāvaṇa and describing to him the beauty of Sītā.

As a result, Rāvaṇa abducts Sītā with the help of Mārīça. In the portrayal of the search of Sītā, the enlightenment of Ahalya, who existed in the form of stone, and the wish of Kevada to clean Rāma's feet are part of the story in this *sarga*. After the declaration of the killing of Kabandha, the prayers to Lord Śiva Rāma offers to retrieve Sītā has also been described in this *sarga*. The storyline of the 7<sup>th</sup> *sarga* is the meeting of Rāma and Vibhīṣaṇa. Here Hanumān reaches near Sītā and gifts her a ring. After the statement about the burning down of Lanka, Hanumān informs Rāma about the details of Sītā. This is succeeded by the description of Amgada's messenger mission. We can clearly see the imitation of Rāvaṇa Amgada Samvāda (conversation).

At the end the building of the bridge and the arrival of Vibhīṣaṇa have been described. In the 8th *sarga*, Rāvaṇa takes Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa to the *Pātāla* (underworld) after the *Keḷivarṇana* (dalliance) of the demons. Hanumān rescues both of them with the help of *Makaradhvajā*. There are only statements of the assassination of Kumbhakarna, Lakṣmaṇa been hit by *Śakti* and the battle between and Indrajith. In the 9<sup>th</sup> *sarga*, the story of Suloṇa and the preparations of Rāvaṇa for the battle. In the tenth *sarga*, a long speech by Rāvaṇa after seeing Rāma at the battlefield has been included. Here Rāvaṇa considers Rāma as the incarnation of Viṣṇu to have taken birth to end the race of demons and praises his own luck of having to be killed by Viṣṇu. He thinks that the prayers Rāma had offered to Śiva as the reason for his victory and also describes the powers of the name Rāma. Later Rāma shows to Rāvaṇa his Śiva form and describes about the Śiva linga. Here there is also a statement about Rāvaṇa seeing Rāma's face all around him. In the 11<sup>th</sup> *sarga*, there is no statement of Sītā's test of fire post the assassination of Rāvaṇa.

But there are statements of Sītā's happiness and Maṇḍodari's grief after hearing about the death of Rāvaṇa. This *sarga* also includes the coronation ceremony of Vibhīṣaṇa. The theme of the 12<sup>th</sup> *sarga* is the coronation ceremony of Rāma's kingdom. Kaikeyī tells to Rāma



that it is as per the inducement by Devendra that she sent him to the forest to kill Rāvaṇa. In the 13<sup>th</sup> *sarga*, after the portrayal of intercourse between Sītā and Rāma, Nārada arrives at Rāma's court and sings praises of him. And ends by detailing the troubles of a pregnant Sītā. In the 14<sup>th</sup> *sarga*, there is description of the birth of Lava and Kuśa and their education. There is no mention about the renouncement of Sītā. After being informed by Nārada, Rāma arrives at the *aśrama* along with his army and returns to Ayodhya along with Sītā and Kuśa Lava after the battle. In the 15<sup>th</sup> *sarga*, there is a description of Sītā killing Kumbhakarna's son Kumbhagarbha. In the 16<sup>th</sup> *sarga*, there are descriptions of Rāma worshipping Srīraṅgamūrty. After the story of Srīraṅgamūrty, in the 17<sup>th</sup> *sarga*, there is a description of Rāma's figure. Rāma conducting *Aśvamedhayāga* as per the orders of Vasiṣṭha and gods attending the same and chanting praises of Rāma and Sītā. Later there is the description of the ascent of Rāma, Sītā and the people of Ayodhya to the heaven along with the details of the greatness of *Sarayutīrtha* (river sarayu). In the last *Advaitamañjari*, there are reviews on life, Brahma, God and illusion. The poetry ends by the 18<sup>th</sup> *sarga*. This *sarga* details on the similitude between Rāma and Kṛṣṇa.

### ***Rāvaṇavadha***

This poetry depicts the test of fire of Sītā after the assassination of Rāvaṇa. Here the description is that Sītā was found to be scared to death hearing about the killing of Rāvaṇa. Here it is been said that Sītā is the daughter of Janaka, the king of Mithila, and Sunanda.

### ***Ravaṇārjunīya***

This is a *Vyākaraṇakāvya* (Grammar poetry) written after *Bhaṭṭikāvya*. The poet clarifies that the work has been written at Valabhi, the capital of Souraṣṭra. The writer of this poetry is known in many names like Bhaumakan, Bhaṭṭabhūman and Bhūman. Even today the literature lovers of Kashmīr pays respect to this poet. This is a scientific poetry by Bhaṭṭabhīma. Bhaṭṭabhīman lived during 11<sup>th</sup> century A.D. The poetry depicts the battle between Kārtyavīrarjuna and Rāvaṇa. All sutra from *Aṣṭādhyāyī* except *Sañana sūtra* and *Çandasa sūtra* have been exemplified in its order in in *Rāvaṇārjunīya*. We have received this much poetry related to *Rāmāyaṇa* story. Two great poetic works created from Kerala based on the story of Rāma are *Rāmaçarita* and *Raghavīya*. The writer of *Rāmaçarita* is Vidvan Ilayatampuran. And that of *Rāghavīya* is Rāmapaṇivādan. Sītā's word has been described in *Rāmaçarita* as follows:

“दशमुख तवयो वरान्ददौ प्राक्  
 सविधीर पिच्छति सधुयत् प्रसादं ।  
 तममुमथ भजस्व रामचन्द्रं  
 स्वकुल हिताय गुणेन विष्णु तुभ्यं ॥”<sup>20</sup>

### *Udārarāghava*

*Udārarāghava* is a great poetry written by Sākalyamallan based on the story of *Rāmāyaṇa*. Only the first 9 *sarga* of this work are available now. There are 890 songs in it. He is a scholar from Andhra Pradesh who existed in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The part till the end of *Śūrpaṇakhavṛttantha* from this poetry is available now. If we read this poetry we can find that the poet is a great grammarian. In this prestigious work, it says that during the time of Sītā *swyamvara* as the *śaivaçāpa* broke, Pārvatī deeply embraced Śiva at Kailāsa after hearing the sound and Śiva turned immensely happy. Some changes have been made in the argument related to incarnation. Rāma has been considered as the true incarnation of Viṣṇu and, Bharata and Śatrughna are respectively that of śeshan, Sudarśana and śangha. Sītā says forcing Rāma to take her with him to the forest,” I have listened

<sup>20</sup> Vadakkamkūr Rājarājavarma, *Keralīya Samskrta Sāhitya Çarita*, Vol-5, Mangalodayam, Kottayam, .1955

to several *Rāmāyaṇas* but in none of them have I heard about Rāma leaving to the forest without Sītā”. In this poetry *śringāra* has been given primary importance. The portrayal of the women of Mithila, the context of forest fun during the period of exile, *Śūrpaṇakhavṛtāntham* (story of śūrpaṇakha) etc.

### ***Daśaratha Jātaka***

In this poetry it says that Daśaratha has one daughter and two sons in his first wife. The sons are Rāma and the daughter is Sītā as described in this work. Daśaratha marries another woman after the death of his first wife and it is been said that Bharata was born to this couple. After the son was born he offers a boon to his wife. The boon was to make Bharata the heir. She incited Daśaratha to offer the position of the heir to Bharata at an age of 7. But the King didn't agree. At that time, an astrologer foretells that Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa had a fate to live in the forest for 12 years and Rāma will receive the throne only after the death of Daśaratha. After 9 years Daśaratha dies and Bharata, on his own wish, follows Sītā, Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa to the forest. But they said that they are not ready to break father's promise and Bharata decides to conduct the royal duties by placing Rāma's slippers on the throne. After 12 years Rāma returns to the country accompanied by Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā and lived there happily after marrying Sītā.

All these poetry are poetic works related to *Rāmāyaṇa*. Now we can evaluate the plays based on *Rāmāyaṇa*. In this chapter we evaluate the plays based on *Rāmāyaṇa* in which Sītā has been included.

### **Other Sanskrit Plays Based on *Rāmāyaṇa***

It has been mentioned in *Harivamśa* that to enact plays based on the story of *Rāmāyaṇa* had always existed.

“रामायणं महाकाव्यं मुद्दिश्य नाटकं कृतं ।  
जन्म विष्णोरमेयस्य राक्षसेन्द्रापथेप्सया ॥”<sup>21</sup>

In the plays related to *Rāmāyaṇa* story a lot of changes have been made from the perspective of the substance of the story rather than the poetic works. It is natural that *Rāmāyaṇa* story became part of the visual arts like theatre as it had already become popular through the verbal tradition. The primary consideration behind the changes made in the *Rāmāyaṇa* story is that of appropriate rasa (aesthetics). Most of the playwrights showed indifference in maintaining, those contexts of the story from the epic which are aesthetically appealing, in its original form. The most modified story contexts in *Rāmāyaṇa* are that of Kaikeyī asking for the wish, Daśaratha submitting himself to Kaikeyī, Rāma following the golden deer and Sītā saying harsh words to

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<sup>21</sup> Father Kamil Bulke, *Rāmakatha*, Sāhithya Academy, Thrissur, 1978. p.157

Lakṣmaṇa. Many playwrights bring the illusory Kaikeyī, Daśaratha, Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa etc onto the stage in order to rectify such inappropriateness. *Uttararāmaçarita* and *Kundamāla* written even before the 10th century have matters related to the *Uttarakāṇḍa* described in them which let the plays end in a happy way. In all these plays the flow of the narrative has been hindered due to the elaborate descriptions and conversations. In some places due to the extensive usage of *śringāra rasa* (Desire), the description of Rāvaṇa's separation, the description of Sītā and Rāma's early romance in Mythili kalyaṇa, description of Sītā and Rāma's intercourse has crossed the limits of vulgarity. The entry of wonder in plays like *Prasannarāghava*, *Āścaryaçūdāmaṇi*, *Atbhutadarppaṇa* etc. are the peculiarities for the same.

### ***Abhiṣekanāṭaka***

In *Abhiṣekanāṭaka*, the story from Bālivadha till the coronation ceremony of Rāma has been portrayed with minimal changes. Instead of building a bridge, the ocean splits from the center and the army reaches the other shore through this way. Sītā is shown illusory heads of Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa. During the test of fire God of fire appears and reveals the secret that Sītā is Goddess Lakṣmi. In the 6<sup>th</sup> scene, 28<sup>th</sup> *śloka*,

“इमां भगवतीं लक्ष्मीं जानीहि जनकात्मजां ।

सा भवन्तमनुप्राप्ता मानुषीं तनुमास्थिता ॥”<sup>22</sup>

In *Pratimānāṭaka*, Rāma has been portrayed as a human being. But in this play, the nature of Viṣṇu in Rāma has been stated in several places. The play which consists of 6 scenes, begins with the coronation of Sugrīva. And ends with the coronation ceremony of Rāma. Bhāsan has not omitted Rāma killing Bāli hiding in the woods and renouncing the righteous Sītā using abusive words after the killing of Rāvaṇa. An unforgettable scene from this play is that of Sītā not submitting to Rāvaṇa even after hearing about the death of Rāma.

### **Plays by Bhavabhūti**

The most popular poet who scripted play based on the story of *Rāmāyaṇa* and contributed two exquisite works to the repository of plays on Rāma was Bhavabhūti. Bhavabhūti’s *Mahāvīraçarita* depicts the early part of *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Uttararāmaçarita*, the later part. In *Mahāvīraçarita*, the basis for all lucky happenings for Rāma is Rāvaṇa’s disenchantment due to the unrequited love. Even though Rāvaṇa requests Janaka to marry Sītā, Rāma gets Sītā by breaking the

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<sup>22</sup> Vallattol Nārāyaṇa Menon, *Abhiṣeka Nāṭaka*, Kamalālaya Book Deppo Thiruvanathapuram, 1941, p.52

*Śaivaçāpa*. An angry Rāvaṇa provokes Paraśurāma who later gets into a dual with Rāma but Rāma defeats his enemy in the battle. Later Mālyavān made Śūrpaṇakha to be in disguise as Mantara and reaches a letter to Rāma in Mithila as if from Kaikeyī. The two requirements as per the letter were to make Bharata the next king and that Rāma should live in exile in the forest for the next 14 years. Eventhough Bharata and Yudhajith decide to make Rāma the next King, by then Rāma returns to Ayodhya and makes a firm oath that he is going spend his life in the forest as per the orders of Kaikeyī. In the forest, after the abduction of Sītā, Bāli and Rāma gets into a dual at R̥ṣyamūkāçala due to the conspiracy by Mālyavān. After killing Bāli, Rāma reaches Lanka and retrieves Sītā after killing Rāvaṇa. Bhavabhūti made huge amount of changes in the story of Rāma in his work, *Mahāvīraçarita*. Here, Rāvaṇa is the reason for Rāma's exile and battle with Bāli and Manthara, a disguise of Śūrpaṇakha. The letter assumed to have been written by Kaikeyī being a fake, Bhavabhūti's Kaikeyī remains innocent.

Bhavabhūti's most refined work is *Uttararāmaçarita* written based on *Uttararāmāyaṇa*. Here also Bhavabhūti isnt least hesitant in making large changes in the structure of the story. Rāma comes to know of the gossips on Sītā when Kousalya and party had been



participating in the yāga conducted for 12 years by Ṛṣyaśrunḡa and abandons that righteous wife in the forest. Thus Bhavabhūti finds a consolation to the question why Kousalya and others didn't stop Rāma when he was renouncing his pregnant wife. The poet has picturized Rāma returning to *Daṇḍakāraṇya*, all alone, where he had spent his life with Sītā during the exile, in order to kill the śūdra sage, Śambūka, who was doing Tapasya. Sadness and regret kills Rāma. A glorious scene here is Bhavabhūti, an advocate of humane values, making vāsanti, a goddess of the forest, interrogate Rāma. Bhavabhūti also doesn't forget to present a choked Sītā, due to a high tide of conflicting emotions, invisibly. In the later scenes, Lava ties up the horse let loose by Rāma, in association with the *Aśvamedha yāga*, and that warrior like, confronting with immense chivalry, the righteous and the unrighteous from the son of Lakṣmaṇa, Çandraketu, till Rāma himself etc have been picturized. Bhavabhūti also executes a novel technique by presenting the happenings after the renouncement of Sītā in front of Rāma and other people through an inner-play. Finally by picturizing Rāma accepting his chaste wife, he gives it a happy ending. *Uttararāmaçarita* can be considered as a classic expressionist play in world literature itself due to the expert picturization of heart touching scenes, a vision

for life based on human love and a deep awareness about human relationships.

### ***Anargharāghava***

*Anargharāghava* is a play by Murāri based on the story of Rāma. This is a play consisting of 7 scenes. Murāri lived even before the great poet Ratnākara who lived in the 9th century C.E. There is a mention of Murāri in Ratnākara's work *Haravijaya*. The play *Anargharāghava* has been popular mostly in Kashmīr. The writing style of Murāri is Goudhi. The feeling which acted behind the creation of *Anargharāghava* is solely the urge to express the scholarship. He imitates Baṇabhaṭṭa. The crust of the story here is the stories from the arrival of Viśvamitra to the coronation ceremony of Rāma at Ayodhya. Even in this play, what leads to things like Rāma's exile to forest is the conspiracy by Rāvaṇa executed through Mālyavān for his anger for not being able to marry Sītā. Even here Śūrpaṇakha comes in disguise of Manthara and plots conspiracy to send Rāma into exile. In this play, Bāli has been presented as Rāma's friend. Bāli appears enraged on the stage when Lakṣmaṇa drops the chest skeleton of the demon Dundubhi whom he had killed himself and later gets killed in the battle with Rāma. Another specialty of this play is that according to what has been mentioned here, Jāmbavān takes the initiative for a friendship between

Bāli and Sugrīva to revive the race of monkeys which had deteriorated due to the enmity between Bāli and Sugrīva. The playwright presents Daśaratha and Vāmadeva conversing with each other after the declaration. Later Viśvamitra joins. Daśaratha actually feels weak and exhausted when he comes to know that the arrival of the great sage is to take away Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa to help him protect his *yāga*. The King agrees to the wish of the saint with half mind, wailing anxiously “कथं लोचन पथ मतिक्रान्तः स राम लक्ष्मणो भगवान्” and the first scene ends. The issue of the second scene is protection of Viśwāmitra’s *yāga*. *Tātakāvadhān*, *Ahalyāmokṣa* are all subplots of this story which happen in between. The theme of the third scene is the story of *Śaivabhañana* being conducted for the marriage of Sītā.

The fourth scene is very important in *Anargharāghava* similar to that of *Śākuntala*. The only difference here is that in *Śākuntala*, Sage Kaṇva sends *Śākuntala* to the palace while here Daśaratha sends his son to dense forest. In both the poetry we can see two fathers who wails due to the pain of separation. The premise for the fourth and fifth scenes are respectively the coronation ceremony of Sugrīva and the assassination of Rāvaṇa. The play ends as Rāma returns to Ayodhya, victorious, along with his family after the aim behind the incarnation was fulfilled. Even though there are slight changes in the main story,

the Rāma we see in *Anargharāghava* is same as Vālmīki's Rāma. *Anargharāghava* is a play which blindly imitates *Mahāvīraçarita*.

### ***Bālarāmāyaṇa***

*Bālarāmāyaṇa* is a long play written by Rāja Śekharaṇ based on the story of *Rāmāyaṇa*. The play has been written in the 10th century. There are 10 scenes in this play. The story from Sītā *swayamvara* till the coronation of Rāma has been described imitating Bhavabhūti and Murāri. In this play, Rāvaṇa goes for Sītā's *swayamvara* along with Prahasanaṇ and disagrees to the test of breaking the bow and later returns by declaring that Sītā's husband is his enemy. He requests Paraśurāma for help. But it goes in vain. After reaching Lanka, he is deeply troubled due to the separation from Sītā. For his content, the part where Rāma achieves success after the attempts by the other kings at Sītā *swayamvara* has been enacted. Later another unsuccessful attempt was made to console Rāvaṇa by Mālyavān who places sparrows on the faces of the sculptures built resembling Sītā and her step mother's daughter. Paraśurāma comes to Mithila according to the opinion of Bhavabhūti and Murāri. But it is Lakṣmaṇa who ties the string to the bow of Viṣṇu. The story of deporting Rāma is a bit different in this play. Māyāmayan, Śūrpaṇakha and a female servant, in disguise of Daśratha, Kaikeyī and Manthara respectively, deports Rāma while

Daśaratha and Kaikeyī were absent in Ayodhya. The portrayal of the context of Sītā's illusory head during the building of the bridge to Lanka and the assassination of Simhanāda, the son of Rāvaṇa and a demoness named Prabhañni have been done. Trijaṭa joins Sītā to Ayodhya.

### ***Udāttarāghava***

This play was written by *Anaṅgahaṛṣamayūrarājan* (temperory king). The period is 8th century. The subject of this work is the story from Rāma's deportation till his return to Ayodhya after the assassination of Rāvaṇa through 6 scenes. In the story, we can see a new form of Sītā's abduction. Several demons and *Asurās* (evil divine being) takes form of the people on Rāma's side. This is the nature of Sītā's abduction. At that time Rāvaṇa goes to Rāma and Sītā in disguise of the chief of the hermitage and rebukes him for sending off young Lakṣmaṇa. At the same time another demon in a fake disguise arrives and informs them the news that Lakṣmaṇa was kidnapped by a demon in disguise of a golden deer. Then Rāma leaves Sītā in safe custody of Rāvaṇa and sets out to find Lakṣmaṇa. In this play a demon in disguise of Hanumān informs Sugrīva that Rāvaṇa killed Sītā. At that time Sugrīva wishes to enter the pyre after making Amgada the heir. But the original Hanumān arrives at the appropriate time and rescues him. In

the last scene, a demon in disguise of the disciple of Vasīṣṭa informs Bharata that Lakṣmaṇa has been killed in the battle. Later another demon comes in disguise of Nārada and informs that even Rāma has been killed. At the end another demoness faking as Sītā confirms that what both of them said was true. When Bharata was about to jump and drown in Sarayu River Hanumān arrives with the good news and stops Bharata. We come to know from Hanumān that a demon in disguise of Sumantrar informed Rāma that Bharata is on death bed. In the third act, a sage comes to Rāma with a letter from Jaṭāyu. In this letter, Jaṭāyu had used his beak as a pen to write using its own blood on a leaf that Rāma should forget his own despair and take revenge on Rāvaṇa.

### ***Kundamāla***

The play *Kundamāla* has been written by the argumentative writer Diṇnāga who lived before 6<sup>th</sup> century A.D. The storyline of this work is the story of *Rāmāyaṇa*. It is been said it is a work even before *Uttararāmaçarita*. The essence of the story of *Kundamāla* has similarities with that of *Uttararāmaçarita*. Lakṣmaṇa, who had to execute Rāma's orders, takes Sītā to the forest in pretense of showing River Ganga. When Sītā was taking rest under a tree after having worn out by the journey, Lakṣmaṇa finds it the right time to inform her about Rāma's decision. The order is to leave Sītā in the forest in fear of

chastity. Sītā was seen greatly worried by hearing this completely unexpected news. But Sītā was relieved even if Rāma banishes her from his kingdom he has given her an eternal position in his heart which made her withdraw from the thought of committing suicide. She decides to save her life for the sake of that even if it has been struck by the thorn of infamy. Finally Sītā bids goodbye to Lakṣmaṇa with a message as a response. With no other option, Lakṣmaṇa returns leaving Sītā in the safe hands of the goddesses of the forest. It is at this time when Viśvāmitra arrives. The benevolent Viśvāmitra takes Sītā to his hermitage. He provides her necessary care. When she had to part with Gaṅga, Sītā prays the following “Dear Goddess Bhāgīrati, I will offer you a fresh garland of jasmine flowers daily after I deliver the babies safely”<sup>23</sup>.

This is the brief summary of the first act. There is a gap of 10 years for the second act to happen. Sītā’s children Lava and Kuśa grew up happily in the love and affection of the saints. What they learn for the first time is Vālmīki’s *Rāmāyaṇa*. Even then Sītā is living proudly in the heart of Rāma while Sītā is subjected to deeper and deeper sadness as it has been tried to be solved. At that time Sītā tells to her

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<sup>23</sup> *Muḷlapūḷlapūmāla*, Dr. S K nair, Pamgrid press and Book Depot, Kadambanad, 1978, p.8

friend Vedavati that her life will be accomplished when she meets the father of her children. This act is a heart wrenching one in this play. Vedavati consoles her by saying that she will for sure be able to meet the king soon. She indicates that Vālmīki and other members leaving to Naimiṣāraṇya to reach the *Aśvamedha yāga* conducted by Rāma as to be enforcing the same. The second act ends when Sītā leaves to make due preparations for wishing Lava and Kuśa goodluck for the journey. The third act begins when Rāma leaves to the bank of river Gomati to welcome Vālmīki. When Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa reaches the bank of Gomati guiding those behind them, as he placed his feet on the the part of the sandy shore where their footsteps were marked, a garland of jasmine flowers was found ready. Rāma was surprised to find the beautiful garland and was wondering who would have made it when he picked it up by his hands and all his confusions disappeared.

Rāma has seen this handcrafting skills before, and they travelled for long following the footsteps. And finally reaches Vālmīki's *āśram*. Sītā was standing there plucking flowers. As Sītā sees Rāma her heart whispered the following. Happy to have seen you, in despair for living in a foreign land, sad about seeing his weakened body, proud to see the unbiased soul, romance towards the well known, urge to see his handsome body, the feeling of a domesticated person thinking that he



is the father of Lava and Kuśa, ashamed to have made her guilty, even I am not aware of what I am experiencing right now. And she shied away from presenting herself in front of him and sets out to find Kuśa and Lava. At that time Vālmīki's disciple was waiting for the arrival of King Vālmīki after finishing all the rituals. Hearing that even Rāma left out for the journey. The fourth act begins with a conversation between two female sages. Once the sages complained to Vālmīki. They are not able to take bath in the lotus pond after the arrival of the King and party as a lot of other men are loitering around. He consoled him and blessed that all women who get into this pond will become invisible to the other men's eyes. Soon Sītā also arrives, Rāma also arrived there adorned with the divine shawl gifted by a goddess of the forest and excited by the beauty of the wilderness. But due to the effect of Vālmīki's power of meditation they both are not able to see each other. For his badluck Rāma could see only her reflection. But Sītā could see Rāma. A deeply sad Rāma lost his consciousness when Sītā comes to fan him with a bit of her saree when Rāma gets a hold on it. And that dress gets into the hands of Rāma. But Rāma can't remember how that dress reached his hands. When sun set, Sītā was forced to leave the place while she was grieving about the momentary situation of Rāma when Kauśika arrives. Kauśika informs Rāma that whatever had happened is by the magical

powers of a divine woman named Tilottama. Thus Rāma lost his desire to retrieve Sītā. The 5th act touches the heart by revealing the relationship between Rāma and Sītā and the purity of the same. It is in this context that Rāma sees Kuśa and Lava for the first time. The two of them reaches there to recite the melodious poetry by Vālmīki.

The pleasant memories of the 7th act of *Śākuntala* comes alive when we see this act. Each statement here is confirming to Rāma's suspicion that the two kids are his own children. He asks them that he wants to know, who is their father? For which they reply that they are not aware of it, and that nobody utters his name in the forest. Suddenly Kuśa says that his name is Merciless and Rāma gets to think that the fault he has committed was so brutal. That act touching the core of the heart makes Rāma delve into deeper thoughts and yet hopeful. The 6<sup>th</sup> act begins with the recitation of *Rāmāyaṇa*. This act is so mellifluous and appealing to the eyes. As Rāma hears the poetry recitation he is convinced that Lava and Kuśa are Sītā's sons and was at the peak of emotions more than being relieved. Even Kuśa and Lava lost their consciousness. After consoling them Vālmīki asks Rāma whether it was appropriate for him to abandon Sītā just because of some gossips from the people. This situations reminds us of Kālidāsa who in *Raghuvamśa* asks whether it's appropriate for his knowledge and race.

When he sees that even then Rāma was not ready to admit his mistake, the act in which the saint's anger crosses his limits bring goosebumps everywhere on the body. Bhūmīdevi herself would make her presence to prove the innocence of her daughter. It was then the husband in Rāma gets awakened. Rāma agrees to accept the saintly woman as his wife for the *Aśvamedha yāga* and later makes Lava his heir.

Thus *Mullappūmāla* ends by the reunion of Rāma and Sītā. A theatre person from Dignāgan turned a painfully ending repetitive story into a happy ending one which isn't very surprising. The basis for the story of *Mullapūmāla* is *Uttarakāṇḍa* of *Rāmāyaṇa*. In this play, Dignāgan, has made theatrical deviations in the story line and the presentation, in order to visualise his hero and heroine uniquely different from that of the others. In *Mullappūmāla* the part where Sītā is being abandoned is described a bit differently. Dignāgan's Lakṣmaṇa doesn't cross the river Ganga. He is leaving Sītā from this side of the river itself. Also Kaṇva, who makes an entry in the fourth act is a creation of Dignāgan's imagination. The shawl in the same act is also unavailable in *Rāmāyaṇa*. Thea reason behind all these deviations is the capability of Dignāgan to observe life exists in its fullest power and his vision that love, trust and mutual understanding makes human life pleausrably tolerable. *Mullamāla* is in a sense simple with the short

sentences which dig deep into the hearts and the expertise in which the dramatic scenes have been merged. In Dignāgan's *Mullappūmāla* Rāma is deeply pained for renouncing Sītā and is aware that his act was more than what was needed being guilty for the same. Dignāgan exhibits controlled sorrow. In *Kundamāla*, situations and characters are comparatively lesser. Dignāgan has eliminated *Śūdrakavadham*, the resistance between Lava and Çandraketu, the inner drama etc.

The theatrical success of the play *Mullappūmāla* has been declared by some of the scenes which can't be forgotten once watched. The scene which elaborates the emotions of Sītā, when she comes to know that Rāma has renounced her and when Lakṣmaṇa had to leave that saintly woman in the forest, and where Sītā cries out from the bottom of her heart saying "Nobody else should be born as a woman" makes anybody shed tears. In *Kundamāla*, Dignāgan says that the pain created in a husband when his wife has desires for another man is meagre. On the other hand the pain induced in a wife when her husband conducts adultery is endless. In these words of Sītā, we can see Dignāgan's knowledge about other people's hearts. This begins with abandonment of Sītā and ends by the reunion of Rāma and Sītā. In the third act, Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa finds a *Kundamāla* near the banks of river Gomati near the hermitage of Vālmīki, and gets reminded of the

garland making skills of Sītā. As they move forward they find the footsteps of Sītā. In the beginning of the fourth act, when Vālmīki understands that the King's army is nearby, he blesses the women in the hermitage with the boon of disappearing with his magical meditative powers. Thus Sītā visits Rāma being invisible and Rāma becomes unconscious after finding her reflection in the water. In the last act, after the recitation of *Rāmāyaṇa* by Kuśa and Lava, Sītā takes the oath in the court assembly. As a result of this Bhūmīdevi appears and stands proof to Sītā's innocence. Then Rāma accepts Sītā and Bhūmīdevi disappears.

### ***Mahānāṭaka or Hanumānāṭaka***

*Mahānāṭaka* is a play written by Damodaramiśran in the 10<sup>th</sup> century. There are lot of controversies around the form of this play. This is a play with 14 acts. The story behind this play is that Rāvaṇa's messenger is present during Sītā swayamvara and Paraśurāma defeats him after reaching Mithila. In the second act the intercourse between Rāma and Sītā has been described after their marriage. It reaches to the level of vulgarity. In the third act, the arrival of Mārīça, and the declaration Bharata is present in Ayodhya during the exile of Rāma into the forest. The story of lifting of Ahalya has been described during the journey from *Agasthyāśrama* towards Pançavati. Rāma leaves with

Lakṣmaṇa to kill the illusory deer after drawing a line on the earth for the safety of Sītā. The 5<sup>th</sup> act is the killing of Bāli. Similar to that of *Mahāvīraçarita* Bāli himself challenges Rāma for the battle. In his Hanumān has been considered as the incarnation of Rudra. The 6<sup>th</sup> act depicts the great victory of Hanumān. Here Sītā gives three tokens of identification to Hanumān. The story of *Çūṭāmaṇi*, Kaka and that of Rāma giving Tilaka (sacred mark on the forehead) have been described in this act. In this play, Rāvaṇa initially shows the heads of Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa to Sītā using his magical powers. Later Rāvaṇa turns into the form of Rāma and tries to cheat Sītā holding his ten illusory heads in his hands. Here there is also a statement about Amgada killing the demoness Prabhñjna.

### ***Āśçaryaçūḍāmaṇi***

*Āśçaryaçūḍāmaṇi* is a famous play by the Keralite Śaktibhadra. The playwright himself states that it is the first play from South India. Śaktibhadra lived after the period of Bhaṭṭanārāyaṇa. The first half of 7<sup>th</sup> century A.D. The proof is that he had read this play to Sankaraçāryar, from Cheṅgannūr, when he was on his way travelling for *Digvijaya* (win over the world). But then since Sankaraçāryar was on vows of silence he didn't comment on the play. So believing that his play isn't good enough Śaktibhadra destroyed the text by burning.

Later after sometime Sankarāçāryar arrives there and calls for Śaktibhadra and enquires about his text. The term Bhuvanabhūti is in one of the *ślokās* in the 2nd act of the play *Āśçaryaçūḍāmaṇi*. Śaktibhadra informs Śankaraçārya about the news of burning the text down to ashes. But he asks him to write it down right there and recollects the play *Āśçaryaçūḍāmaṇi* from his memory. Śaktibhadra was happy to find his creation again. This is a Sanskrit play with 7 acts. The theme of the play *Āśçaryaçūḍāmaṇi* is the story from *Āraṇyakāṇḍa* till *Yuddhakāṇḍa* from *Vālmīkirāmāyaṇa*. In the play with 7 acts, the first 6 acts are respectively seen to be named as *Parṇaśāla*, *Śūrpaṇakha*, *Māya Sītā*, *Jadayuvadha*, *Aśokavanika*, *Aṅgulīyaṅka*. In the base text for some unknown reason doesn't have a name for the 7<sup>th</sup> act. The most important thing in the 7th act is the entry into the fire. The storyline begins with the phase where Śūrpaṇakha approaches Srīrāma after the killing Khara and Dūṣaṇa. The play gets concluded as the gods and the sage Nārada congratulates Rāma finding Sītā's chastity pure after subjecting herself to the fire. Even though the play lives with *Rāmāyaṇa*, several changes have been made with absolute discipline. It is also been said there are also other poetry written by him. But many of them haven't been recovered yet. The storyline of the story begins with Śūrpaṇakha approaching Śrī Rāma after the killing

of Khara and Dūṣaṇa till Sītā's test of fire from the story of *Rāmāyaṇa*. There have been an elaborate interpretation of *Āścaryaçūdhāmaṇi* in the name Vivṛti and a brief interpretation in the name *Āścaryaçūdhāmaṇi Tīka*. The aesthetic expression in this play is wonder.

“वीरकार्यात्भुतरसभूयिष्टत्वेन आश्चर्यकराणां

चूडामणिरित्याश्चर्यचूडामणिरिति संञ्जा ।

आश्चर्यं भूतश्चूडामणिर यस्मिन् प्रतिपाद्यत्वेन अङ्गीकृत इति वा ॥”<sup>24</sup>

Thus says the interpreter on the meaning of *Āścaryaçūdhāmaṇi*. In both ways the name of the play is highly suitable. In this play, the poet *Çūdhāmaṇi* has been given a significant position.

From this we can understand the appropriateness of the name based on the poet *Çūdhāmaṇi*. The *Çūdhāmaṇi* which gets rid of the magical powers of Rāvaṇa, a sorcerer himself, and astonishes him from in front of Sītā, who was insecure and helpless being abducted by Rāvaṇa in the 4th act, has to be considered rather than the wonderful powers of the ring which relieves Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa from the magical illusions of Mārīça and Śūrpaṇakha in the end of the 3rd act. We can see that the poet has given primary importance to *Çūdhāmaṇi*

<sup>24</sup> *Sāhitya Prabhavam*, Smt. Ambāṭi Kartyāyani Amma, Kerala Sahitya Academy, Thrissur, 1927.



than *Aṅgulīyakam* even in the execution by making Rāma say the story of *Çūdāmaṇi* as follows.

“पूर्व राक्षसी मायाविप्रलब्दस्य मे देव्याः प्रत्ययकारणमासीदाश्चर्यचूडामणि”

Above the *Aṅgulīyaka* story which convinces Sītā that she is devoid of the powers of illusion while she was asked to bow down in front of Nārada by holding Rāma’s hands. We can’t not talk about the praiseworthy observation skills and sense of appropriateness of the poet who named the play as *Āśçaryaçūdhāmaṇi*, which clearly reveals the fact that the success of the play lies in the novel imagination of the poet about *Aṅgulīyakam* and *Çūṭāmaṇi*. Which is sheer imagination of the poet and not existing in any historical works which has always helped the famed plot of the play to be such mind blowing.

The close observers will find that how the storyline of *Śakuntala*, by the famous poet Kālidāsa, is dependent on the poet’s imagination of the *Mudramotira*, similarly, in *Āśçaryaçūdhāmaṇi*, the story is greatly bonded by the wonderful powers of these gems which are poet’s imaginative creations. The story depicted in *Āśçaryaçūdhāmaṇi* begins with Rāma’s entry to Pançavati along with Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa till the return to Ayodhya in Puṣpaka *Vimāna* from Lanka after the assassination of Rāvaṇa. Yet the poet has suitably included the part of the story before reaching Pançavati by creating appropriate situations

and thus not eliminating any vital parts from the story. The first character which enters the stage in the first act *Parṇasālaṅkam* is Lakṣmaṇa. Lakṣmaṇa enters to inform the news that he has built the hermitage for their long term stay near the banks of Godāvāri. On his way he was forced to agree to meet Śūrpaṇakha after finishing the work assigned by Rāma. After that he informs Rāma and Sītā about the matter welcomes them to the hermitage. Rāma appropriately tries to make Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa favorable to the life in the forest. After reaching the hermitage he sends Lakṣmaṇa off to rest and gets ready to relax himself when the curtain falls for the first act.

The second act named *Śūrpaṇakhāṅgam* comes along as a continuation quite naturally. The same characters from the first act can be seen in the 2nd act. First Śūrpaṇakha, later Sītā and Rāma, followed by Lakṣmaṇa with the sword in his hand and the original Śūrpaṇakha, the demoness enters the stage in that order. Later, Lakṣmaṇa mutilating Śūrpaṇakha, Śūrpaṇakha informing Khara and Dūṣaṇa, Rāma preparing to fight the demons have been described. The part depicted in the 3rd act *Māyāsītāṅkam* is the essence of the play, the abduction of Sītā. Here the poet uses all his imaginative skills to bring novelty and life to the storyline. After walking through the Viṣkambha which includes the conversation between the young son of the sage who was

passing by and the old sage, the story of the assassination of Khara and Dūṣaṇa, it leaves a hint on separation from Sītā. In this act apart from Rāma, Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa, the illusory golden deer Mārīça, Rāvaṇa, Sūtan and Śūrpaṇakha present themselves on the stage. In the beginning Rāma sees a bad omen and let's Sītā know of the forthcoming evil. On the other side, following this, we can see Mārīça preparing to turn into an illusory golden deer to enchant Rāma having been forced by Rāvaṇa. Lakṣmaṇa, armored after visiting the sages, offers to Rāma the ring and *Çūṭāratnam* (a jewellery made of a special gem) to free themselves from illusory powers. As they wear the same the illusion of Mārīça becomes visible.

Rāma moves far away after being enchanted by the illusory deer and a paranoid Sītā, after hearing the illusory cry of Mārīça who gets killed by Rāma, by whose harsh words Lakṣmaṇa sets off to find Rāma and she herself starts walking out of the hermitage. At that time Rāvaṇa, Śūrpaṇakha and a messenger reaches there finding an opportunity, and the messengers of Rāvaṇa in disguise of Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa carries Sītā onto the *Puṣpaka Vimāna* and rises unto the sky faking that it's to rescue Bharatha in Ayodhya. Śūrpaṇakha turns into the form of Sītā and stops Rāma on his way back after the killing of Mārīça. Eventhough both Rāmas and both Sītās get to see each other

from top and bottom, they don't realise the truth being enchanted by the illusion. Not only that seeing a dead Mārīça in disguise of Rāma the Sītā turned Śūrpaṅakha arrives and even attempts to kill the real Rāma. At that moment Rāma makes Lakṣmaṇa aware of the reality using the *Aṅgulīyaka*. When Śūrpaṅakha sees the illusion of the golden deer disappear in the effect of the ring turned helpless. When Rāma tries to console her by wiping her tears, she turns back into the original Śūrpaṅakha from that of the illusory Sītā and Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa are completely free from the illusion. When Rāma gives her a shelter she reveals to him about the story of the abduction of Sītā, and returns to Lanka with the brave and noble message from Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa by which the act ends. Even though it reminds of parts of Rāmabhadradīkṣitar's *Jānakīpariṇaya*, this act with the illusory Sītā is full of series of happenings and rich with beautiful imagination which is highly wonderful.

The fourth act *Jaḍāyuvadhāṅka* begins without Viṣkambha, Praveśaka etc. Here Rāvaṇan, Sītā, Sūta, Jaḍāyu etc come to the stage. The battle between Rāvaṇa and Jaḍāyu up in the sky has also been described here. The stage where the story happens is the sky. When Rāvaṇa, with uncontrollable excitement about Sītā, who was travelling in the plane along with him believing it as Rāma, in the pretense of

tying her hair attempts to touch Sītā, she goes silent thinking of the presence of Sūta in disguise of Lakṣmaṇa and fends off Rāvaṇa's hands, Rāvaṇa's original form becomes visible by the greatness of *Çūṭāmaṇi* in such a manner that it surprises Rāvaṇa himself. Immediately even Sūta leaves his disguise of Lakṣmaṇa. When Sītā realises that she has been cheated, a helpless Sītā cries out for help calling out names of Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa which when reaches Jaṭāyu's ears flies down with immense anger and fights with Rāvaṇa, the scene which is rich with the emotion of valour.

As Rāvaṇa cuts off its wings using *Çandrahāsa* it falls down to earth and Rāvaṇa reaches Lanka along with Sītā and the act ends. In the 5<sup>th</sup> scene *Aśokavanikāṅka*, the stage is Rāvaṇa's kingdom and *Aśokavanika*. Rāvaṇan, Varṣavaran, Amātyan, Sītā, Maṇḍodari, Çedi etc. are the characters in this act. Initially the situation of a lust sick Rāvaṇa is revealed through the conversation with Varṣavara. Amātya, being aware of his own actions, attempts to advise Rāvaṇa. Still he accepts defeat in front of the pompous arguments of Rāvaṇa. Rāvaṇa reaches *Aśokavanika* in order to visit Sītā along with Varṣavara. Varṣavara and Maṇḍodari and Çedi hiding in front of the green hut become witnesses to Rāvaṇa's lustful ways to make Sītā agree to him. When an enraged Rāvaṇa, due to the brave attitude of Sītā, picks up the

sword to kill her, the daughter of Māya appears and stops him. Maṇḍodari sends an ashamed Rāvaṇa back to the zenana. As a helpless Sītā tries to commit suicide due to despair sun rises and the act ends. This act becomes invaluable by the expertise in enunciation. In the 6th act, the *Angulīyānka*, the play starts with the entry of Rāma's messenger Hanumān.

The two characters Hanumān and Sītā alone have a place in this act. Hanumān reaches *Aśokavanika* after seeing the glory of the heavenly garden and the kingdom of Rāvaṇa post arrival at Lanka, by crossing the ocean like Rāma's arrow, and searches for Sītā in the shadow of *Śimśpā* tree as per the words of *Sampāti* but in vain, and have thoughts on attempting suicide in despair and gets into the lake nearby for cleaning the body before ending the life while Sītā sees for the first time in Lanka, a radiant moon and listens to the weeping sound. Later he describes the story of Rāma to console Sītā and goes to her directly to earn her trust and tells her the *Angulīyaka* and the token word. Making use of this opportunity, the poet, as per the requirement of Sītā makes Hanumān describe Rāma's state of separation and brightens the stage by her radiant expression of love. The act ends as Hanumān returns after receiving the *Çūṭāmaṇi* consoling Sītā completely.

The 7<sup>th</sup> act begins by summarising the parts of the story from *Miśraviṣkambha* of the Vidyādhara couple until the assassination of Rāvaṇa. Jāmbavan who announces the killing Rāvaṇa, Rāma, Vibhīṣaṇa, Sugrīva, Lakṣmaṇa, Sītā, Nārada etc comes onstage in this act. Rāma assigns Sugrīva the responsibility of conducting the coronation ceremony of Vibhīṣaṇa of Lanka after the death of Rāvaṇa, and is satisfied by accomplishing Dharma. Rāma is confused about accepting Sītā again and due to the powers of the blessings of Anasūya, who was observing everything even without the awareness of Rāma, a beautiful Sītā appears in the view of Rāma instead of a love-lorn Sītā who is later abandoned and proves the truth by subjecting herself to fire and later by the arrival of sage Nārada and in the presence of the gods, forefathers and saints, the greatness of chastity becomes a wonder. This act end as everyone returns to Ayodhya in *Puṣpaka Vimāna* as per the guidance of the sage. In this play Sītā has been portryed as a complete chaste woman. The poet has given great care in giving each character a rich personality and life.

### ***Prasannarāghava***

*Prasannarāghava* is a play by the post Jayadeva based on the story of *Rāmāyaṇa*. He had created this play in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The story from Sītā swayamvara till Rāma returning to Ayodhya after the

assassination of Rāvaṇa has been portrayed here in seven acts. We can see the influence of *Anargharāghava* in this work. Jayadevan is a grotesque poet. And an unparalleled argumentator. His father was Mahādeva and mother Sumitra. He also has names Pakṣadharamiśran and Piyūṣavarṣan. He wrote the text on the science of figures of speech called *Çandralokam*. In the first act, the presence of Rāvaṇa and Bāṇāsura at Sītā swayamvara and their vain attempts at striking the bow have been described. The act ends as Rāvaṇa expresses his imagination of abducting Sītā enraged by what happened. In the second act, Sītā and Rāma meets een before the breaking of the bow at *Çaṅṭikāyatna*. Later the arrival of Paraśurāma's messenger and Paraśurāma himself at Mithila etc, the allegation of humanity in several rivers, and the stories of Rāma related to the parts of Earth where these rivers merge with the ocean, the knowledged Rājaśekhara showing the happenings at Lanka, through magic, to Rāma who is in despair due to the separation etc have been portrayed.

### ***Kanakajānaki***

*Kanakajānaki* is a play written by a poet named Kṣemendra who lived in Kashmir during the middle of the 11<sup>th</sup> century. The substance of the story here is related to Sītā's sacrifice.



### ***Dūdaṅgada***

*Dūdaṅgada* is a play written by Subhaṭṭa related to *Rāmāyaṇa*. This play has been written in the 13th century. Subhaṭṭa describes about the messengership of Amgada in the first two acts. The specialty of this act is that an illusory Sītā comes and sits on the lap of Rāvaṇa in front of Amgada and Amgada gets angry by this. At the end after the defeat of Rāvaṇa the celebration of Rāma's victory has been portrayed. The monkey goes to Rāvaṇa's house to return Sītā to Srī Rāma.

### ***Kṛtya Rāvaṇa***

This play has been written in the first half of the 9<sup>th</sup> century. The writer of this play is still unknown. In this play, the story from the abduction of Sītā till the test of fire has been presented in 7 acts. We can understand from the name of the play itself that it has a suggestion of Rāvaṇa's sorcery skills. Apart from the illusory deer, we can familiarize with the magical powers of the demons from the different forms taken by Śūrpaṇakha and the display of killing of Rāma from right in front of Sītā. In this play a novel form of Sītā's abduction has been described. Here Sītā doesn't utter harsh words towards Lakṣmaṇa. It is Śūrpaṇakha who abuses Lakṣmaṇa by taking the form of Sītā. The main objective behind the new form for Sītā's abduction is to rescue Sītā from the sin of unnecessary accusation of Lakṣmaṇa. In the 6<sup>th</sup> act

order has been given to the demon Darunika to kill Sītā. Darunika kills an illusory Rāma in front of Sītā in order to provoke her in committing suicide. When Sītā sees her husband being killed she attempts to be subject to fire.

### ***Çalita Rāma***

*Çalita Rāmam* is an ancient play written by unknown based on *Rāmāyaṇa*. The period of this play is the 9<sup>th</sup> century. The plot of this play begins from the arrival of Rāma in Ayodhya after the assassination of Rāvaṇa and ends with his *Aśvamedha Yāga*. The reason for renouncing Sītā is not the gossips of the people of Ayodhya. Lāvaṇa sends two demons to Rāma. They become close friends of Rāma and creates hatred for Sītā in Rāma's mind. It is because of this treachery and deceit of Lāvaṇa that this play got the name as *Çalita Rāma*. Here the description of the battle of Lava and Kuśa, Lakṣmaṇa taking Lava to Rāma's court assembly after tying him up has been portrayed. Lava recognizes his mother when he sees the golden statue of Sītā at the *Aśvamedha maṇḍapa* (hall). From this Rāma comes to know that Sītā is alive.

### ***Rāghavābhyudaya***

It begins with the happenings in *Āraṇyakāṇḍa* and ends with Sītā's retrieval. The demoness Jālīni takes the form of Sītā as per the

orders of Rāvaṇa and Rāvaṇa wishes to offer her to Rāma. When Rāma hears about this declaration he was clueless of what to do. At that time he has given a word to make Vibhīṣaṇa the king of Lanka. Another demon arrives in disguise of Indra and forces Rāma to accept Rāvaṇa's offer. Finally Lakṣmaṇa reveals that it is an illusion created by Rāvaṇa.

### ***Maithilīkalyāṇa***

*Maithilīkalyāṇam* is a play written by Hastimallan. He was a Jain poet. This play was written during the time of 1290 C.E. This play is dominant of the emotion of love. In the first four acts, the early romance of Rāma and Sītā has been described. Both of them meets at the Kāmadeva temple and Mādhavi forest in Mithila even before the *Swayamvara*. And later the bereavement of both of them have also been portrayed. In the house of Çandrakāntadhāra, Sītā has been picturized as a sex worker. The matter of description in the last act is the breaking of the bow and the bereavement of Rāma and Sītā. From this common sensical review, the interest of the Indian playwrights in unraveling the story of Rāma has been clarified. The most interesting fact is that the playwrights approached *Rāmāyaṇa* not for blind imitation but to express their fundamentaity by making necessary changes in possible ways. When we analyse this form of literature from

a historic sense, we can understand the tendency to make changes in the base story according to the changing values of Dharma. Here we can remember the recreation and reevaluation of the stories of, killing of Śambuka by Rāma and abandonment of Sītā from *Uttararāmāyaṇa*, from the broad perspective of human values. The situation in the story like the killing of Bāli from *Rāmāyaṇa* was not completely acceptable by the sense of righteousness of the succeeding eras. The *Rāmāyaṇa* plays showcase a piece of the unending process of repeated interpretation, evaluation and modernization of *Rāmāyaṇa*, an epic of one realm.

### **Sītā in Folk Literature**

India has a rich, vocal historical tradition. As part of it it describes the legends. There is no other literature as well known, existing in different forms and different narratives of the story like *Rāmāyaṇa*. *Rāmāyaṇa* can be found in different countries in different forms. It still exist as song stories, folk tales, ‘Purāvṛṭṭa’ plays, shadow puppetry, ritual songs and as folk *Rāmāyaṇās*. The origin of *Rāmāyaṇa* was also in an unwritten form. A literature which has been spreading vocally. It is through such native or oral tales that the lives of the native people became known. More than as one individual’s creation they are later been known as contributions towards society. This folk literature

exist as songs, tales, proverbs, riddles, folk styles or later evolve into great literature. The word folklore means “the knowledge on the heritage of the human species”. ‘Folk’ is the ordinary people living in the lower strata of the society leading a life quite different from those of the upper strata. It is the uncivilized part of the modern society. The word ‘lore’ means ‘knowledge’. The word folklore is said as the knowledge of the native indigenous people”<sup>25</sup>. The reason behind the formation of the folklore is the knowledge, experience and imagination of the folklore. Sir William Arthur describes about folklore as “the specialty is that they are the expressions of human minds stimulated by the creative feelings and also the originating center of the Indian culture.”<sup>26</sup>

The basis for all the classic works is the oral literature. Before these works were created these stories existed on the tongue tips of the village people. The reverse can also happen. Oral literature can also be formed from the classical works. When we look at *Rāmāyaṇa*, it still exist as folk lore and poetry in many countries in different languages. In countries like Philippines, Indo China, Thailand, Tibet, Burma etc

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<sup>25</sup> Dr. M.V. Viṣṇu Nambūtiri, *Folklore Nighanḍu*, the State Institute of Languages Nalanda, TVM, 1989. p.374.

<sup>26</sup> K.Çandra Mohan, *Folklorinte Vartamānam*, Financial assistance from the central institute Indian Languages, Manasagangotri, Mysore, 2010. p.74.

have their own *Rāmāyaṇas*. *Vālmīkirāmāyaṇa* has many versions among the people of the same country. Like India, there are *Rāmāyaṇas* existing as oral and written form in other Asian countries. In each country there are *Rāmāyaṇas* and other artforms related to *Rāmāyaṇa*. These *Rāmāyaṇas* entered other countries through several routes. These *Rāmāyaṇa* stories formed as oral and written works have deeper influence in the social and cultural life. Many subtexts of *Rāmāyaṇa* are also being passed on through oral renditions. Even stories associated to *Rāmāyaṇa* are passed on orally. Similarly in Kerala, even though when, by the imitation of *Kambarāmāyaṇa*, *Rāmaçarita*, *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa*, Ezhutatṭṣan's *Rāmāyaṇa* and translation of *Vālmīkirāmāyaṇa* we're available people who didn't know to read and write depended on their own other *Rāmāyaṇas*.

Many folk *Rāmāyaṇas* were created in Kerala too like *Māppiḷa Rāmāyaṇa*, *Wayanādan Rāmāyaṇa*, *Pātāḷa Rāmāyaṇa*, *Sītādukha* etc. In this way *Rāmāyaṇa* has also reached many places as forms of creative expressions and artforms. Hereby folklore is connected to all areas of human life. Such innumerable changes in *Rāmāyaṇa* happened as part of social recreation. The story of *Rāmāyaṇa* found popularity in all the places it travelled. The characters created in each place were also found different. Women have been portrayed differently in

different *Rāmāyaṇas*. *Uttararāmāyaṇa* part has been portrayed differently in different places. Every situation in the story use different forms depending on the difference in cultures. There can't be many narrative story tellings in the world which are as popular and exist in so many forms as *Rāmāyaṇa*. Different stories of *Rāmāyaṇa* are popular in a vast majority of countries in Asia. Like how shadow puppetry is based on *Kambarāmāyaṇa* and *Çākyārkkūttu*, *Kūdiyāṭṭam* are based on *Vālmīkirāmāyaṇa*, and the illiterate people celebrated the other *Rāmāyaṇas*.

The examples for this are *Pātāḷa Rāmāyaṇa*, *Sītādukha Kilippāṭṭu* and *Māppiḷa Rāmāyaṇa* etc. The ordinary people of South East Asia still sing these *Pātāḷa Rāmāyaṇa* and *Sītādukha* with slight changes. According to the beliefs of the locals, certain situations of *Rāmāyaṇa* have happened in places of Kerala like Tiruvaṇṇād, Marutvāmala, Aṇḍallūr, Çaṭayamaṅgalam, Śabarimala, Pampa, Çirayinkīzhu, Ponkunnam, Dhanuvaçapuram, Villukutti, Ezhimala, Pulpalli, Çeṭṭīnkāvu and *Vālmīki Aśram*. The legend says that the Kuravankurattimala, where Idukki dam exists presently, is the Kurava and Kuratti cursed into a stone by Sītā when they had a peek while Sītā was bathing in Periyar. Elappāra is the place where Sītā hung her clothes after washing. When Sītā was trying her clothes Rāma and

Lakṣmaṇa stayed as guards on nearby the mountains which is the Aṅṅantambimāla in Elappāra. Thus roots have grown deep in those places where the story of *Rāmāyaṇa* has travelled and the ordinary people believe in certain places as where Rāma was born and grew up. According to the people of Philippines Ayodhya is in their country itself. Thanjonbank is their Ayodhya.

Lanka is in Kāçāpuri and Marutvāmāla is in Sri Lanka. Its name is Bar-Ingual. *Rāmāyaṇa* has thousands of different forms in India and abroad. Their characters are different from each other. In the *Rāmāyaṇa* from IndoChina, the original hero is Rāvaṇa. Rāma is just a non important character. Sītā is also not important. In *Pātāla Rāmāyaṇa*, famous in Kerala and in South East Asia, it is Hanumān who is more valorous than Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa. In the *Rāmāyaṇa* of Philippines, Sītā is a relative of Rāvaṇa. According to one version in Indo China, Sītā is the daughter of Rāvaṇa, and Hanumān is the son of Rāma. We can see that *Uttararāmāyaṇa* has great popularity among the ordinary people. In different countries they find a different reason for renouncement of Sītā. In *kiḷippāṭṭu Sītādukha* from Kerala, it is been said that the jealousy of Daśaratha's wives is the reason for abandonment of Sītā. They ask Sītā to draw the picture of Rāvaṇa which the mother's later show to Rāma and getting suspicious assigns



Lakṣmaṇa to take her to the forest and kill her. The same story also exists in South East Asia with minimal changes. In that version her maids ask Sītā to draw the picture. In the story Sītā lives happily with Rāma instead of descending into the earth. In the vocal *Rāmāyaṇa* in Andhrapradesh the reason for renouncing Sītā is Śūrpaṇakha. When Śūrpaṇakha finds out that Sītā is the obstacle for her relationship with Rāma to not happen she tries to remove Sītā from her way. When she approaches Rāma in disguise of a hermit, he send her to Sītā who when offers her many gifts she insists to take only Rāvaṇa's picture. Sītā agrees to her demands but says that she is only familiar with his thumb and draws her a picture. Śūrpaṇakha completes the picture and gives life to it seeking help from Brahma. She hides it under bed in the night but it forces Rāma out. Rāma gets suspicious because of this and sends Sītā to the forest. Each situation in the story has changes in form in each culture. Thus people within and outside India, carry with them thousands of *Rāmāyaṇas*, as part of their life.

We can find free adaptations of legendary stories, in the form of songs, stories and ritualistic forms, among the Indian tribes and the lower strata of people. Among the folk musician communities, in order to give more appeal to the songs, new ditties are added to these historical stories thus converting them into innovative new versions.

Since it belongs to the vocal traditions, each song becomes different for each poet or singer. Sītā is one of the favorite characters for the folk musicians. Sītā reflects all the sighs and emotions of the world of women. These folk songs reach out to the people with what has not been said by the poets. Different folk songs have different stories”. Sītā is Rāvaṇa’s daughter in Kannaḍa folk songs. In that story it is Rāvaṇa who conceives Sītā and not Maṇḍodari. Rāvaṇa had to conceive as he greedily ate the Divine mango given to him by Śiva. The growth of Rāvaṇa’s pregnancy, nine months of pain and embarrassment and finally the baby coming out of his nose during a sneeze surprising everybody have all been depicted here. This changes the story into a tragedy by presenting Rāvaṇa as a father who falls in love with his own daughter.”<sup>27</sup> “In the folk songs we can change the epicenter of all the happenings in the *Rāmāyaṇa* story according to one's own wish and at the same time respect the emotions and peculiarities of the narrator and the listener. We can find in the Telugu oral traditions how the songs cleverly reflect on the issues on the feminine experiences and interests.”<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Ācārya Narendrabūṣan, *Ayodhyayile Śrīrāmān*, D.C Books, Kottayam, 2011. p.98, 99.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, *Ayodhyayile Śrīrāmān*, p.96

The stories like Kausalya conceiving, her morning health during those days, details on her pregnancy treatment, lullabies sung for Rāma, baby Rāma having bath, Sītā's wedding, her journey to her husband's house, Sītā's first menstruation, plays of Sītā with Rāma etc. which have been left out in the history can be found in these folk songs.

Śūrpaṅakha is very favorite character of the folk singers. There is a story related to Śūrpaṅakha which has been written in the eighteenth century. Śūrpaṅakha enters into a verbal argument with Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa, her ears and nose get chopped off, after listening to her complaints, Khara and Dūṣaṇa comes to kill Rāma but instead get killed themselves in the fight, she later flies to Lanka and complains to Rāvaṇa, and also adds that Rāma's wife Sītā is a very beautiful woman. *Rāmāyaṇa* story speeds up as revenge and lust conjoins. Śūrpaṅakha leaves the scene. But the folk tradition has is the coming back of Śūrpaṅakha. She reaches Ayodhya in disguise of a sage after her lust for Rāma inflamed and her desire to take revenge intensified. Later enticed Sītā to draw the picture of Rāvaṇa's toe nail. When she was living in *Aśokavana*, she had seen only the toe nail of Rāvaṇa when he approached her to assault or terrorize her. Sītā draws just the toenail. Śūrpaṅakha completes the picture. She requests Brahma stating her wish to see her brother once again and asks him to give life to the

picture. Brahma agrees. Rāvaṇa comes to life and forces Sītā to return with him to Lanka. Sītā tells to burn the drawing. But it doesn't happen. Rāmān enters the scene and starts suspecting Sītā of her purity.

Rāma doesn't give an ear to the words of Ūrmiḷa, Māṇḍhavi or Śṛutakīrtti. Rāma orders Sītā to live in the forest. Bimba, a Kannada play was inspired by this story. In this, Sītā and Śūrpaṇakha have been presented as characters susceptible to human emotions. These kind of folk tales and cultures are able to influence the deepest of human emotions. We have several written and oral lessons on a feministic view of *Rāmāyaṇa* to give us strength. These folk traditions have deep relations with the life and culture of the Janapadās.

### **Folk Theater Associated with Sītā in *Rāmāyaṇa* Story**

“The word Folk Theater can be stated as ‘a platform for a collective or as a platform for folk artform’. Collective or Community Theater existed even before the theater which exists today.<sup>29</sup> Here we don't find any stage arrangements or decorations. The objectives of a folk theater are to nurture cooperative mentality between people, to make them self confident, It is difficult to identify an actor and an audience. They don't use devised or any scientific movements over

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<sup>29</sup> .Dr.M.V Viṣṇu Nambū,tiri *Folklorinte ,Kaivazhikal* vol-,1 Kerala Folklore ,Academi ,Kannur .2004 p.42.

here. Here an actor has the freedom to perform according to her or his own creativity. Changes happen from one generation to the other through experiences. There is no significance for the *Sātvika Abhinaya* (the true expression), one of the four *Abhinayās* (art of expression), in the folk theater.

The important *Rasās* (aesthetics) in the folk theater are *Vīra* (heroism), *Karuṇa* (compassion), *Atbhuta* (wonder), *Hāsya* (laughter), *Raudra* (fury) and *Bhayānaka* (horror). The costumes are very natural. They use leaves, climbers, sticks, pāḷakaḷum and colours for their characters. There were no fixed stages for the folk theater. Shades of trees or Kāvu (temples) were the stages for folk theater performances.

### **Tolppāvakkūttu (Shadow puppetry)**

Tolppāvakkūttu is a Visual, auditory artform which unifies the features of folk artforms and ritualistic artforms. It is a temple artform and also an agricultural artform. This Kūttu is performed aiming at an audience who are the farmers of the village. The stage setting of Tolppāvakkūttu is special and large. Tolppāvakkūttu is performed at specially arranged Kūttumāṭaṇal. One can find in this Kūttu, all the methods in the folk artforms. Tolppāvakkūttu, which only narrates the story of *Rāmāyaṇa*, is based on *Kamba Rāmāyaṇa*. The story is

familiarised to the people using puppets. In this Kūttu one can find one puppet each to represent almost every character of *Rāmāyaṇa*. The leather of a Kṛṣṇa deer is used to make the puppets. This Kūttu is mostly seen to be performed in and around Palakkad district. The reason why it has this name is that it is performed by casting shadows of the leather puppets, hung with the help of strings, on a cloth. In Tolppāvakkūttu, the stories of *Rāmāyaṇa* are performed in 21 days. The literature used in this is called ‘Ādalpaṭṭu’. Ezhupara, Çeṇṭa, Maddala etc. are the percussions used in this artform. The performance starts after the Veliççappāṭu (oracle or mediator) arrives at the Kūttumaṭam and gives permission.

The act begins by Rangapūja (sanctification of the performing space) and Guruvandanam (paying respects to the teacher). In the earlier days puppets were also made using Coconut palm leaves. So the artform was also known as OlappāvaKūttu. The Kūttu begins every time with a ritual called Kūttu koṭṭikayaruka. 41 days are necessary to completely perform all the stories from Rāma’s birth, *Viçinnābhiṣeka*, *Vanavāsa*, *Sītāpahaṛaṇa*, *Sītānveṣaṇam*, *Setubandhana*, *Rāma-Rāvaṇayudha*, *Rāvaṇavadha*, *Sītāsvīkaraṇa*, and *Ayodhyayātra* till *Śrīrāmāpaṭṭabhiṣekam*. The narration of a story is called ‘Kūttu Kavipādal’. The person who sings or Kūttu Kavi is called ‘Pulavar’.

Tolppāvakūttu has all the features of the expressions in theater. The literary value of Tolppāvakūttu has been taken from the literary value of *Rāmāyaṇa*. The base text is *Kamba Rāmāyaṇa*. Tamil is the main language. The literature in Pāvakūttu has been selected and devised, by including the most important parts taken as one for every hundred, from *Kamba Rāmāyaṇa*.

### **Pāṅkaḷi (Purāṭṭin Kaḷi)**

Pāṅkaḷi is an indigenous artform popular in Palakkad district. Purāṭṭukaḷi is conducted at the rice fields after the harvest is done. In this play, the men perform as females. The narrative expression is through songs and conversations. The percussions are Mṛdangam, Çeṇḍa and Ilattālam. This play has been performed by the Pāṇan community. At the beginning and end of the play there will be a person who questions similar to a Vidūṣaka (clown). When the character comes on stage it is this person who asks questions. The characters reply to them. The parts of the story are connected through these questions and answers. In this play Vanṇāṭṭi comes on stage at first. Vanṇāṭi comes and sings a virutam praying to the teacher, Gaṇapati, Saraswati and the Cherished goddess. Then it is the question answer session with the questioner. Thus several characters come to the stage. Dāsi, Maṇṇān, Kavaraççi, Kavara, Çerumi, Çeruman, Kuratti,

Kuravan, Çaklıyan, Çaklıchi, Pūkkāri, Mātu, Āççi are some of the important characters which enter the stage. Before the play there is a ritual called Keḷikoṭṭu. Purāṭṭu Nāṭakam Pāṅkaḷi, Deśakkaḷi Tekkatti nāṭakam, Tekkanum Tekkattiyum, kurattiyāṭṭa, Kākkariśsi nāṭaka are forms which are similar to the plays which belong to the Purāṭṭu Nāṭaka category. There are two kinds of Purāṭṭu namely kūṭṭappurāṭṭu and ottappurāṭṭu. This is an important play of the Pāṅars. The legend behind the idea of Pāṅkaḷi is that during Pālāzhimadana (churning of the ocean milk) using the serpent Vāsuki as the rope, mount Mandara as the churning rod, the ocean was churned for the nectar of immortality when the serpent, all worn out, spit out a lethal poison and lord Parameśwara drank the Kāḷakūṭa poison for protecting the three worlds.

Later he feels dizzy and according to the astrological advice, his son Subramaṅyan calls for Pāṅan to sing Tuyilunarttupāṭṭu until the rise of the dawn and lord's dizziness went away which the history celebrates as the effect of the Pāṅan's music. This is Pāṅkaḷipāṭṭu. As part of this there is offerings of umbrellas made of coconut palm leaves and purāṭṭukaḷi during the nights, from the first day of Meṭa month to fifteenth when the Vela arrives, at the Çeruneṭṭūri Bhagavati temple in Çiṭṭilanjeri deśam, Melārkkod Panchayat, Palakkad. The Pāṅan community people are the torch bearers of this art tradition of Kerala.



There is a special style for presentation, acting, dances, dialogue etc. There is Keḷi Kaḷi percussion for Purāṭṭu. The primary singer, Kaḷiyaççan, Çodyakkāran etc asks questions to the characters and the Çodyakkāran asks associated questions after listening to the answers thus controlling the direction of flow of the story. By presenting orally through words and songs, the getting together and falling apart of the characters, the rituals and practices of the community, good messages and praising the name of the Deśam, they shower joy and divine nectar in abundance to the audience. In Palakkad this play is presently being performed together by Mr.A. Rāmakrṣṇan and his brothers. This is being done for pleasing the Devi and for the wellbeing and good fortune of the Deśam and its children. One situation in Purāṭṭu where the Kuravan is searching for Kuratti Kuravan, busy selling ‘çekku, çītti’, selling clothes, gets separated from his wife Lakṣmi in a crowd when an elephant runs amok at Thrissur pooram grounds.

The kuravan reaches the sabha while in his search when the questioner asks him the matter. He requests to show him his wife. The questioner asks again if his wife is that necessary for him for which the Kuravan replies that even the great Ṛshīśwarās, sages and Devās have proved how significant women are. In Purāṭṭukaḷi it is been said about Sītā that she is the daughter of Rāvaṇa, the king of Lanka. Lord

Nārāyaṇan, the one who doesn't have birth, the ultimate spirit, with unending affection for his devotees, realizing the wish of Devās and as per the request of Indra, Brahma, Rudra etc, Aṣṭan reincarnates as an illusive human and takes birth as Rāma of Sūrya dynasty while Yogamāyadevi is found by Janaka in his plough field in the agricultural land in his house, in the form of a human being. Nārada and King Janaka together decides to give the child Sītā, the incarnation of Lakṣmi (Vedavati, the daughter of Kuśadwaja, the son of Bṛhaspati), to Mahāviṣṇu.

At that time the king of the demons, Śambhu tried to lure Vedavati but in vain and in turn he kills Kuśadwaja. In protest to it, she sets out to the Himalayas to pray to Lord Viṣṇu to fulfill her father's wishes. Rāvaṇa, who passed by after the great victory over the three worlds, gets enticed by Vedavati's beauty and touches her hair when she cuts her hair off and commits suicide. She also curses Rāvaṇa. She enters the fire cursing him that she will take birth again as the reason for his death. It is Vedavati who is later born as Ayonija Sītā. When the girl asks and demands an answer in the play if anybody knows the reason for the birth of Sītā, the boy says that Sītā is born after Vedavati prays to Vaikuṇṭha vāsan.

## **Sītā in Vankaḷi**

The long plays in Pūrakkaḷi are called as Vankaḷi. In Vankaḷi, plays by singing the stories of *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata* are primarily included and also Gaṇapati plays. Vankaḷi is performed after the musical performance of *Pūramāla*. In some kāvū, for the sake of the comfort of the audience, Vankaḷi is performed in an exterior pantal (decorated tent). There are two different styles oṭṭa and iratṭa in *Rāmāyaṇa* kaḷi. In oṭṭa, the words are played with in a slow pace. While in iratṭa it is in a faster pace.

## **Sītā in Veṭṭikkaḷippaṭṭu**

It is an artform existing among the Paraya community. Veṭṭikkaḷi is the play where the performers dress up as pregnant women and wet nurse. This is the ritual song which is sung for Karimpālar Sītakkaḷi.

## **Sītākkali**

It is a raunchy ritual dance form of Karimpālar people. There are primarily three characters in this dance. They are Sītā, Maramūdan and Paṇiyan. Sītā's costumes include Mārmuḷa and Talappāḷi. In this play, there will be a Kaṇṇampāḷa on the face of Paṇiyan and Maramūdan will have a wooden face mask. Maramūdan will have a stick in his hand. The dance is in the form of a guffaw. The play is performed by

wearing costumes made of tender Coconut leaves. Paṇiyan, with plantain leaves tied on his forehead and waist, dances by holding one end of his dhoti in his hand. The character Sītā also dances with them. The character Sītā is enacted by men. The percussion in this is Tuṭikkūttu. They perform at every house and in return take rice, paddy, money etc. There are songs specially designed for Sītākālī. It is an artform of entertainment among the Māvilar people of North Kerala. Sītā, and Poṭṭan, Paṇiyan, her two sons are the characters in this play.

### **Sītā in Teyyam and Tira**

Daivatār teyyam, performed for the festival at Āṇdalūrkāvu, near Talassery, is based on the sankalpa (belief) of Śrīrāmā. There are two parts of Āṇdalūrkāvu. Melekkāvu and Kīzhekkāvu. The belief is that Melekkāvu is Ayodhya and Kīzhekkāvu is Lanka. The Daivatār along with Aṅkakāran (Lakṣmaṇa), Bapūran (Hanumān) Teyyams accompanied by Villukār, comes to Kīzhekkāvu in search of Sītā. They reach Tazhekkāvu and the war with Rāvaṇa begins. This war is called Āṭṭam. In this Teyyam the Daivatār doesn't take part in the fight. He stays as a witness to the fight. The killing of Rāvaṇa is symbolically done by destroying a tender coconut flower shell by grinding it using fingers. Atirāḷa and the sons are believed to be Sītā and Lava Kuśa.

Daivatār returns to Melekkāvu after winning Sītā. It is believed that Daivatār is Śrīrāmā. The next day Tira representing Bāli Sugrīva, Sītā, Lava, and Kuśa perform. The Tira of Bāli is known as Pūtāṭi and that of Sugrīva is Elankaruvān. The Teyyam that Paravan of North Kerala perform, Koti, is that of Śrīrāmā, and Saṅṅayāru, of Lakṣmaṇa also exist. The Teyyam Maṅavālan and Maṅavāṭṭi respectively performed in Maṭiyāṅkula and Rāmavilya represent Rāma and Sītā in that order.

### **Sītā in Pūrakkāḷi**

Pūrakkāḷi is a ritual dance form belonging to the community Tīyya. They are performed at the Bhadrakāḷi temples of Malabar region. Vankaḷi is a famous dance of Pūrakkāḷi. We can listen to the story of Rāma in the song used for this dance Vankaḷi. These songs are written based on *Pātāla Rāmāyaṇa*. We can see the emotional state of Rāma while searching for Sītā.

### **Sītā in Pazhampāṭṭu**

Pazhampāṭṭu in Malayalam is a literary area which touches upon all areas of life which also belongs to the folk tradition. Songs written for different purposes like Tārattupāṭṭu, kalyāṇapāṭṭu, vivāham, vaṅipāṭṭu, ūṅālpāṭṭu, pāṇanpāṭṭu, kuratipāṭṭu etc. In all these songs

story contexts of *Rāmāyaṇa* come into being according to situations. We can find many folk singings like the one beginning with ‘Janakante makaḷaḷḷo ḷṭapeṇṇu’ for example.

### **Sītā in Kūdiyāṭṭam**

Kūdiyāṭṭam is one of the important visual artforms of Kerala. It’s a Sanskrit drama performance tradition. Apart from Kerala it is also considered valuable by the foreign countries. Even the kings respected this artform. The priests in this artform are Ḷākyaṛ, Nambyāṛ and their women Naṇiyāṛ. The rule is that the Ḷākyaṛ performs, Nambyāṛ plays the percussion and the Naṇiyāṛ is responsible for singing. The female characters are portrayed by women. Kūdiyāṭṭam is performed at kūttambalam which has been constructed according to the rules of *Natyasāstra*. The system is that there will be a green room in the interior, a stage right in front of it and the seats for the audience in the rest of the place. The *rangamaṇḍala* will be a square and on both the sides there will be two mizhāvu placed in grilled boxes, one each for the meḷam and the rhythm. The Naṇiyāṛ sits on the floor with folded clothes and plays the kuzhitāḷam along with the singing. The iṭaykka is played from near the left mizhāvu accompanied by the kuzhal playing. There will be a clown. A lamp is lighted in front of the performance space. Kūdiyāṭṭam is a harmonious atonement of four kinds of

abhinaya called *vāçikam*, *sātvikam*, *āñikam* and *āhāryam*. In Kūdiyāṭṭam it is the actors who sing and talk. Nātya (dance) has the most significance in Kūdiyāṭṭa. *Mudrās* (gestures) are chosen based on the literature *hastalakṣaṇadīpika* according to each case Kūdiyāṭṭa is the first Indian danceform which has been accepted by UNESCO. Given below is the summary of the part related to Sītā in *Śūrpaṇakhāṅgam*, which has been written based on the *Rāmāyaṇa* story.

## **Folk Literature**

### **Sītā in *Māppiḷa Rāmāyaṇa***

*Māppiḷa Rāmāyaṇa* is an ideal example for the fact that the story of *Rāmāyaṇa* has influenced people from other religious groups. This is a poetic work which had been popular in North Malabar. *Māppiḷa Rāmāyaṇa* is a work in which each story context has been rewritten into the form of Māppiḷa pāṭṭu. They are sung in the tune of Māppiḷa pāṭṭu where in the *Rāmāyaṇa* characters Sītā, Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa, Śūrpaṇakha etc are connected to the live styles of the Muslims. This poetry has been written from the words and styles used among the Muslims. Without making any changes in the *Rāmāyaṇa* story or the characters, the characters of *Rāmāyaṇa* are presented as belonging to

the Muslim community. Here, by converting the story giving focus to humour, each moment has been presented so beautifully by the poet. The writer is still unknown. This is a song which has been orally spread among the people of Vadakara deśam of Kozhikode district. The *Māppiḷa Rāmāyaṇam* which existed as an oral poetry was recently been published as a book. The famous folk artist T.H.Kuñirāmān Nambyār published this book. This book by T.H. Kuñirāmān Nambyār came to be known to the outside world as a result of the research of Dr.M.N.Kārasseri Kuñan Nambyār was born in 1922 in Memunda of Vadakara Taluk. A teacher at Todannur School, he was also a scholar in Sanskrit, Astrology and *viṣa çikitsa* (toxicology). He was also known as the king of vaṭakkan pāṭṭu. He published a collection of vaṭakkan pāṭṭu like Pūmāte, Ponnamma, Mathilerikkanni, Kuñittālu etc. He has also published, along with *Māppiḷa Rāmāyaṇa*, some her *Māppiḷa pāṭṭu*, Aṭiyālarude pāṭṭukal, Toṭṭampāṭṭu, Tamāśapāṭṭu, Taçolipāṭṭu etc. He byhearted these songs from his mother. He says that he learned *Māppiḷa pāṭṭu* from his folks singing the same. He also adds that people from all religious groups used to sing these songs. The story and characters of *Māppiḷa Rāmāyaṇa* have been taken exactly the same from *Vālmīkirāmāyaṇa*. The approximately 170 lines as in the memory of Kuñan Nambyār are only available currently as *Māppiḷa*



*Rāmāyaṇa*. The part which introduces *Rāmāyaṇa*, Purappāṭ (setting out) of Śūrpaṇakha, the love proposal of Śūrpaṇakha, Rāvaṇa’s entry to Aśoka vanika, Hanumān’s entry to Lanka etc are only available to us for now. This poetic work is full of several words and suggestions relating to the Muslims. Ouli, Bāpa, Mayyatilāvuka, Ummānte, Pāttumma, Mūttumma, Bīvi, Sulṭtān, Māppiḷa, Taṭṭam, Bīdar, Śariyatt, Nikkāh, Kalbu, Maṅgalam, Ūra, Koyibiriyāṇi, Mayyat, Oḷakku etc are those words. The language used in this work is the language which the people of Vadakara still use in their life for communication. Manjga (hole), Ūra (hip), Pūti (wish), Vai (way), Olu (wife), Bālyakkāran (young man), Īlu (broomstick) etc are still very commonly used words in Vadakara. In the first part which is the part that introduces *Rāmāyaṇa*, the song begins by praising Rāma as in *Adhyātmarāmāyaṇa*.

“Lāma lāma lāma lāma lāma lāma lāma  
 lāma lāma lāma lāma lāma lāma lāma  
 Paṇṭutāṭikkāranauli pādivannoru pāṭṭu  
 kaṇṭatalle ṅimmaḷi lāmāyaṇam katha pāṭṭu  
 karkkiṭakam kāttu kattu kuttirikkum pāṭṭu  
 kāturaṇṭilum kaiviraliṭṭorikūṭṭum pāṭṭu”<sup>30</sup>

<sup>30</sup> T.H. Kuñirāman Nambiyār, *Māppiḷa Rāmāyaṇavum Nādanpāṭṭukalum* .D.C  
 ,Books .Kottayam p.2007.25

In the song, by Tāṭikkāran ouli they mean to suggest Vālmīki. The Muslim *Sidhās* are known as Ouli. The poet suggests in the beginning itself that this song had been sung during the month of Karkkiṭaka from time immemorial and that he hasn't heard any of what the content of the story says in his real life. The poet says that the *Rāmāyaṇa* singing during the month of Karkkiṭaka is like the Orikūṭṭal by closing the ear with a finger as while Bānku Viḷi (call to prayer).

After that describing all the important story contexts of *Rāmāyaṇa* he suggests that the storysong is one which includes all these. It says about Daśaratha marrying three women, of his ill luck in bearing children, three women having four children after drinking the *pāyasam* (sweet) etc. It also remembers Vālmīki at the beginning. It characterizes Paramaśiva as Nañju Nakkiya Padaṇ. Also Sītā is characterized as Kuñjukuṭṭitankamol and Paraśurāma as Tāṭilāma. The next scene is the setting out of Śūrpaṇakha. Śūrpaṇakha, whose husband passes away, sets out to find a new husband after taking permission from Rāvaṇa. Her husband Vidyutjihnan is characterized as the emperor of Pātāḷa. She is preparing to visit Rāma 56 year old Śūrpaṇakha posing as a 16 year old as a country girl sets out to meet Rāma and finds him.

“Kunnum malayum kerikkīñu çenambuñerakkam  
 Vannoru sundari lāvaṇante peñalumṁā  
 Ponnuperutoru pātālatile sulttānore  
 Minnum ponmaṇi kanmaṇi bībi śūrpaṅkha”<sup>31</sup>

Later after seeing Rāma she is smitten by him and proposes her love to him and the conversation with Rāma. Rāma asks her who she is for which she replies she is the sister of Rāvaṇa and asks him to come with her to Lanka. But Rāma spurns her by saying that he is not interested in another marriage. Śūrpaṅkha asks back to Rāma that he can marry any number of times according to the Śariyat rules. Unable to tolerate her he sends her to his younger brother Lakṣmaṇa.

This is the most interesting part of *Māppīḷa Rāmāyaṇa*. Rāvaṇa’s entry into the Aśoka Vanika. A year having passed after bringing Sītā to Lanka she hasn’t surrendered to Rāvaṇa’s wishes and he sets off to Aśoka Vani after dressing up himself. He expresses his desires for her and tries to lure her by telling her about the pleasures she would enjoy if she marries him and other offers to persuade her and yet since Sītā doesn’t agree he tells her that Rāma has remarried and it is of no use waiting for him. The part ends by him saying that even the clouds will

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid ,*MāppīḷaRāmāyaṇ avum Nādanpāṭṭukaḷum*, p.26.

shower rains upon his request and yet why doesn't the dark clouds on her face change.

This is the last part of *Māppila Rāmāyaṇa*. Hanumān jumps to Lanka in search of Sītā. The time when he jumps is when Rāvaṇa was shaving his face. He thinks that he can finish off his job by then Rāvaṇa shaves his ten beards off. Here the demonesses who stay guard to Sītā have been described in a very vulgar manner. Hanumān reaches Lanka in search of Sītā as per the orders of Rāma. He reaches there, finds Sītā and takes back *Çūṭāratnam* (Sītā's jewellery) and kills the demons who tries to attack him. The poetry ends at this. It has not been found if the entire story of *Rāmāyaṇa* has been written. It is its specialty that this work received national attention. This song of *Rāmāyaṇa* has been composed in the īśal style of Māppiḷappāṭṭu. For the same reason this *Rāmāyaṇa* has been included in the category of Māppiḷappāṭṭu as folk songs. Calling Rāvaṇa as the Sulttān of Pātāḷa (underworld), Śūrpaṇakha as bībi , the premise of the story of *Rāmāyaṇa* and its language is found to be as that of Māppiḷappāṭṭu and was thereby been said as *Māppiḷa Rāmāyaṇa*. This *Rāmāyaṇa* is also found as a guide to communal harmony. The historians have found this as a valuable historical document as the proof for the fact that *Rāmāyaṇa*'s greatness

and popular influence has also reflected upon people of other religious groups.

### **Sītādukha**

It has been written in the nineteenth century by an unknown poet. Even though it doesn't have much to claim in terms of language or literature it is a poetic work which has been very popular among the women. Kerala has a tradition of idolizing Rāma and Sītā. The popularity of Sītādukha spread to the interior parts of the villages of India through those village women who took to their minds the sorrows of the heroin of *Rāmāyaṇa*, Sītā as their own woes thus making them more ordinary. Until recently the couplets of *Sītādukha* had popularity in the districts of Alappuzha, Kollam, Kottayam and Ernakulam. Even now it is a small book whose several copies gets sold during the festivals. In *Rāmāyaṇa* the reason for renouncing Sītā is said to be the suspicion which arouse among the people about the chastity of Sītā. But in North India, the reason for abandoning Sītā is Rāmā's jealousy and calumny by Rāvaṇa's sister. Rāvaṇa's sister asks Sītā to draw the picture of Rāvaṇa, but Sītā he Sitates and yet she forces Sītā to draw and makes her draw the hands and legs and when she was drawing the ten heads, Rāma enters and Sītā hides the drawing inside her Saree. Rāvaṇa's sister tells about the drawing to Rāma while serving food to

him. Immediately Rāma assigns Lakṣmaṇa to send Sītā to forest. Lakṣmaṇa was in despair and unhappy. Lakṣmaṇa asks some questions to Rāma about Sītā such as Sītā is the food for hunger, she is the water of the thirst, clothing for the naked body and how could someone suspect a woman like her. Lakṣmaṇa leads Sītā to the forest and in between Sītā asks for water due to thirst. Lakṣmaṇa seats her under the Sāṅdalwood tree and goes in search of water and returns with water in a folded Kadamba leaf , finds Sītā sleeping out of fatigue and return in tears. When Sītā wakes up she gets worried as she couldn't find Lakṣmaṇa.

In the folk song of Northern India the Abandoning of Sītā has a different take. Rāma asks Lakṣmaṇa to take him to the forest where Sītā lives. When they reach the forest they meet Lava and Kuśa and when they ask them who they are they reply by saying that Daśaratha is their Grandfather, Lakṣmaṇa uncle and mother is Sītā but they don't know about their father. Rāma goes with the children and requests Sītā to return to Ayodhya. Sītā rejects the offer and asks the Goddess of Earth to give her refuge. When the earth splits open and Sītā return to the Pātāḷa, Rāma catches hold of her hair. Sītā disappears leaving a few hair with Rāma. The hair which go pressed within Rāmās hands became Kuśa grass.

Thus we can find many deviations in the *Rāmāyaṇa* stories found in the folk knowledge and they also have clear objectives. It is Sītā's sense of pride which reflects in her descent. Her purity and shrewdness are clarified in the '*çikuravṛttāntam*' where the hair turns into Kuśa grass. In *Sītādukham kiḷippāṭṭu* the rivalry with the mother-in-law is also said to be the reason for renouncing Sītā. When Rāma leaves for hunting Kausalya, Kaikeyī and Sumitra asks Sītā about Rāvaṇa and that they have only heard of Rāvaṇa's physicality and requests her to draw it on a stool. Hearing that Sītā warns them by saying that they are trying to bring trouble and that her husband will be angry if he comes to know of it. Rāma, returning after the hunt if gets to see it would chop off her head. Sītā requests them not to provoke her into committing sin. Kausalya reaching out to all the Gods promises her that they wouldn't trick her and extends the *Maṇipīṭham* to her for drawing. Sītā thinks that if she doesn't draw after the mothers make the promise it would bring them trouble and starts drawing Rāvaṇa's picture. She draws the ten heads of Rāvaṇa portraying ten different emotions. One face chanting Vedas, one face singing music, another face fighting with the God, a face with all thoughts on Sītā, a face consuming alcohol and meat, a face calling out for Indrajith etc. The mothers were happy to see the faces. Sumitra took the picture from her

and hides it. When Rāma and his army return after the hunting tired and hungry the mothers gives him the same stool on which Sītā had drawn Rāvaṇa's picture. Sītā got terrified and hid behind the door. When Rāma sat on it, the stool shook and when he lifts and turns it, finds dead Rāvaṇa's picture. The mothers, in return to his words tell more evil about Sītā. From the day he married he hasn't found happiness in his life. If he doesn't forget her his life will be in jeopardy. Rāma got angry listening to the ill words of his mothers. He asks Sītā why she drew that picture. Sītā says that she wasn't aware of the mistake and starts crying. She continues to cry by saying that she hasn't erred anywhere. Seeing Sītā's sorrow, the mountains begin to shake, the birds close their wings, leaves stood still on large trees, cows and leopards gazed together, the river stopped flowing and Kālan starts singing about sin.

Rāma remembers that he only had misfortune in his life after his marriage with Sītā. He lost the kingdom he deserved, had to leave to forest leaving his mothers and he can't understand whats in her mind. He thinks if she knew of Mārīça approaching them in disguise of a golden deer. Thus reinterpreting each things of past he gets convinced that Sītā has sinned. He says that Sītā has never been loyal to him. Sītā breaks down crying and says that it's all her fault that everything



happened. Even after seeing her tears none of the mothers uttered a word. Finally Rāma asks Lakṣmaṇa to kill her from the forest. But Lakṣmaṇa refuses by saying that he can't kill pregnant Sītā and that if he kills a woman the adverse effects of it would spread to seven worlds. Hearing Lakṣmaṇa's reply Rāma says he doesn't want her as wife anymore hearing which Lakṣmaṇa shuts his ears. Lakṣmaṇa says that if the person who has married her doesn't want her then even he doesn't wish that she stays. He then takes her to the forest and reaches a hermitage. The sage asks why he has brought her there. Lakṣmaṇa explains the situation. Hearing this the sage says that if she is pure she will stay here and asks her to take bath from the nearby river. If she has sinned the leopards and tigers in the forest would kill and eat her. Hearing this Sītā goes to take bath. She returns without any issues. Lakṣmaṇa leaves Sītā at the hermitage and returns to Rāma.

On the way he chops off a python, pig, a viper and a lizard and smears his sword with blood. He places the blood stained sword in front of Rāma. The mothers examine the sword and find out that they are not human blood stains. When Rāma supports their view Lakṣmaṇa again leaves to the forest. When Sītā knows of Lakṣmaṇa's return she asks him to cut off her finger and smear the blood on the sword. Lakṣmaṇa does accordingly and places it in front of Rāma. Mothers

inspect the sword again and express their suspicion. Lakṣmaṇa tells the mothers cut themselves to find the difference in a woman's blood when the mothers shut themselves up. When Rāma knows about Sītā's death Rāma enters his room and shuts the door. Rāma cries saying out aloud each beautiful thing about Sītā. They spent many days without shower or prayers or any interest towards life. After five months Sītā delivers in the Īttupura under a green tree in the eastern side of the hermitage. The pregnancy process happened with all rites. Ear piercing, Vedic education all happened in its own time. Sītā brought her son up taking care of the hermitage. Once when Sītā had been out to pluck flowers, the child had to pee. The sage so as to not let the child's urine fall on the hermitage floor he received the urine in his hands.

The child goes to Sītā and tells her what happened. Sītā got angry, cease plucking flowers and returns to the hermitage. At that time not finding the child the sage created another child from chanting *Mantrās* with tied *Darbha* grass. When Sītā reaches the hermitage she finds another child exactly like hers and her heart weakens. The sage says to Sītā that it is her son. But when Sītā says that her son is with herself the sage says that whatever has to happen has happened and asks her to bring them up equally. The children grew up and while playing other children asked them about their father. They returned to

Sītā and enquires about their father and that the forest people asked them about it. Sītā replies Śrīrāma and Lakṣmaṇa. Later one day when the children were playing in the forest they found people carrying milk and bananas. While enquiring to whom they were taking it, the people reply that it is for Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa. Suddenly the children snatch the milk and bananas from them and eat them up. When the forest people inform about this to Rāma he goes to the forest in search of the kids and recognizes them as his children. He enquires them about their mother. The children take Rāma to their mother. When Rāma sees Sītā he moves towards her and that moment when he was about to touch her Sītā requests the goddess of earth for refuge. Suddenly the goddess appears splitting open the earth from below and carries Sītā on a throne. When Rāma tries to stop her she descends into the earth leaving a handful of hair with Rāma.

Later they go to *Pālāzhi* where Viṣṇu sleeps on Vāsuki and Rāma and his children live happily. The agony of Sītā thus comes to an end. Since this poetry has spread orally there are many repetitions and changes. There is an error in the statement that Viṣṇu sleeps on Vāsuki in Pālāzhi. The name of the hermitage where Sītā finds refuge has not been mentioned and that Sītā gives birth to only one child and the other child has been created from the grass by chanting *Mantrās*.

The children snatching and eating the milk and bananas which were to be presented to Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa is a story which can only be found in this. It is when *Adhyātmarāmāyaṇa* existed as part of the cultural life of the people when *Sītādukham Kiḷippāṭṭu* spread into the interiors of the villages. In this work, the poet sees Rāma as a human being.

### **Sītā in *Wayanādan Rāmāyaṇa***

In Kerala, *Rāmāyaṇa* stories have spread through regions of Wayanad as folk stories and have pointed out certain places as mentioned in the epics. Certain peculiarities in terms of its geography has said about the resemblance of Wayanad to the epic poem *Rāmāyaṇa*. Many temples in Wayanad have lineage towards the Jain religion. Story telling is a special ritual in Wayanad. We can see in those regions, a way of sharing the verbal capital through narration of the story of Rāma and Sītā. The two varieties of *Wayanadan Rāmāyaṇa* is *Aṭiya Rāmāyaṇa* and *Çeṭṭi Rāmāyaṇa*. The creation of this *Rāmāyaṇa* is based on the events that happened during the exile to the forest. The story of *Rāmāyaṇa* and its characters have prime importance among a particular community of people called Aṭiyānmār. The people of Çeṭṭi community seen in Wayanad, have uprooted and replanted the epic stories into their own life situations through oral narration and have made them as their own and even claim the legacy.” The cultural

landscape of the Wayanadan Çeṭṭi people is a cultural surrounding created from a spiritual bond with several regions which include characters like Rāma, Sītā, Lava, Kuśa and Vālmīki.”<sup>32</sup> The native place of Aivar Çeṭṭi people is been considered as Pañcavaṭi of *Rāmāyaṇa*. According to the beliefs of the people of Wayanad the landscape of *Rāmāyaṇa* story exists there. According to them a lake called Ponkuzhi has formed from the tears of Sītā. Near to it is the stool on which Sītā sits with Vālmīki’s hermitage existing close by are what they imagine. *Wayanādan Rāmāyaṇa* is one of those many *Rāmāyaṇas* spread across the different communities of India. Similarly there is a *Rāmāyaṇa* for the Aṭiya community which is known as *Aṭiya Rāmāyaṇa*.

The story of Rāma according to the Adiya community is as follows. There is a *Teyyam* called Pākkateyyam in Pulpally *deśam* of Wayanad. This *Teyyam* confronted Sītā and told her that the place is his and asked her to leave the place and go somewhere else. Thus Pākkattappan drew boundaries and measured out a region for himself. Sītā leaves the place (Pulpally) along with her belongings travelling through the hill and mountains. It was at that time Rāma and

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<sup>32</sup> Dr. Azīz Taruvaṇa, *Wayanātan Rāmāyaṇam*, Matrubbhūmi books, Kozhicode, 2009. p.137.

Lakṣmaṇa return after the battle. Sītā gives them way when Rāma notices her and falls in love. He says this to Lakṣmaṇa and asks him a way to get her. Lakṣmaṇa replies that he would ask her right away and if she doesn't agree he would kidnap her. By then Sītā had reached long past them and Rāvaṇa finds her on his way. When Rāvaṇa sees Sītā he stops her. Rāvaṇa gets into a friendly conversation with Sītā, coaxes her and takes her to Lanka. Rāvaṇa seats Sītā on the topmost floor of his palace. Sītā says to Rāvaṇa that she is on meditation for the next twelve years and to not touch her during that period which Rāvaṇa agrees. All this time Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa were wandering in the valleys, river banks and the forests looking for her. Enquiring about Sītā to each and everyone they walk past Pulpalli deśam and Tirunelli deśam. Finally they reach *Pakṣi Pātālam*.

Some monkeys there informed them that they had seen Rāvaṇa and Sītā passing the bridge. Hearing this Hanumān says that he will go and get her. Searching for long time Hanumān finally understands that Sītā is in Rāvaṇa's palace and finds a way to reach her. He plans to hide inside the hamper of the aṭiyatti (An aṭiyār woman) who washes Sītā's clothes. Hanumān waits for an opportunity and finally when the woman was folding the clothes hides inside the hamper and reaches Sītā's room without anybody's knowledge. Hanumān comes out of its

hiding finding an opportunity but Sita gets frightened seeing him. When Hanumān informs her about everything Sītā asks her to leave the place as soon as possible or his life is in peril. After that Hanumān creates many troubles in Lanka and returns to Sītā to make her understand of the qualities of Rāma and also convinces her of the ill doings of Rāvaṇa and finally leaves with Sītā to irippu. He hands over Sītā to Rāma. Sītā comes to know that Hanumān was searching for her after getting into so much trouble and burnt Lanka in order to retrieve her. Thus Rāma and Sītā were living happily with each other as husband and wife when Sītā gets pregnant. At that time rumours started spreading around the region. That she had lived with Rāvaṇa, spent her nights at his palace etc. But people are unaware about Rāvaṇa's promise to Sītā. The rumours spread like forest fire. Rāma also started getting suspicious of her and even decides to kill her. Rāma orders Lakṣmaṇa to take her to the top of the hill and kill her.

Lakṣmaṇa was in a dilemma. Lakṣmaṇa is a person who has great interest and respect for both his elder brother and his wife. How can he deny his brother's words? And how would he kill a pregnant woman. Rāmān gives him the sword to kill Sītā. While Lakṣmaṇa stood there crying, Sītā wipes them off with the edge of her Saree and tells him that he need not kill her nor kill himself. They could both live and

that she would tell him a way out of it. She shows him a tree. She asks Lakṣmaṇa to make a cut on the tree. Lakṣmaṇa chops the tree. Sītā asks him what is oozing out and Lakṣmaṇa replies that there is milk coming out of the tree. She says that it is for the children in her stomach and shows him another tree to chop. When he cuts that tree, blood comes out of it. It was a vengā tree. She asks him to smear the blood on his sword and Lakṣmaṇa does accordingly. At that time Sītā gives birth to two kids at Vālmīki's hermitage. The children grew up learning to write and read and also showed interest in agriculture. One day a ferocious horse entered their field and ate away all the crops. It was Rāma's horse but the children out of anger tied the horse up. Finding that their horses haven't returned, Rāma Lakṣmaṇa and Hanumān goes in search of them and were surprised to find the horses tied up. Hanumān tries to untie the horses. The kids chase him away. Hearing that Rāma shouts out to find who have tied up the horses for which the children reply that it's them and they enter into an argument. But Rāma wasn't aware that he was arguing with his own children. The argument peaked and they started fighting. The kids tied up Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and Hanumān. Sītā was watching all this. In order to end this dispute Sītā sent a letter each to Valiyūrkkāvu Bhagavaty, Pulpally Bhagavati, Pākkateyyam, Tiruneḷḷi Perumāl and Koṭṭiyūr Perumāl. Soon after they



received the letters they all arrived at the place and started discussing on every aspect of the problem. They later conducted investigation on Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa. It is during this investigation that Rāma got convinced that the kids are his own children. All the chiefs knew about this earlier itself. These children are yours right, didn't they grow up without their father's attention, was it right to abandon your pregnant wife? Isn't it the responsibility of the husband to protect his wife and thus the chiefs and Teyyam from all the deśam fixed on the decision that Rāma should take his children and his wife back. They called out for Sītā. Both Rāma and Sītā sees each other and they talk. Rāma openly admits that he made a mistake. Sītā explained all the happenings to her children and they were happy. They were extremely happy to hear that their parents are reuniting. Sītā went back to Iruppu with Rāma. It is still been believed that Sītā lives in Iruppu. There is a temple for Sītā and pūja is conducted to worship Sītā. This chapter mainly consists of the places where suggestions of Sītā exist in the folk literature along with the folk visual artforms and folk *Rāmāyaṇas* which include Sītā. An interview with the *Wayanadan Rāmāyaṇa* and its accompanying illustrations are appended to the Appendix.

## CHAPTER III

### SĪTĀ AS PORTRAYED BY VĀLMĪKI

The third chapter tries to find out how Vālmīki's story telling style gave a vigor and resplendence to Sītā. In this chapter, different factors are shaped out from different story contexts, which Vālmīki has used to build a self for Sītā after examining how she has been referred to in the chapters from *Bālakāṇḍa* to the *Uttarakāṇḍa* of *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*.

Vālmīki, a saint poet, is the *Ādikavi* and his work *Rāmāyaṇa*, the *Ādikāvya*. Nothing is definitely known about his life or career except some meagre and fabled remark about in *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Adhyātmārāmāyaṇa* and some *purāṇās*. In *Adhyātmārāmāyaṇa* we get a detailed note on the life of Vālmīki as a snatcher from the passers by and the circumstances that changed him to become a *Ṛṣi*. This ancient story is known world wide. Another remark about we get the poet is the *Uttarāramāyaṇa*. At this time Vālmīki in a clear and detailed manner states that he is the tenth son of Prācetas and had not thought of untruth even secluded. He had go through penance for many years and he is very much committed the cause of truth. He had saintly eyes and an extremely be fully grown intelligent person which he got as an

outcome of penance. A further mention of Vālmīki is workout in *Ayodhyakāṇḍa*. In this spot Rāma Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa are said prostrating before the *Ṛṣi*. In the *Uttarakāṇḍa* Vālmīki had a momentous. The auther himself had become a character of the *kāvya* in this part. The defence of Sītā abandon by Lakṣmaṇa by the order of Rāma the shelter given to her in his hermitage education given to Lava and Kuśa the sons of Sītā the teaching of *Rāmāyaṇa* story composed by him ton Lava and Kuśa, taking sita before Rāma his valorous utterings about her chastity and her disappearance are all dealt with here. Vālmīki is said as *Ṛṣi* belonging to *brgugotra*. I n the first four kāṇḍas in Bālakāṇḍa also there are references to the poet and his work. Here Nārada narrates the story of Rāma to Vālmīki on his request. The story after the abandoning of Sītā had not been narrated by Nārada. So it is the story before the abandoning of Sītā. This aspect provides proof to believe Vālmīki as a contemporary of Rāma.

As Vālmīki was a *Ṛṣi* he had no personal likes or dislikes.He wrote what he felt good for humanity.The *Ṛṣi* knew that spirituality alone is not sufficient for the fullfilment of a life. Vālmīki possessed a very good knowledge of geography. He is a man of spiritual faith.Vālmīki was a strong advocate of chastity. Vālmīki touches up on all aspects of administration as a guideline for the rulers of the whole

world. *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* had played a major role for putting the strong foundation of spiritual truth and worldly truth in the Indian pious mind. Vālmīki showed no tolerance for dishonesty at any time; untruth according to him was an act of hate and dread.

If we study the female characters in Indian literature with due importance and perennial relevance we can see that the character Sītā has demonstrated a personality stressing on *Dharma* and *Pātivr̥tyam* (loyalty to husband). The epic heroine Sītā is a glorious character in the minds of the people. Sītā's life had been tested by unsolvable sorrows and miseries. Sītā in *Rāmāyaṇa* is an ideal model for how a woman, in this social surrounding, surpasses the problems faced by her. Even if she has a clear opinion, as a woman, on the weaknesses and injustice of her husband, Sītā, without expressing them, uses tolerance as her weapon. Vālmīki describes Sītā's *Pātivr̥tyam* (loyalty to her husband) as a world model. *Rāmāyaṇa* is a poetry which had a strong influence on the Indian literature and culture. *Rāmāyaṇa* is the self-stimulating power of the Indian society. *Rāmāyaṇa* is an epic poem which has radiated its influence to all spheres of the Indian life. Works like *Rāmāyaṇa* still live in the hearts of the humanitarians as it portrays the fundamental behavior of the humans. There are many situations and declarations in *Rāmāyaṇa* which make us think emotionally and

intellectually about the timely and just virtues and relationships human beings should be having with each other. The reality and imagination meets in *Rāmāyaṇa*. *Rāmāyaṇa* is an assembly of real humans and non-human characters.

Ethics, Economics, social sciences and aesthetics are reflected upon in *Rāmāyaṇa*. The essence of the story of *Rāmāyaṇa* is humanity. There is no such poetry existing even in the world literature which is so meaningful and rich with ideals. Even though the meaning of the word *Rāmāyaṇa* is Rāma's *Ayanam* (solstice), it is Sītā of *Rāmāyaṇa* who has attracted the minds of most of the kind people. Why didn't it become *Sītāyanam*? Rāma and Sītā are considered as ideal figures for the men and women of India. If you look at any studies on the female characters in the Indian literature, we can see that none of them could avoid leaving behind an analysis of the character Sītā. Sītā is such an important and all time relevant character. Sītā is a character which informs us of the emotional purity of the Indian women. Sītā tells us through her own life that along with our life our minds should also remain pure. *Rāmāyaṇa* doesn't advise but shows us itself. It shows us life through Sītā, Rāma and Rāvaṇa. If we examine the life of Sītā we can see how great the sacrifice in her life was. We cannot find any other woman in history who has had to endure such a sacrifice. Vivekānanda

says about Sītā in the following manner: you will have to complete reading all the past world literature in order to find another Sītā. You will also have to read the works yet unwritten. Sītā is hard to find there could be more Rāmas. But there cannot be one more Sītā. She is a role model for the real womanhood.

All the ideals India expects to have in a complete woman have developed from this history of Sītā. The researchers are still trying to find the answer to the question that how Sītā stands different from all the female characters presented by the poets, in each era, as a model for womanhood. We are now able to think and evaluate the female characters of *Rāmāyaṇa*. As a feministic vision came into being a possibility was created to re-analyse the female characters. Through this thesis, we are trying to have a reasoning to be found about Sītā who, like every other female character, was able to live according to her free will being a woman or if she was dependent throughout her life stuck in different kinds of bondages in this human life in a society including herself. *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* is a legend related to the *Kosalās* and *Videhās* who were very powerful in India. All those which can be seen as invaluable and felicitous in *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* have been portrayed here in a very beautiful manner. Ayodhya has been described as a city of justice and righteousness. The King of *Kosalās*, Daśaratha,

who suffers for the well being of his people has been picturized as a king who can be cited as an example for all. The poet shows in Rāma, the eldest son of Daśaratha, an ideal king who is courageous, competent and precise and truth seeking. The King of Videha Janaka is a *Rājaṛṣi*. A loyal wife and a pure woman has been portrayed through Sītā, the daughter of Janaka and of this story. The imagination power of no other poet have been able to create a pure and noble like her. It is confirmed that no other literature in India has such an ideal example for the trust and loyalty of women. Sītā, is a qualified example as for all the women and men, for a care giving and loving wife. We think that there is no other story which has been so popular and have changed so many forms like *Rāmāyaṇa*.

There is *Rāmāyaṇa* for Budhists, Jains, Muslims and Hindus. Even their characters are different. In the IndoChina *Rāmāyaṇa* it is Rāvaṇa who is the main character. In the *Pātāla Rāmāyaṇa* which is popular in Kerala and south-east Asia, Hanumān is the main character. There is a *Rāmāyaṇa* story popular in IndoChina which presents Rāma and Sītā as reincarnations of Budhha and Yaśodhara respectively. In the Philippines *Rāmāyaṇa* Sītā is Rāma's close relative. In the *Jain Rāmāyaṇa* Sītā is one of the four most significant of the eight thousand wives of Rāma. In that story Rāma takes to the path of renunciation and

attains salvation. It is Lakṣmaṇa who kills Rāvaṇa and not Rāma. Similarly there is *Māppīḷa Rāmāyaṇa*. Thus several thousands of authentic *Rāmāyaṇas* are being carried in the hearts of the people inside and outside India as part of their life.” In the all beautiful *Rāmāyaṇa* if “शोकः श्लोकत्वमागतः” is changed to “शोकः ग्रन्थत्वमागतः” it will be an inference to *Rāmāyaṇa*.”<sup>33</sup>

How beautifully and in a heartfelt manner does *Rāmāyaṇa* describe the domestic lifestyle? It is doubtful that there will be an Indian language in which the story of *Rāmāyaṇa* hasn't been translated. Sītā, the epic Indian, is a qualified for all the women and men, for a care giving and loving wife who has also achieved a special significant position in the world literature. The status of Sītā in *Rāmāyaṇa* is sky high. Sītā who is a convergence of the intricate of the expressions of human life and womanhood stands different from other epics. Sītā's presence is the ground for all thoughts based on Indian truth and womanhood. In *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* Sītā has been described as the ideal model for true womanhood. Sītā, who was given birth by the Earth grew up as a *Vīryaśulka* (a bride to be won only by the worthiest and the very best). Her birth being connected to Earth, Sītā, is praised as

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<sup>33</sup> C.K. WARRIER, *Rāmāyaṇa Irupattinālu Vṛtta*, Kerala Sāhitya Academy, Thrissur, .1989 P.2



the patron goddess of Agriculture in Vedic literature and the effect of her personality is impressed rightfully in earth born Sītā. If we try to examine the life of Sītā, we can see how great her sacrifice was. We can't find any other woman in any other places in the epics who has suffered such a sacrifice. Sītā is the pet daughter of Vālmīki. She is someone who says what she wants to say at the right moment. Sītā's physical beauty and purity is at par with her intellectual beauty. In his poetic work, Vālmīki says that Sītā doesn't take a step back from Sāvitrī's fortitude. In *Vālmīkirāmāyaṇa* we can see the purity of heart and radiance of character of Sītā with a firm resolve. Even when she is neck deep in sadness we can see that Vālmīki's Sītā's words are highly ethical, full of love and pacifying.

Vālmīki narrates to us the story of Sītā and Rāma as human story. In Vālmīki's times women and men shared one life. So until the *Yuddhakāṇḍa* of *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* Sītā is competent enough to get into righteous argument with her husband and shows intense fury if her husband behaves in an improper manner. During the times of *Uttararāmāyaṇa* women used to live as slaves of men. In that, Sītā decorates her husband's demeaning behavior towards her. In *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*, the stages of Sītā's birth, childhood, marriage, forest life, Sītā's abduction. Abandonment, entry to Vālmīki's *āśram* and descent

are critical moments of her life. Through this chapter we observe how Sītā has been described by Vālmīki in all these contexts.

### **Birth of Sītā**

The birth of Sītā can be seen to have depicted differently in different *Rāmāyaṇas*. In some *Rāmāyaṇas* Sītā has been described as *Janakātmaja*, *Bhūmija*, *Padmaja*, *Raktaja*, *Agnija*, and *Rāvaṇaputri*. In *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* the narration of the origin of Sītā has been done in the 66<sup>th</sup> *sarga*, *ślokas* from 13 to 15. Viśvāmitra says to Janaka after having reached his Kingdom: Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa, the sons of Daśaratha, are world famous and scholars, especially in archery, and adept at it. We wish to see the royal bow in your royal custody. We have to see it before our return. In reply to it Janaka speaks about the royal bow. This bow had been entrusted to Devaratha, the sixth king by King Nimi. God Śrīrudra, out of extreme rage trying to destroy the *Dakṣayāga*, says to the *Devās*,” Dear *Devās*, I will reap your honorable heads, which don’t grant the part of *Yajña Karma*, using this bow. The befuddled *Devās* calmed down the God of Gods by singing his praises. Pleased by them, *Girīśa* gifts this bow to those great minds. This brilliant bow of Mahādeva was entrusted to me by my ancestors.”

“न्यासभूतं तदा न्यस्तमस्माकं पूर्वजे विभौ ।  
 अथमे कृषतः क्षेत्रं लाङ्गलादुत्थिता ततः ॥  
 क्षेत्रं शोधयता लब्धा नाम्ना सीतेतिविश्रुता ।  
 भूतलादुत्थिता सा तु व्यवर्धत ममात्मजा ॥  
 वीर्यं शुल्केति मे कन्या स्थापितेयमयोनिजा ।  
 भूतलात्दुत्थितां तां तु वर्धमानं ममात्मजाम् ॥”<sup>34</sup>

A few years ago when I conducted and completed a noble *Yajña*, a girl child was born when hit by a plough while ploughing the field. I named her ‘Sītā’ as I got her from the furrow. I brought up the little girl, *Ayonija* and *Avanija*, as my own child and retained her as a *Vīryaśulka*. This is the story of Sītā’s birth which is found in most of the tales of Rāma. This supernatural (without any sperm donation by the father and without getting pregnant) birth story of Sītā would have originated from the influence of the primary goddess of agriculture, named Sītā. The story of the birth of Sītā has been described in detail in *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*. Once when King Janaka was ploughing the *Yāgabhūmi* (field for conducting sacred rituals) he sees the beautiful damsel Menaka in the sky and wished to have a daughter like her and to live with her. Janaka has an oracle that he will get a daughter with a beauty

<sup>34</sup> Vālmīki, *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*, Gita Press, Goraghpur, India, 2011 p.p.167.

contending with that of Menaka through Menaka. What Janaka then sees is Sītā emerging out of the earth. He hears the same oracle again. It said the following about the birth of Sītā “मेनकया समुथिन्ना कन्येयं मानसी ति”. Sītā has been described as the daughter of Earth in several *Rāmāyaṇas*. In *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* the birth of Sītā has been described as Bhūmija.

## **Marriage**

As Sītā grew up into a young mature woman they started looking out for suitable husbands for her. After discussing with the ministers and sages they announced a contest of vaour. Anybody who can strike *Trayāmbaka*, the *Śaivaçāpa* which wouldn't move even by a thousand wrestlers, would have Sītā. The human beings, *Devās* and *Yakṣās* who came to contest the competition failed and quit. This is the time when Rāma arrives there along with Vālmīki. The young Rāma not only strikes the bow but breaks it. The entire world shook by the sound of it. The *Devās* showered flowers on Rāma. They praised him in *stotrā's* accompanied by Vedic percussions. Janaka embraced Rāma after seeing the bow break. Sītā was extremely happy to see Rāma become her husband. All the writers of *Rāmāyaṇa* are of the same opinion about the marriage of Sītā. Along with this marriage two competent dynasties enter into a firm relationship. After arranging the marriage hall as per

the statute Sītā was brought to the hall adorned with jewellery. Janaka marries off his daughter to Rāma with great affection and pride. When Janaka gives his daughter's hands in the hands of Rāma he says the following:

“Oh God, *Brahmarṣi*, I will show the royal bow, with its glitter and shine, to Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa. If he strings the bow I will give away *Ayonija* Sītā to Rāma as his wife.

“यद्यस्य धनुषो रामः कुर्यादारोपणं मुने ।

सुतामयोनिजां सीतां दद्यां दाशरथेरहं ॥”<sup>35</sup>

Hearing this Viśvāmitra asks him to show the bow and smiles. The bow was carried by 5000 giant men. Viśvāmitra called for Rāma and showed him the bow. Rāma took permission from Janaka and Kouśika. Rāma, like a child's game, picked up the *Śaivacāpa* holding it in the middle with its left hand, bent it and tied the string in a moment's time. Unable to handle the strength of his hands the bow broke into two pieces. All stood there awestruck without moving their eyelids. The earth quake in such a powerful manner that it could shake all the mountains. Janaka bowed to Viśvāmitra and said, “I watched the bravery of the son of Daśaratha. What a wonder, this Rāma is

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid, *Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa*, p.p.168

immortal! So I want to give Sītā to Rāma.” Following that he sent his ministers to bring Daśaratha. The ministers reached the kingdom and informed them everything. Daśaratha calls for Sumantrar and asks him to prepare the chariot. He climbs the chariot and sets off accompanied by the *Çaturānka* army and other saints. On the fourth day they reach Videha kingdom. Janaka gives them a royal welcome and receives them with great happiness. He asks Vasiṣṭha to conduct the marriage in the auspicious presence of the great saints after the *Yajña*. The young girls, radiant like the flames of fire, arrive at the stage after performing the rituals for good fortune in the proper manner. A stage was built according to the rites, in the middle of the *Pantal* (hall) overseen by Viśwāmitran and Śātānandan, the masters of righteousness. It was decorated by flowers of beautiful fragrance. Golden ornate plates were arranged with special golden pots and placed in the appropriate places. The most pure lamps, the vessels of incense which spread fragrance, vessels of conch, other offerings, vessels filled with puffed rice and *Akṣata* (rice) were all placed on the *Darbha* grass, arranged on the floor, by chanting *Mantrās*. Saint Vasiṣṭha began the *Homa* (sacred ritual for religious offerings) starting the fire with the chantings. Sītādevi, with the body of a swan, adorning herself with light yellow colored silk, golden hued *Uttariyam* (shawl), every part of her body

embellished with jewellery, extended her presence like Mahālakṣmi reincarnated from the lap of Mahāviṣṇu without her lotus. In 73<sup>rd</sup> *sarga* of *Bālakāṇḍa* it is described as:

“ततः सीतां समानीय सर्वाभरण भूषिताम् ।  
 समक्षमग्रे संस्थाप्य राघवाभिमुखे तदा ॥  
 अब्रवीज्जनको राजा कौसल्यानन्दवर्धनम् ।  
 इयं सीता मम सुता सहधर्मचरी तव ॥  
 प्रतीच्छ चैनां भद्रं ते पाणीं गृहीष्व पाणिना ।  
 पतिव्रता महाभागा छायेवावानुगता सदा ॥  
 इत्युक्त्वा प्राक्षिपत् राजा मन्द्रपूतं जलं तदा ।  
 साधु साध्विति देवानामृषीणां वददां सदा ॥  
 देवदुन्दुभिनिर्घोषः पुष्पवर्षी महानभूत् ।  
 एवं दत्त्वा सुतां सीतां मन्त्रोदकपुरस्कृताम् ॥”<sup>36</sup>

With superior indications of beauty like long, black, thick and curly hair, a body bright as the lightning, and long, large eyes, she was positioned near Rāma near the staged fire. Janakan said to the prince who is Kausalya’s happiness,” Let my daughter be your partner. May all good fortune come to you step by step, accept her by holding each

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, *Vālmīki, Rāmāyaṇa*, p.184

other's hands? This pure soul will follow you like your shadow.”

Janaka gave the holy water to Rāma. Gave everybody's wishes and blessings to them. As the *Devadundubhi* began to resonate continuously, flowers were shed and showers of flowers happened, Sītādevi was considered to be offered. Divine percussions reverberated up in the sky encircling the fire, stage, the kings and the saints. Along with the background music started the chanting of praises. The *Apsarās* (nymphs) started dancing. The *Gandharvās* (fairy) began to sing. The moment of Sītā's marriage was filled with such wonderful things.

Apart from the mention that Lakṣmaṇa married Ūrmiḷa supplementary to Sītā's marriage, how cruelly has the history forgotten Ūrmiḷa? Sītā gave company to Rāma even in the forest. There has not been any hindrance to the domestic life other than the fact that they were in the forest. But why doesn't anybody try to remember the price paid by Ūrmiḷa? Nowhere in *Rāmāyaṇa* does Lakṣmaṇa utter a word about Ūrmiḷa. Similarly having decided that it is difficult for her to stay separate from her husband, Sītā doesn't say a word for her sister Ūrmiḷa. Then and even now we can see that women have been disgraced for the decisions taken by men”. The wedding between



*Āryaputrā* Rāma and Earth's daughter Sītā was also a marriage between the Ārya and Dravida cultures of India.”<sup>37</sup>

### **Sītā's life In the Forest**

After the marriage, Sītādevi's reappearance in *Rāmāyaṇa* is in the *Ayodhyākāṇḍa* during the conversation between Sītā and Rāma in the 26<sup>th</sup> *sarga*. Sītā is waiting for Rāma with great happiness after having completed the holy rituals for the *Abhiṣeka* (coronation ceremony). Sītā had a period of happiness since her arrival at Ayodhya as Rāma's wife still the time of exile to the forest. The period from arriving in Ayodhya as Rāma's wife till the time of exile to the forest was of happiness for Sītā. A few years after the arrival at Ayodhya Sage Nārada comes there which turns the life of Sītā altogether. Rāma was a prince who had been popular among his people. The elders and teachers were pleased by him. A happy Daśaratha decides to make his son the King. But when the elephants and the party were all set for the celebration, the son who had been to visit his father returned with a pledge of exile to forest. Apart from Kaikeyī mentioning it in the 18<sup>th</sup> *sarga*, Vālmīki doesn't make Daśaratha utter anything about Rāma's fate of exile. Here we can find Rāma to have expressed extreme broad

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<sup>37</sup> Nitya Çaitanya Yati, *Sītā Nūttandukaḷilūde*, Greenbooks, Thrissur, 2013. P.22

mindedness. From this we can understand that Rāma is completely docile to his father. Here a truth has been hidden which can be understood by a reader who reads this *Kāṇḍa*.

Everybody can understand that the words uttered by Kaikeyī with a highly frivolous mind, based on greed and avarice alone are not the wishes of his father. If not keeping his word to Kaikeyī is a violation of promise then how will breaking a vow to the people be a righteous thing to do for a King? It is when Rāma tries to make the word promise literal. Apart from blaming Kaikeyī for all the crimes not even a word does Daśaratha utter which explains the actual situation. If the selfishness of Daśaratha's wife Kaikeyī is given a righteous aureole then Rāma, who married Sītā with fire as witness, could have been stopped from going on exile to forest. But that is not what Sītā did. Sītā displays a mentality of a completely upright Indian culture, existing since the Pre-Vedic period, which is most worshipped upon. Moreover Sītā's actions has the beauty of sacrifice. We can never find any wickedness masked by righteousness in the thought flow of Sītā. There is no implication of a woman in the Indian literature which transcends Sītā. Every promise that Sītā makes to Rāma is fulfilled by her precisely from the beginning till the end. Vālmīki later meets Sītā when Rāma comes to say goodbye to Sītā before going on exile to the forest.

We can imagine the mental state of Sītā when Rāma asks her to stay back in the palace and take care of his mother. Sītā doesn't stop Rāma instead tells him with great conviction: Don't utter hollow words like the 'Non masculine'. Where the husband resides there resides the wife. I will be with you in happiness and sadness.

During the journey through forest she would walk in the front and Rāma would follow her. She also says that separating from her would bring down his glory. Rāma says that there are carnivorous animals and demons who eat human beings behind the wild beauty of the forest and Sītā being unfamiliar with all this, will find it difficult to survive there but Sītā was not ready to accept that. He narrates to Sītā, one by one, the various difficulties of being in a forest but Sītā wasn't willing to withdraw from her firm decision. Tired, and she also says derogatory words about him. At that time an adorned Rāma enters his home which is full of people content for him. Rāma's face turned slightly pale unable to hold his sorrow in front of Sītā. We could see the agony on Rāma's face which he couldn't hold anymore in his heart. At that moment Sītā asks Rāma which has been described in the 26<sup>th</sup> *sarga* of *Ayodhyakāṇḍa*:

“विवर्णं वदनं दृष्ट्वा तं प्रस्विन्नममर्षणं ।  
 आह दुखाभिसंतप्ता किमिदानीमिदं प्रभो ॥  
 अथ बार्हस्पतः श्रीमान् युक्तः पुष्येण राघव ।  
 प्रोच्यते ब्राह्मणैः प्राज्ञैः केन त्वमसि दुर्मनः ॥  
 न ते शतशलाकेन जलफेननिभेन च ।  
 आवृतं वदनं वल्गुच्छत्रेणाभिविराजते ॥  
 व्यजनाभ्यां च मुखाभ्यां शतपत्रनिभेक्षणं ।  
 चन्द्र हंस प्रकाशाभ्यां वीज्यते न तवाननं ॥  
 वाग्मिनो वन्दिनश्चापि प्रहृष्टास्त्वां नरर्षभ ।  
 स्तुवन्तो नाद्य दृश्यन्ते मङ्गलैःसूतमागधाः॥  
 न ते क्षौद्रं च दधि च ब्राह्मणा वेदपारगाः ।  
 मूर्धनि मूर्धाभिषिक्तस्य ददति स्म विधानतः॥  
 न त्वां प्रकृतयः सर्वाः श्रेणीमुख्या श्व भूषिताः।  
 अनुव्रजितुमिच्छन्ति पौरजानपदास्तथा ॥  
 चतुभिर्वेगसंपनैहर्यैः काञ्चनभूषणैः ।  
 मुख्यः पुष्परथो युक्तःकिं न गच्छति तेऽग्रतः ॥  
 न हस्ती चाग्रतः श्रीमान् सर्वलक्षणपूजितः।  
 प्रयाणे लक्ष्यते वीर कृष्णमेघ गिरिप्रभः॥  
 न च काञ्चनचित्रं ते पश्यामि प्रियदर्शन ।

भद्रासनं पुरस्कृत्य यान्तं वीर पुरस्सरम् ॥

अभिषेको यदा सज्जः किमिदानीमिदं तव ।

अपूर्वो मुखवर्णाश्व न प्रहर्षश्च लक्ष्यते ॥”<sup>38</sup>

What is the reason that your heart is burning so much and why is no *Veṅkoṭṭakuda* (royal umbrella), with a hundred strings and white like the foam, shining above your head? Why is nobody blowing you with the eclipsing moon and swan like royal fans? Why are the *Magadhās*, *Sūtās* and *Vandikal* not following you happily singing songs of your praise? I can't see any honey or curd offered on your head, post royal bath, by the greatest of the Brahmins? Why are the prime ministers, significant people adorned with jewellery and elders of the kingdom not following you? Why doesn't *Puṣyaratha*, to which the greatest of the horses with golden embellishments has been fastened to, precede you? On the sides I don't see any mighty elephants with all indications of a good one, which resemble the dark clouds on your sides? I also can't see the throne embellished with gems which you are brought on when accompanied by the valiant ones? In this situation when all preparations for your coronation ceremony have been completed, why is your handsome face full of discontent? Rāma replies to Sītā's

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<sup>38</sup> Vālmīki, *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*, Gitapress, Goraghpur, India, 2011. p.291

questions with utmost curiosity. Dear Sītā, father's advice is that I should live in the forest. The reason is that long ago father had given two boons to mother Kaikeyī. She requested them back today to father, an upholder of promise.

Those boons are that Bharata has to rule the kingdom and that I should live in exile in the forest. I came to visit yourself to say goodbye while ready to leave for a lone exile to the forest. Rāma says while leaving. Don't utter anything about my qualities while in the presence of Bharata. A prosperous person can never tolerate others' praise. You should live accordingly by the path of brother's opinions. Since he has been given the power of rule don't consider him just as a brother. You should also remember that he is the king. Don't create hatred in the mind of the heir to the throne and also you should please him. I am leaving to the forest right now to fulfill father's wishes. You should stay paying attention and also continue the vows and the fasting until the end of my forest life. You should bow to the father after paying the offerings to the *Devās*. You should take care of an ailing and grieving mother to not deviate from the path of *Dharma*. The other mothers have also brought me up well so you should also pay respects to them. It's Devi's duty to take care of their interests. Bharata and Śatrughna are dear to my life and therefore you should also please them, and with

firm vows of truth, not surrendering to any *Adharma*, you should live in this palace according to my words. Hearing this Sītā replies to Rāma with extreme rage of love. It is sad to see yourself, the noblest of all men, uttering words which seem like chaff. Dear lord, father, mother, brothers and all are doing their own duties. They are experiencing the good and bad effects of it. But the happiness and sorrows of a husband is for the wife. In this world and outside, husband is the only resort for a woman. If you are beginning your journey to the forest right now I am the one who would walk ahead of you making a comfortable way for your holy feet by stepping and treading on the *Darbha* grass. Please take me with you without any doubt by holding in your spite and anger.

Oh great lord, to me, who hasn't committed any kind of sin, the heaven is at your feet. It is the life in the forest which is happier for me than the life in this palace and I would live there serving your feet taking vows of *Brahmacarya* (bachelorhood). You, who can protect any living thing directly and indirectly can easily safeguard me in the forest. I will live there eating the fruits and nuts. I will stay there as if in being in my father's close proximity. I will live there serving your feet. Even after telling all this Rāma tried to change her mind from living in the forest. Not only that he says to Sītā that having born to a glorious race, she shouldn't take a step back from *Dharma*. Dont do

acts of selfishness. Living in the forest is full of troubles. I am asking you not to accompany me to the forest as I wish you to have a comfortable life. Hearing Sītā turned sad instead of feeling relieved. She shed tears hearing her husband's words and humbly said, when your kindness is always with me, the sorrows you just mentioned will turn into happiness. In order to completely obey father's words it is necessary that I accompany you. Separating from you will lead to the end of my life. Havent you said to me multiple times that" No high born woman can live without her husband."? Moreover, elderly Brahmins at my father's house had informed me, after looking into the indications, about the fate of having to live in the forest. If you don't take this devotee, who is neck deep in despair, along with you, then my only refuge is water or poison or fire. When again Rāma repeated his appeasing words Sītā got angry.

“किं त्वामन्यत वैदेहः पिता मे मिथिलाधिपः ।

रामः जामातरं प्राप्य स्त्रियं पुरुष विग्रहं ॥

अनृतं बत लोकोऽयं अज्ञानाद् यदि वक्ष्यति ।

तेजो नास्ति परं रामे तपतीव दिवाकरे ॥”<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid, *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*, p.299



In an insulting tone, will you think that my father is a woman in disguise of a man? Is what people say that” our prince is radiant than Sūrya’s rays” untrue? Of whose fear do you think of leaving me, who doesn’t have anybody to rely on? If you don’t take me with you trying to understand the depth and spread of my love, then I will drink poison not having to be enslaved by anyone. When even being away from you for a short while equates to death, oh lord, how will I suffer long fourteen years of separation. Out of unfathomable, deep sadness, Sītā embraced Rāma and cried aloud.

“यस्य पथ्यंचरामात्थ यस्य चार्थेअवरुध्यसे ।  
 त्वं तस्य भव वश्यश्च विधेयश्च सदानघ ॥  
 स ममानादाय वनं न त्वं प्रस्थितुमर्हसि ।  
 तपो वा यदि वारण्यं स्वर्गो वा स्यात्त्वया सह ॥  
 न च मे भविता तत्र कश्चित् पथि परिश्रमः ।  
 पृष्ठतस्तव गचछन्त्या विहारशयनेष्विव ॥  
 कुशकाशशरेषीका ये च कण्टकिनो द्रुमाः ।  
 तूलाजिनसमस्पर्शा मार्गे मम सह त्वया ॥”<sup>40</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*, p.300

Hearing this Rāma says that he doesn't even wish heaven without Sītā. I don't even know what fear is. I always at place have the ability to protect Devi?

“यत् सृष्टासि मया सार्धं वनवासाय मैथिली ।

न विहातुं मया शक्या प्रीतिरात्मवता यथा ॥”<sup>41</sup>

But I tried to stop you from going to the forest in order to know what your heart wants to say. You have even been born to live in the forest with me. Sītā for me is like glory for a valorous man. Does Rāma exist without Rāma? Who can even think about such a thing? I adopt the *Dharma* been followed by the great minds. I decided to obey the orders of my father who is also grounded by the discipline of *Dharma*. I hesitated a bit to take the soft body of Sītā to the horrific dense forest. But you have stated your decision about it. I permit you Sītā, to bring glory to the Janaka and Raghu dynasties by accompanying me into the dense forest as my wife. Rāma gives permission by asking her to leave with him. Even there we can see an attitude of male Chauvinism. A woman born to a high race cannot live without her husband. Here Rāma comes to bid goodbye to Sītā while leaving for exile to the forest, when

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid, *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*, p.301

he says that he tried to stop her from accompanying him in order to understand what is in her heart,

“न विहातुं मया शक्या प्रीतिरात्मवता यथा”<sup>42</sup>

These words stand proofs for the fact that Rāma had been testing her from that moment itself. Devi, having fixated your mind on a life abiding by the Dharma, please perform the duties for living in the forest. Rāma says that he doesn't require any heaven without Sītā

“आरम्भस्व सुभश्रेणि वनवासक्षमाः क्रियाः ।

नेदानीं त्वदृते सीते स्वर्गोपि मम रोचते ॥”<sup>43</sup>

As per Rāma's instruction Sītā quickly started performing donations with utmost happiness. Later Sītā appears in the 117<sup>th</sup> *sarga* of *Ayodhyākāṇḍa* in *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*. During the time in the forest, when Rāma and Sītā sets out to visit Sage Atri, Anasūya tells Sītā like her own daughter, “Sītā, you are fortunate enough to be following *Dharma*. You followed your husband to the forest by sacrificing wealth, self-esteem and relatives.

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid, *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*, p.301

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*, p.302

“नगरस्थो वनस्थो वा शुभो वा यदि वाशुभः ।

यासां स्त्रीणां प्रियो भर्ता तासां लोका महोदया दुःशीलः ॥

कामवृतो वा धनैर्वा परिवर्जितः।

स्त्रीणांमार्यस्वभवानां परमं दैवतं पति ॥”<sup>44</sup>

A householder, or a forest dweller, or a sinner or a blessed soul whoever he may be, a woman who likes her husband will attain a superior world. Bad natured, or a poor, or a hot headed, or anybody, husband is the greatest god of all good mannered women. You are a fortunate one. Women like you full of good qualities are known as the blessed ones. The way you suited for the *Dharma* of a *Pativrata* you should also maintain the name of a wife by following your husband. It will be the reason for your *Dharma* and glory. Receiving these kind of advises from Anasūya, Sītā replies as follows:

“नैदताश्चर्यमार्यायां यन्मां त्वमनुभाषसे ।

विदितं तु ममाप्येतद् यथा नार्याः पतिर्गुरुः ॥”<sup>45</sup>

I know that the husband is the God for the women community. It is my duty to serve my husband even if he ceases to perform his rites and manners.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*, p. 550

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*, p. 551

“न विमृतं तु मे सर्व वाक्यैः स्वै धर्मचारिणि ।  
पतिशुश्रूषणानार्यास्तपो नान्यद् विधीयते ॥”<sup>46</sup>

Sāvitri Devi became known to the whole world due to the service she did to her husband. Even Anasūya is famous for taking care of her husband. The women who are determined about serving their husbands will be respected by the people for their own good deeds. Anasūya, happy about hearing all these, handed over her with necklaces, clothes and jewellery which are divine and superior, the best mix for applying the *Kuri* (stripe on the forehead) and body fragrances. If you apply this holy body fragrance on your body you will brighten up your husband as the original Mahālakṣmi does to Viṣṇu. After accepting everything from Anasūya humbly, she leaves with Rāma wearing the clothes and ornaments given by Anasūya. At that time a demon named Virādha approached Sītā with a jarring sound that would scare everyone away. He picks up Sit and keeps on his shoulders shaking in a manner that would quake the earth. He asks Rāma enraged, why did you come to *Danḍakāraṇya* wearing ascetic clothes along with your wife? Why do you need a wife if you are sages? I will take this beautiful woman as my wife. Hearing Sītā started shaking as if like plantain during a storm:

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid, *Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa*, p. 551

“श्रुत्वा सगर्वितं वाक्यं संभ्रान्ता जनकात्मजा |

सीता प्रवेपितोद्वेगात् प्रवाते कदली यथा ||”<sup>47</sup>

The fact that another man touched Sītā burnt his heart even more than the seizure of kingdom or the death of his father. This became the reason for the battle with Khara. Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa were carried away on each shoulder. Seeing that, how much ever Sītā requested with a shrieking heart, he didn't leave them. The urge to kill Khara aroused while listening to the words of despair from Mythili which he couldn't tolerate anymore. Lakṣmaṇa cut off Virādha's hand and Rāma his right leg. Suddenly Virādha says that he is a *Gandharva* (fairy) who had turned into a demon due to a curse to be freed once Rāma kills him in a battle and leaves to heaven. Later they leave to *Śarabhangāśrama*. When they reaches the *āśrama* sage Śarabhanga enters into the fire the moment he sees Rāma. Within seconds he turned into ash. After that they leave to *Sudīṣṇāśrama*. Reaching there they ask the sage to guide them to find a suitable place to live. He replies that *Sudīṣṇāśrama* is a holy place and that they could live there happily. There is plenty of fruits and nuts here. Many saints are doing *Tapasya* (meditation) here. Moreover animals wander around here in flocks without any fear.

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid, *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*, P. 559

But they continued their journey without staying longer. While returning from the hermit Sītā says to her husband with love and in a hearty manner: In order to attain a higher *Dharma* we need to have a well thought, intelligent decision. It is not possible to people who haven't been able to surpass the grief of lust. There are three kinds of worries due to lust. First is to lie, second is adultery and third being to kill without any hatred. I see that you have committed wrong by killing someone unkindly who hasn't caused any evil to you. You have committed to the sages living in *Dandakāranya* to protect them by destroying the demons in the battle. My worry is increasing even by seeing this arrow in your hands. I am not content to see you leave to *Dandakāranya*. The reason being that you might attack any forest dweller on your way with your arrows and Vālmīki had equated the act to the placing of dry wood near a fire which would enhance the glow, similarly the strength of a *kṣatriya* would definitely raise when he carries an arrow. I am telling you all this out of respect and love. So you might get to see many demons at *Dandakāranya* but you shouldn't kill them without any vengeance. I don't wish to kill anybody who haven't committed any sin. The *Dharma* of a *Kṣatriya* who has picked up his bow is to protect the troubled forest dwellers. So we will attain happiness and meaning to life by *Dharma*. The essence of life in this

world itself is *Dharma*. We excel in *Dharma* in our life with great efforts while forgoing the pleasures of the body or health. Please conduct the *Dharma* which is proper for this divine place by keeping your soul pure. Rāma says as a reply to her. I was approached for refuge by sages who don't deviate from *Dharma*. They are not cursing the demons as they don't wish to lose the endless gifts they have received by their long *Tapasya*. I agreed to help them because of their helpless condition for which they sought my refuge.

So I don't wish to keep it just as a word and instead sacrifice his own life and even that of Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa for this reason. Yet I am not ready to break my promise. I understand that you're saying all this to me is due to your endless love for me. He leaves to the forest by saying that he wouldn't kill anybody who hasn't sinned to him, with Sītā in the middle and Lakṣmaṇa at the back. Vālmīki has very beautifully portrayed that forest. The green leafy forest under the valley of trees, the rivers flowing gracefully, sand filled river banks where the swans and cranes move around freely, several varieties of aquatic animals, birds, lotus ponds, spotted deers, the rutting wild bulls running around, large wild boars, wild elephants who can uproot effortlessly the large trees in the forest etc. Watching all these they travel a long stretch by the sunset. They went to and later to *Agastyāśrama*, where



Sage Agastya gave away divine weapons like bow, clothes for the battle, arrows and sword. Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa left to Pañcavaṭi as if they are familiar with the forest. When they were taking bath in Godavari, a demoness sees him with Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa and felt as if it was Mahādeva Lord Rudra standing along with Pārvatidevi and Nandikeśwara. Later they went to the *Parṇasāla* and spent time telling stories to Lakṣmaṇa. Śūrpaṇakha enters suddenly to the place where they were all attentively telling and listening to stories. Śūrpaṇakha is Rāvaṇa's sister. Attracted by the beauty of Rāma she could not even stop looking at him but also not even move her eyelids. She was also asking many questions to Rāma.

What is the reason that you are here with your wife? Who are you with this divine radiance? As an answer to this question Rāma says that he is the son of King Daśaratha and Lakṣmaṇa is my brother. He always follows me like a shadow. This is my wife Sītā. I have come to this forest to uphold dharma as per the orders of my father and to keep my word to my mother. Who are you? Why are you travelling through this dense forest? What is the reason for you coming here? Hearing this she replies that she is a demoness named Śūrpaṇakha. I have the ability to change my form into anything I wish and I am travelling solo instilling fear in others as I am not afraid of anyone. Thus replies

Śūrpaṅakha. She says that Rāvaṇa, Vibhīṣaṇa, Kumbhakarna, Khara and Dūṣaṇa are my brothers. I don't give in to any of them. I reached here unexpectedly while exploring the forest. I wish to take you, the fortunate of the human beings, as my husband. I deserve and have plenty of power to do that.

What is the use of this Sītā to you? This woman, in whom all hideous qualities amalgamate, is ill natured and doesn't suit you. I am a better suit to be your wife. Rāma, I can eat this woman, Sītā, with a gangling stomach, along with Lakṣmaṇa right in front of you. Then we can hang around in the greeneries of the forests high up in the mountain ranges. After saying all this Śūrpaṅakha placed herself in between Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa. Listening to all this and by watching the expression on her face, Rāma smiles and said," Dear Bhadra, I am married. This sweet girl is right with me as my wife. Isn't it intolerable to be the husband of a wonderful beauty like you. While Lakṣmaṇa, the good natured and handsome one who doesn't have her wife with him is in need for a wife. My brother doesn't have a wife now. I can say without any doubt that Lakṣmaṇa is the most suitable one for this kind of beauty of yours as I find your enchanting figure unearthly. Vālmīki describes the conversation between Rāma Lakṣmaṇa and Śūrpaṅakha as the beloved woman, like the sunshine radiating on the mountains of

Mahāmeru, you please join Lakṣmaṇa .Hearing this Śūrpaṇakha approaches Lakṣmaṇa the very next moment. She says to Lakṣmaṇa that her beauty is at par with his and if he agrees to take her as his wife they could travel comfortably in the *Daṇḍakāraṇya* forest. Lakṣmaṇa replies to this with a humble smile by saying that he is just a servant. If you become my wife you will become a servant too. Such a condescending status doesn't suit you. You deserve in all ways to be the second wife of my brother, the epicenter of all good fortune. Moreover he would accept you in a position in order after abandoning this ugly woman with flat stomach.

Would any intelligent man forego a woman as wonderful as you for a woman, a human being? Śūrpaṇakha couldn't make out the humour in the words of Lakṣmaṇa. The demoness believed his words to be completely true. She yet again approached Rāma who was sitting with Sītā and said, you are not paying me any respect to me because this old ugly woman with dangling stomach is besides you. I can eat this woman right away in front of you. Then there won't be any competition between the wives. And I can also have fun with you. Here in *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* we can find Sītā being abused as ugly and ill-formed several times. Also we can see Śūrpaṇakha being played around without even being considered as she is a woman. Apart from that

during the arrival of Śūrpaṅakha, Rāma speaks in such a way that he has forgotten about the wife of Lakṣmaṇa who had accompanied him to the forest. As a result of all these actions Śūrpaṅakha's eyes turn red who then approaches Sītā, with the eyes of a female deer, with her big eyes all popped out like how a *Koḷḷimīn* (shooting star) affects the star Rohiṇi.

The ever powerful Rāma stops the demoness who approached like hell and warns Lakṣmaṇa to not have any timepass with spiteful natured ones like her. He asks Lakṣmaṇa to mutilate the large stomached horny woman. Hearing this Lakṣmaṇa looks at her outrageously as if to burn her to flames. He takes the sword from Rāma and chops off her nose and ear. She began to cry aloud in pain as if shaking the whole forest. Śūrpaṅakha withdrew and started running on her way back. Vālmīki describes it as: She began to run, shouting out various sounds, like a storm during the rainy season. She, with a dreadful figure, disappeared into the wild forest. Khara, Śūrpaṅakha's brother lives in the inhabited spaces of the forest. Śūrpaṅakha ran to that nasty one. She stood in front of him like a lightning fallen from the middle of the sky. She informs him about how Lakṣmaṇa mutilated her. Khara's anger inflamed when he sees blood oozing out of her sister's mutilated body. He asks Śūrpaṅakha to calm down and who did this to

her. Who mustered so much courage, to poke with his fingers, the highly poisonous *Kr̥ṣṇa* snake lying motionless? Which ignorant has prepared himself to adorn himself with *Kālapāśa* (the rope of *Kāla*, the God of death). Dear sister, which crazy person confronted you to drink the *Kalakūṭa* poison?

Who has the guts to disfigure you, the valiant, sensual and the killer? I will take apart the soul of any person from his body with my steady arrows, like a swan separates milk from water. I became like an orphaned whore due to those extremely handsome brothers and flat stomached woman, *Sītā*. You should kill that deceptive woman and the dastardly brothers. I want to drink the foaming blood out of them. A large and terrifying *Śūrpaṅakha* walking affront showing the way, fourteen extremely brawny and rutting *Arakkār* at the back, she showed them *Rāma*, *Lakṣmaṇa* and *Sītā* seated in the *Parṇasāla*. Seeing them *Rāma* asks *Lakṣmaṇa* to wait near *Sītā* for her help for some time. I will send the *Naktançarar* brought by the demoness right away to the hell. *Lakṣmaṇa* humbly obeyed the elder brother's orders. Oh nocturnal animals, we are the sons of King *Daśaratha*, *Rāma* and *Lakṣmaṇa*. We have come here with my wife, *Sītā*, and surviving on fruits and nuts we here perform *Tapasya* (meditation) without harming anybody. For what reason are you preparing to trouble us? If you think you can stand

facing me with bow and arrows then you can confront us without leaving from here. Do you wish to save your own life? If that is what you wish then please take your way back so that you can get back your life. The demons got agitated by this as if pouring ghee into the fire and said that they are servants of the demon king Khara. We are going to kill you right now who made our lord angry. Nobody can confront us in a battle. How would you human worms then be able to do that? Fourteen pheons came jarring at Rāma shining and sparkling high up on the sky. Rāma quickly struck fourteen earsplitting arrows towards them.

The arrows of Rāma, bright like the sunshine, sent sharply aiming at the enemy pierced through the chest of each one in the army. The disfigured demons swam in the blood oozing out of their chest. They fell down like uprooted large trees. Watching this Śūrpaṅakha again ran to Khara. She fell in front of him, crying inch by inch of pain, with the slightly dried up blood stains, like the gum of the dates. When the battle happened between them, Sītā was made to sit in a difficult yet guarded cave, wearing *Çāpabāna*. The later descriptions are of the killing of Khara's army, killing of Dūṣaṇa and his men, killing of Triśirasu, battle with Khara, chopping off Khara's weapon, killing of Khara, request for killing of Khara, meeting of Śūrpaṅakha and

Rāvaṇa etc. Śūrpaṇakha tried to insult Rāvaṇa sitting amidst his ministers. When he heard about his sister's harsh words an annoyed Rāvaṇa asks. Who is this Rāma? What is so brave about him? How does he look like? How ferocious is he? Why did he come to *Daṇḍakāraṇya* which is a difficult terrain for normal human beings? What are his weapons? How could he kill Khara, Dūṣaṇa and Triśirassu along with their large and powerful army? Who mutilated the stunningly beautiful you in this manner? His words stirred up her anger. She replies with burning rage.

The arrows of Rāma, the first and favorite son of King Daśaratha, with his long, blooming eyes, highly strong arms, an attractive handsome body, wearing *Maravuri* (cover of tree bark) and *Mānttol* (deerskin), sent from the rainbow like beautiful bow decorated with a golden string, are akin to the snake with the *Kālakūṭa* poison. How much ever we pay attention we could not see the struck arrows been picked up from the quiver, attached to the string or been pulled back. But one thing is very clear that the army of demons dropped down dead nonstop. Alone, Rāma, standing on plain ground, within approximately three hours, sent Khara, Dūṣaṇa and Triśirass along with 14000 armies of demons to the death's place, using his brutal arrows. It was his greatness that he left me without killing. He didn't

like to kill a woman as he is an enlightened soul. Here we can see Vālmīki purposefully making Rāma an ideal man. I have only seen another one like Rāma which is Lakṣmaṇa. The younger brother is the elder one's right hand and '*bahiṣcarārpaṇa*' (spirit moving outside). He later describes Sītā. Her face is like the full moon during the *Śarat* (early autumn) season, large eyes, long, curly, web of hair, a curvy body as if carved out, a complexion as of gold, a close waist, long, reddish nails, thus with all indications for an ideal woman, the daughter of King Janaka is the wife of Rāma.

There is nobody you can find who could compete with Jānaki, who is bent about her husband's wishes, among the *Devīs* (goddesses, fairies or *Yakṣi* (demigoddess. I who has a habit of travelling have never been fortunate enough to find such a beautiful womanhood. That good natured woman, with immense beauty if looked at from any angle would be the ideal wife for you. You will be the only who could be her most suitable husband if searched in all the three worlds. I felt like making her, an irresistible beauty and your wife. It was when I tried to bring her here that Lakṣmaṇa mutilated me. If you meet her once, the moonfaced woman who is everything of the essence of all beauties, you will be exhausted been hit by the necessary arrows of *Madana* (cupid). I felt that the most beautiful one in all the three worlds should



be your wife. If you want to bring her here in anyways you should set out for it soon. If you wish to give a little fondness towards the race of demons you will kill Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa using darts and influence the widow Sītā. Thus you should bring here the most precious gem among the women, Sītā. You should make her your wife. Rāvaṇa lost in thoughts for a solution and requested Mārīca for a help. Mārīca you should help me out. In *Daṇḍakāraṇya*, Daśaratha's son, the difficult, a Shylock, who has left his own *Dharma*, interested in *Adharma*, one who does only improper things, mutilated our sister, who doesn't even speak in opposition to anybody. In *Daṇḍakāraṇya* now nobody has to be afraid of any demon. If we don't retaliate for this it will be a dishonor for our race. So we have to kidnap Rāma's wife, Sītā.

### **Abduction of Sītā**

Rāvaṇa seeks help of Mārīca for kidnapping Sītā. In order to help me, you should go near *Ramāśrama* in disguise of an unprecedented deer which is golden in colour with silver specks in between. When Sītā sees the way it stands and walks, the magical animal, in the most fantastic manner, she will get curious. Then Sītā will say that she can play with the animal when she is alone. And Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa will set out to catch the animal.

“ततस्तयोरपाये तु शून्ये सीतां यथा सुखम् ।

निराबाधो हरिष्यामि राहुश्चन्द्रप्रभामिव ॥”<sup>48</sup>

At that time I will approach Sītā and abduct her like *Rāhu* swallow the moon. It is the metaphor Vālmīki has used to explain it. We will then be able to trouble Rāma, who is in deep despair for having separated from his wife. When Mārīça hears the words of Rāvaṇa, the god of demons, he got scared, his body trembled, throat muffled, he wet his dry lips. He stared at Rāvaṇa, petrified, not able to move his eyelids as if like a dead person. He replied to Rāvaṇa that Rāma is the embodiment of Dharma and that he is like Indra for the *Devās* (gods). The Absolute, the supreme soul, Rāma’s glory always protects. Nobody can abduct Sītā from Rāma. You don’t have the power to abduct Sītā, who lives by serving Rāma’s feet, in the middle of the forest. Rāma’s wife Sītā is dear to him than his own life and an eternal follower of him. The wife of Rāma, born to Ikṣvāku’s race, Sītā is like a burning flame of fire, the gem of all women, unable to be touched by anybody. Hey Rāvaṇa, it is better for you to recede from this pointless action. If Rāma gets to see you directly, he will mark the date of your end right away. Mārīça narrates *Mārīçavarṇana* for some time. He

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid, *Valmīki Rāmāyaṇa*, p.p.637

reminds Mārīça again and again that there is no act more sinful than abducting another man's wife. Moreover you have thousands of wives, please be satisfied with them. Thus, take care of your race. Isn't it your duty to take care of the pride, glory, the land, the home? If you are abducting Janaka's daughter Sītā, your relatives, friends along with your sons will see your end together by Rāma's arrows in which there is no doubt. But these honest and reasonable words of Mārīça did not only bring any change in the mind of Rāvaṇa but also said improper things using harsh words.

The words you didn't deserve to say which you uttered to me is a waste of time. Vālmīki's metaphor is that, what is the use of sowing seeds in the sands which has been lying barren without water. Mārīça, I have come here by deciding one thing for sure which is to kidnap Sītā with your help. Not even *Devās* or *Asurās* can make me change my resolution. You please turn into a golden deer with silver specks. Go near Rāma's *āśrama* and walk delicately so as to attract Sītā. It is sure that Sītā will be smitten if she sees such a magical animal. She will request to get hold of it for her. Rāma will follow you. When you reach far away from the *āśrama*, you should cry out aloud "Ha Sīte, Ha Lakṣmaṇa" with a helpless tone in Rāma's voice. Hearing this Lakṣmaṇa's heart would be restless and will exit the ashram as

instructed by Sītā. When both of them leave the āśram leaving Sītā alone, I will kidnap her like what Indra did to Śaṅḍīdevī. You just have to do this much for me. Later you can leave to any place as desired. Hey Mārīṇa, you who does fasting for good, in return for this good deed I will give you half of my kingdom. Leave fast, I will be coming to *Daṇḍakāraṇya* following you in the chariot.

We can reach the capital of Lanka happily by seizing Sītā using a small deceit without any battle. Mārīṇa if you don't obey my orders your life is going to end here. Even if it is a matter that is difficult for you to do, isn't it the duty of a subject to obey the orders of the King. If you try to resist in this matter I will end in misery. If you obey my orders you can live happily even more. If you rebel one thing is for sure, death. Now you can decide whatever you want by using your intelligence. Don't you have the faculty for that? Mārīṇa replied, Ok we can leave, in a deeply saddened tone. There is nobody who has returned alive after confronting Rāma. Rāvaṇa heart cooled down hearing Mārīṇa's words of agreement eventhough in a sick tone. Mārīṇa, now you have turned into the one I had imagined. Now please climb up the chariot. You can leave once you take Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa far away from the *āśrama* after making Sītā get enticed by you. The powerful me alone is enough to take Jānaki away. Rāma and Mārīṇa ascended

the aeroplane like chariot. Later they get to see *Rāmāśrama*, and after reaching there Mārīça quickly turns into a golden deer and started grazing in the *āśrama* surroundings. A deer so unique and surprising, with its horns as bright as the *Indranīla* stone, a beautiful body with black and white stripes. An ear like the sapphire stone, a face like a red lotus flower, a slightly high neck, the lips who win over the ‘*Ameyanīlaratna*’, a stomach which defeat even jasmine flowers, full moon and the diamond stone, a close waist, joints which fascinate minds, an upright tail which is as beautiful as the rainbow, a lubricious and guileless golden deer with silver spots was the kind of deer which Mārīça turned into. In the form of a unique and bright deer, which would attract anybody’s heart so as to entice Sītā, the magical deer grazed in the meadow where tender grass grew so close to each other.

The deer which was wandering around eating tender leaves from the trees, started playing in the plantain garden, flower garden, so as to be noticed by Sītā, being close to and far away from her, thereby stealing her eyes and heart. At times it will madly spree to a place far away and other times stay at a place jumping around. Sometimes it will join the herds of deer grazing at the entrance of the *āśrama*. It will stay there for a brief time and then withdraw. It started roaming around in several ways so as to be noticed by Sītā. The other deers began to sniff

the new charming deer. Suddenly it ran rapidly in all directions as if out of fear. At that moment Sītā, with lotus eyes, came out of the āśram to pluck flowers. The eyes of Sītā, who was plucking flowers like *Karṇikāra*, *Aśoka* and *Mākanda* and who doesn't deserve to live in the forest, fell on the golden deer. Sītā looked into the eyes of the golden deer, whose fur shines like silver, with her gentle affectionate eyes. Sītā's kind eyes kept falling again and again on the golden deer. While the illusory deer moved around, in a whimsical manner, illuminating that part of the forest.

When Sītā sees the deer, of the kind which she hadn't seen before, a faint smile sprout on her lips. Immense wonder burst out on her face. Sītā called Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa near her and showed the deer. When Lakṣmaṇa saw the deer, he has a doubt and tells to his elder brother that he feels that it is an illusion of the vicious demon, Mārīça. As he says that, Sītā stops him and pretends to be sad. She says "this golden deer is stealing my heart. You, the valorous one, should please bring it to me for play. Several animals graze in the surroundings of this sacred hermitage. But this one is of a finer kind than all of them. It lights up even the interior parts of this forest. It is shining like a full moon, pompous colour, a dazzling glory, a melodious sweet voice, wonderful body parts, thus this highly marvellous hub of beauty is

winning over my heart. It would be good if you can get hold of the animal alive. It would make the happy life I am leading now more wonderful. When we live in Ayodhya after ending the forest life, this animal will be a decorative ornament in the *Antapura* (zenana). This precious deer will create curiosity in the hearts of all the people there. Even if you don't get the deer alive even seeing the unusual skin of it gives me extreme happiness. If the deer had to be killed I wish to sit on the golden skin of it spread on the grass. It is the nature of women to desire any object which gives joy to the eyes.

This behaviour doesn't suit an ideal woman. The fact that Sītā desired that deer changes her life dramatically. It is this desire which puts her into trouble. Yet I have strong desires for this deer even though it's controllable. He reminds her that by entrusting on Lakṣmaṇa the safety of Sītā whatever we are trying to do are dependent on Sītā. Either I will catch the deer. Or I will kill it. You should wait here at the entrance of the *āśrama* keeping Sītā safe here. Only one arrow of mine is needed to kill the deer. Rāma leaves to catch the deer by asking Lakṣmaṇa to protect Sītā carefully along with the help of Jaṭāyu. Mārīça started trembling with fear after seeing Rāma. The deceitful demon quickly fled and hid somewhere. But Rāvaṇa's stare brought the demon out of his hiding. Rāma ran and approached the exquisite

deer. As the deer saw Rāma it ran so far away that his arrow won't reach it. Vālmīki describes that scene as: That magical deer continued to attract Rāma like a moon in the early autumn which disappears in the dark clouds and appears back very quickly.

“छिन्नाभैरिव संवीतं शारदं चन्द्रमण्डलं ।

मुहूर्तादेवददृशे मुहुर्दूरात् प्रकाशते ॥

दर्शनादर्शनेनैव सोपाकर्षत राघवम् ।

स दूरमाश्रमस्यास्य मारीचो मृगतां गतः॥ ”<sup>49</sup>

When Rāma tries to catch hold of the deer among the herds of wild deers, it ran and hid itself out of fear. The beauty and playfulness of the deer which appeared unprecedentedly, frightened Rāma. When Rāma sees the deer standing beyond the large trees, anger budded in his heart. Rāma decided to kill it pitilessly. He struck an arrow as powerful as the sun. The arrow which was sent with a belief to kill the deer split open the chest and body of the demon as if on a diamond mountain and the arrow hit demon was elevated to the height of a palm tree falling on the floor with a groan. At the moment of the end of his short life he thinks, how Sītādevi would send him here, how will Rāvaṇa take Sītā away from the empty hermitage? Suddenly Mārīça had a strategy. He cried

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid, *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*, p.655



out “Ha Sītā, Ha Lakṣmaṇa” in a voice so loud that it could be heard at the hermitage. Since the unique arrow of Rāma had struck at his Arcanum, life started separating from his body. Gradually, its original body started revealing as the deer reverted to its original form. When Rāma sees Mārīça’s huge body and a horrifying face with fangs, adorned by attractive jewellery like shoulder bracelets, golden necklaces etc, wriggling in blood, thought of Lakṣmaṇa’s words. When Sītā hears this wicked one’s plaintive voice “Ha Sītā, Ha Lakṣmaṇa” during its death, how sad would she be?

What would happen Lakṣmaṇa? Rāma, extremely sad and scared, quickly walks back to where he started off after killing another deer. Hearing the cry resembling her husband’s voice, Vaidehi is scared to the core and tells Lakṣmaṇa. Dear younger brother, please leave immediately. Search for your brother. My heart and my soul are restless. I heard the cry of a pitiful voice very clearly. Your brother would have got into some trouble in the middle of the vast forest, please go quickly and help him out.

“रक्षसां वशमापन्नं सिंहानामिव गोवृषं ।

न जगाम तथोक्तस्तु भ्रातुराजाय शासनम् ॥”<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid, *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*, p.657

He would be reaching out for help now. He would be struggling amidst the army of demons like a bull stuck in the mouth of a lion. Even after hearing all this Lakṣmaṇa didn't move a bit. Even then it was resounding in the ears. When Maithilī sees Lakṣmaṇa standing still she got infuriated. She continued irritatedly

“तमुवाचा ततस्तत्र क्षुभिता जनकात्मजा ।  
 सौमित्रे मित्ररूपेण भ्रातुस्त्वमसि शत्रुवत् ॥  
 यस्त्वमस्यामवस्थायां भ्रातरं नाभिपद्यसे ।  
 इच्छसि त्वं विनश्यन्तं रामं लक्ष्मण मत्कृते ॥  
 लोभात्तु मत्कृते नूनं नानुगच्छसि राघवम् ।  
 व्यसनं ते प्रियं मन्ये स्नेहो भ्रातरि नास्ति ते ॥  
 तेन तिष्ठसि विस्रबधं तमपश्यन् महाध्युतिम् ।  
 किं हा संशयमापन्ने तस्मिन्निह मया भवेत् ॥  
 कर्तव्यमिह तिष्ठन्त्या यत्प्रधानसत्वमागतः ।  
 एवं ब्रुवाणं वैदेहीं बाष्पशोकसमन्विताम् ॥”<sup>51</sup>

“Hey Lakṣmaṇa, you who pretends to be a relative by appearance and expression is in real a foe to your own elder brother. You don't feel to rescue your brother who is in danger? You are not

<sup>51</sup> Ibid, *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*, p.657

reaching upto him or helping him because of your desires towards me. You don't even have a drop of love in your heart for your brother.

You wish for sorrow and destruction of your brother. Isn't that the reason why you are no interested in helping that luminary? Shame on you! Because of whom you and I were able to come here, don't you feel like helping that noble being? When you are in doubt of your own life what the use of me to you is? When Lakṣmaṇa hears the words of Sītā, trembling like a scared doe, with tears in her eyes, he replies humbly. Do you think Rāma could be defeated by Pannagāsura or other gandharvās (fairies), or humans or the immotals? Even if they all come together it is not possible to revolt with brother who is as powerful as *Devendra*. It's impossible even to the mightiest of the mighty people to confront my elder brother. Not only that, it wouldn't be right to leave you alone here in this forest where demons wander around freely. Rāma will reach here in a few moments after killing that deer. It is not my brother's voice you just heard its some illusion. My brother left by entrusting the duty of protecting my elder sister in my hands. Is it right for me to go leaving you alone? I am not ready to do that. Sītā's rage increased hearing this kind of words of Lakṣmaṇa. This is the only moment of *Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa* whre Sītā gets angry. In this context Sītā fires Rāma in a very harsh manner.

“अब्रवीत् परुषं वाक्यंराम लक्ष्मणं सत्यवादिनम् ।

अनार्याकरुणारम्भा नृशंस कुलपांसन ॥

अहं तव प्रियं मन्ये रामस्य व्यसनं महत् ।

रामस्य व्यसनं दृष्ट्वा तेनैतानि प्रभाषसे ॥

नैव चित्रं सपत्नेषु पापं लक्ष्मण यत् भवेत् ।

त्वत् विधेषु नृशंसेषु नित्यं प्रच्छन्नचारिषु ॥

सुदृष्टत्वम् वने राममेकमेकोअनुगच्छसि ।

मम हेतोः प्रतीच्छन्नः प्रयुक्तो भरतेन वा ॥ <sup>52</sup>

“Hey scoundrel, unkind, evil to the race, brutal, you immensely like to bring deep sadness to Rāma. It is the reason why you, who knows the wishes of him, are evading giving such reasons. It is of no surprise that such a sinful interest originates from enemies like you. Following your elder brother who lives alone in a dense forest is only due to your hidden intent towards me. I even feel that Bharatan has sent you here for this reason. There is no other reason for you to follow him alone. Soumitre, your or Bharata’s wish is not going to happen. Will I ever desire contemptuous men like you when I have been able to take, the dark and handsome, lotus eyed, Rāma as my husband. You brute, there is no Sītā without Rāma. I will leave my body right here in front of you.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*, p.658

Such words of Sītā gave goosebumps to the ascetic Lakṣmaṇa and fed his pride. Folding his hands above his head he said humbly. Dear goddess, you are my divine spirit. Devotees like me cannot answer to this question. Desi Sītā, it is not surprising to hear unreasonable words from the mouth of a woman. We can see that most of the women are unaware of *Dharma* and *Adharma*, of childish nature, intensely behaving and with a taste to crack things up. Oh the daughter of Janaka Vaidehi, each word from you is burning my ears like an arrow to my ears. These forest dwellers are witnesses for the just words of mine and unjust words of you. Women are generally mean. You, who uttered such words to a real devotee like me, your happy life is about to end.

The harsh words towards Lakṣmaṇa would have emanated from Sītā's state of mind after having known about her husband's danger. Not only would that she have behaved in this manner due to her immense love for her husband. Here, Sītā's reprimanding behaviour has been portrayed as a nature of women and a decry on women thereby insulting widely. Lakṣmaṇa hints Sītā that her delightful life is coming to an end. You are doubting someone who doesn't err even slightly in obeying his Lord. I am going to my brother. May all good come to you. May the goddesses of the forest take care of you? I can see horrific bad omens. When I return here with my brother I am hoping to see you

here. After hearing the noble Lakṣmaṇa's words, Sītā continued her harsh words with tears flowing out of her eyes. Hey Lakṣmaṇa, if Rāma leaves me I will jump into the Godāvāri River or will hang myself on a rope. Or I will drink poison or fall into fire. I won't touch any other man other than Rāma even on his feet. Here Sītā's state of mind to commit suicide also makes her a normal woman. Sītā cries loudly speaking out abusive words of Rāma. Even though Lakṣmaṇa tried to console her with severe pain inside, Sītā didn't speak a word to her husband's brother. Lakṣmaṇa sets out to find Rāma.

At that time, Rāvāṇa, who was waiting in front of the *āśrama* for an opportunity, quickly approaches Sītā in disguise of a sage. Rāvāṇa, adorned in Jaṭa (dreadlocks), umbrella, Metiyaṭi (sabot), soft saffron clothes, Kamaṇḍalu (goglet), Yogadaṇḍu (bludgeon) on his left shoulder, moves to the *Parṇasāla* (hermitage) without Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa, like a dusk without Sun and Moon as Vālmīki describes.

“रहितां सूर्यचन्द्राभ्यां संध्यामिव महत्तमः।

तामपश्यत् ततो बालां राजपुत्रीं यशस्विनीम् ॥

रोहिणीं शशिना हीनां ग्रहवद् भृशदारुणः ।

तमुग्रं पापकर्माणं जनस्थानगताद्रुमाः॥”<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid, *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*, p.660

Rāvaṇa looked at Rāma's wife, Sītā, with great curiosity, like how the planet Mars touches the Rohiṇi star in the absence of the moon, and when Rāvaṇa looks at the gorgeous Sītā in such a manner, the trees in the '*Janasthāna*' stood still. Vāyu (wind), the omnipresent and ever moving, became motionless. The river Godāvāri which was flowing rapidly slowed down. That brute, in disguise of a sage, reached the hermitage of Sītā, the abode of all fortunes, like the planet Saturn of the star Çitra, finding an opportunity in the absence of Rāma. The treacherous Rāvaṇa, like a deep well covered by green grass, glanced at the gorgeous, with the face like a full moon Vaidehi, again and again. The crooked nocturnal approached even closer to Sītādevi who was in tears which was flowing out in streams after being separated from her husband. The king of demons, struck by cupid's arrows, sucking the honey off the beauty of Jānakidevi, the real Mahālakṣmi garbed in yellow silk and shining in the middle of the forest, and proclaiming *Vedamantra* in that deserted place, asked Devi with a pretentious humility. Who are you with the golden coloured complexion, wearing the garland of lotus flower petals, radiant like Lakṣmīdevi? Like the flow of river hits its banks with great strength, you are reaving my heart. When Sītā sees Rāvaṇa in the attire of an ascetic she performed the necessary rites for her guest. She gave her an honourable seat. I am

the daughter of Janaka from the Kingdom of Videha. I am also the wife of Rāma. I lived in the kingdom of Ayodhya for almost twelve years cherishing all the humanly pleasures of life. Then I was eighteen and Rāma twenty five. Sītā informed everything thinking that he was a saint. By then you take some rest Rāma and his brother will return after collecting enough food from the wild.

What is your *Gotra*? Is there any special reason for travelling alone in this dangerous forest? Please tell me the truth. The questions from the wife of Rāma pleased the King of demons. Dear Sītā, I am a demon named Rāvaṇa, a terror for all *Asurās*, *Devās*, *Nagās* and all other living things. From the day I saw the ever attractive you, I lost desires for all my wives and even started hating them. I used to bring precious beauties from all the kingdoms I have won over. Similarly I will consider you as the dominion of the troupe of women. Hey Sītā, we can stroll together in the famous kingdom of Lanka located in the middle of the great ocean. Sītā, you won't even remember this forest and the life you had here. You are the *Paṭṭamahīsi* (the principal wife) of me, the lord of all the worlds, from now onwards. There will be five thousand female servants to serve you who will be adorned with all kind of precious jewellery. Such a reply from Rāvaṇa annoyed Sītā. At that moment Sītā replies that her husband is immovable like a mighty



mountain, astonishingly chivalrous like Devendra, unflappable like the great ocean. I am the ardent follower of *Dharma* who always accompanies Rāma, the embodiment of wonder. I am the wife of Rāma, who always follows him, in whom all ideal qualities amalgamate, the one who provides shelter for everyone like a banyan tree whose branches have spread widely, truthful and is the greatest of the Lords.

I am the wife of Raghurāma, with long, curved arms and a wide chest, chivalrous like a lion and with a suitable emotional temperament. I am the companion of Rāma with the face like a full moon in the early autumn period, who has won over all the senses, the prince of *Raghuvamśa*. How will you, Rāvaṇa, the king of all nocturnal beings and who is just like a mere fox, have desires for me, the lioness who is the wife of the lion of all human beings? Will you be able to touch me, who is like the rays of the sun? Shame on you! That you are having your eyes on the wife of Rāma, the gem of *Raghuvamśa*. You are thinking on plucking the fangs from the mouth of a lion enraged by starvation and thirst. You are wishing to pick up the mighty mountain Mandara by your hands like a playfully. You are coveting to get Rāma's wife like a fool in a way that you can sit peacefully after drinking the Kālakūṭa poison, to wipe your eyes with a sharp pointed edged needle, to lick the most poignant sword. Your yearning is like

attempting to swim across the ocean with a large heavy stone tied onto your body. It is like thinking of freely juggling with sun and the moon in each hands. How could a demon like you crave for the wife of Rāma!

You could walk or dance on the barbed edge of a diamond like pheon, but what you are doing now is tougher than that. The difference between you and Rāma is like that of lion and a fox, the mighty ocean and the wild stream, sweetness of a nectar and the rice gruel. Even if you abduct me while Rāma, an equal to Devendra, is equipping himself with the arrows, you can't digest it like the ghee and a housefly. By then Janakīdevi, the purest one, spoke those words to Rāvaṇa with ease and courage, her gentle body trembled like a plantain tree hit by a storm. While Rāvaṇa, deaths alter name, when he saw Sītā shaking out of fear, began to describe himself even more about his race, power, fame, ability in actions etc in order to aggravate her condition. Rāvaṇa got angry by Sītādevi's words. It seemed like fire spewing out of his eyes. He screamed in a loud voice, "Hey Sītā, What did you think of me? Do understand that I am the son of Viśravassu, brother of Vaiśravaṇa, and highly august. All living things like *Devās*, demigods, devils, reptiles, birds etc. run and hide from me as if they have seen death in front of them. Dear Sītā, the embodiment of all good fortunes, I have been commanding the aeroplane named *Puṣpaka* with my

masculine power which travels in the sky where the mind says to. Oh the most beautiful of all three worlds, there is nobody who is able to look at me when I am in fury. The greatest of the *Devās* like Indra and party flee to all directions out of fear. Even the wind would turn humble while approaching me. The impetuous rays of the sun becomes softer while falling on me. Else it would turn rubious by a single glance of mine.

Even one leaf of the large trees would move where I am sitting or walking. The rapid rivers freeze. My kingdom of Lanka is in the middle of the ocean. That town, that resembles Amarāvati, sparkles with the golden walls decorated with the festoons made of turquoise stones. In the town of Lanka, which is full of elephants, horses, chariots and foot soldiers and where the drums resound at anytime, there are delightful gardens where trees and plants stand thick, and where flowers bloom and seeds ripen in all seasons. Hey Sītā, you can live happily there with me. In that way you won't even have time to remember about the human beings. You can enjoy living with me the luxuries of the humanly and divine. Daśaratha entrusted the kingdom with Bharata since he is not capable of anything. And he gave forest to Rāma. Rāma is a poor man living in the forest having ostracized from his kingdom thus destroying his mental peace. What happiness will you

get from a man like him? I am the emperor of all the demons from all the worlds. If you reject me you will regret like Ūrvaṣi who poked on the legs of Purūravasū. If your husband tries to confront me in a battle he doesn't even level my little finger. Sītā, it's only because several great merits have converged that a great fortune has led me here. You can also live completely unaware of any sorrows. Rāvaṇa's brags didn't please Sītā instead it seemed like fire fuming out of her large eyes.

The rough words coming from Sītā, the wife of Rāma standing in front of Rāvaṇa, alone and in the middle of the dangerous forest annoyed Rāvaṇa. Hey Rāvaṇa, the lord of three worlds, how could you be so rude when Vaiśravaṇa, who is worshipped by all the living things with utmost devotion, remains as your elder brother? You are no even evil minded, but enslaved by all senses, and the reason for the end of the entire race of demons since you are their ruler that I can tell you without any doubt. Even if you abduct śaḍidevi, the wife of Devendra, you might be able to stay alive. But if you try to kidnap the wife of Raghurāma, born to the Surya dynasty, it's the end of your life. Even if you have ingested the sacred nectar, if you touch the wife of Rāma, then he already reached his final moments of life. When Rāvaṇa hears the fearless words from the daughter of Janaka, he rubbed his hands

together strongly. His body started getting larger bit by bit. Hey Sītā, you are a real crazy one. It's a sad thing that even after explaining to you about my valorous acts you have not yet understood anything a bit. Oh beautiful one, I will lift the earth with my hands while standing up in the shiftless sky. I will empty by drinking the entire water from the ocean. If you are set for a battle then I will end the killer himself. Will split open the earth using the barbed heads of a series of arrows. Will immobilize the sun himself?

Dear Sītā, the one who is standing before you is an ideal husband who grants every wish of his wife and an embodiment of lust. Hey lunatic, look at me! Rāvaṇa's eyes fumed like the rays of the sun. A yellow colour spread around the red eyes. The lord of all demons, the brother of Kubera, quickly shed his sweet ascetic form. He revealed his death like body. The huge body with the complexion of the dark clouds, the eyes shining like ember, bright and colourful clothes - ten heads - twenty long, curved hands - jewellery embedded with precious stones thus with an attire which would shock any organism, said, staring at Sītādevi, the precious one of all women, "Hey gorgeous, join me if you wish to have an ideal man who has spread his glory across all the three worlds as your husband. I am such a magnificent husband that I can't explain it in mere words. Please live happily worshipping me. I won't

do anything against your wish. A normal human being- taking alms having lost his kingdom – short lived, that poor Rāma, please forego your love for him. And embrace that love to me. How can a man who wanders in the forest after having given up his kingdom and people listening to the words of a foolish woman be a loving person? Rāma, without any respectful scholarship, ignorant, wicked and weak, is loitering in a forest where tigers live in ambush. Rāvaṇa, evil minded and the God of the demons, spoke many tempting words blind of lust.

He closed on her like the planet Mercury moves towards the star Rohiṇi incited by the time. He grabbed Sītā's hair using his left hand and her haunch by his right hand. The body like huge mountains when bent, the fangs so sharp like the crescent moon, long curved out forearms, the ferocious ten headed man when seen by the goddesses of the forest they fled in all the four directions out of immense fear. An illusory and divine chariot reached there making a horrifying sound. The ten faced, evil speaking, demon ascended to sky, placing Sītā on his lap in that chariot with wheels golden in colour. Sītā, drowned in the ocean of sadness being stuck in the demon's clutches, began to wail, calling out for her husband who was far away from her. When the demon saw Sītā rolling in his hands without even the slightest of love for him, took off to the sky with extreme lust.

They started travelling through the sky with great speed. Sītā, like an intoxicated crazy woman, was crying out aloud in a pitiful voice “Hey brother Lakṣmaṇa, the infinitely strong prince, the one who continuously puts effort to please his brother, the greatest enemy Rāvaṇa is taking me along with him. Dear brother, aren’t you aware of this? Dear mightful one of *Raghuvamśa*, you who have sacrificed his life, comforts and good fortunes for abiding by dharma, I am being taken by a nocturnal who practices *Adharma*. Are you seeing this? You are the great conquerer. You have taken up the destruction of evil as your discipline, why aren’t you not punishing this great, ten faced sinner? The time should come for the fruits of the plants to turn ripe. Similarly the actions of the evil beings wouldn’t produce results so soon? Hey despicable demon, due to the bad times and erroneous mind, you who is carrying out such a terrible act may have a dreadful end with dangerous casualties by the hands of Rāma. If Kaikeyī comes to know about the abduction of the wife of righteous Rāma would, along with her close people, feel satisfied. The extremely scared Sītā continued by looking around with her lambent eyes. Oh the blooming Konna trees (*Cassia fistula*) of ‘*Janasthāna*’, you please quickly inform the hero of *Raghuvamśa* that Rāvaṇa has stolen Sītā. The daughter of Janaka requests by bowing down to the goddesses of the forest who

dwell in the large trees to inform her husband about Rāvaṇa taking her away. That immensely powerful one with elongated hands like *Parigham*, will retrieve me even if from the heaven or by winning over the Yama.

When Sītādevi looked down to the ground she saw Jaṭāyu, the king of birds, fast asleep on a large tree near the *Parṇaśāla* (hermitage). The embodiment of beauty in the grasp of Rāvaṇa spoke with quavering voice. Hey the god of birds, Jaṭāyu, please inform quickly about my abduction by Rāvaṇa to Rāma and the ferocious Saumitri. When Jaṭāyu, in deep sleep, hears the cry of help from Sītā, he wakes up to see Rāvaṇa carrying Sītā along the sky. The king of the birds, with fierce and pointed beak, and a body like the pinnacle of a mountain, spoke polite words while seated on top of the tree. Hey demon king Rāvaṇa, I am Jaṭāyu, the king of all birds, who strongly believes in truth and righteousness, and the enormously powerful! You are abducting Sītā, the wife of Rāma, who like Indra and Varuṇa takes care of the well-being of all worlds. Should a righteous king think about or touch another man's woman? Isn't it your duty especially to protect a queen? Touching another man's wife is a demeaning behaviour. Please quit from that. An intelligent man should never do what has been despised by all ideal beings. What informed people do is to take care



of other men's wives from danger like one's own wife. Hey, the son of Paulastya, an ideal king would never perform any righteous or lustful acts which haven't been stated in the sciences. A king is the *Dharma*, desire and prosperity in himself.

The *Dharma*, *Adharma*, good and bad grow through the ruler himself. Nobody can ever change the basic nature. How can a good advice impress upon the heart of a ruthless person. Have the powerful Rāma did anything wrong at your kingdom or at your mansion? Has he thought of anything which is not righteous? Why are you such a demeaning act to such a king? Rāma effortlessly killed the barbaric Khara along with his followers at Janastāna. Isn't your sister Śūrpaṅakha behind the whole thing? Hey Rāvaṇa, the god of all demons, what wrong has Rāma done there? Please don't take away the wife of the lord of all the three worlds, Rāma. Please let go of her. Please don't let the fumes of fire from the eyes of the Lord fall on you like that of *Indravajra* on *Vrtrāsura*. You have no clue that what you have wrapped up and placed on your lap is a highly poisonous snake. You are not seeing the *Kālapāśa* (The rope of death god, Kāla) tied onto your neck. You shouldn't carry loads which would weaken you. You should only eat in a way that it doesn't make you ill.

The intelligent beings wouldn't perform acts which would deplete wealth, glory and health. Hey Rāvaṇa, I am 60000 years old. I have been living on the path as advised by my father and forefather. I am old now. You are a young man adorned by bow, arrows, armor with a chariot. But one thing is for sure you won't be able to take Sītā away from in front of my eyes. Can we win over the voice of Veda by reason or argument? Hey Lord of Lanka, if you have atleast the slightest courage, please stop. Fight with me and win over. Khara fell on the earth after loosing his life. Similarly you will also once have a fall. Rāma has easily gained victory in the fierce battle with the demons of Rāvaṇa and the devils. Rāma adorned with the deerskin and living in the forest will kill you undoubtedly. What will an old man like myself do? Both the princes are far away from you. Hey brute, it is sure that you can't speak of the fear you have in those magnificent men. Else what is tempting you to hide this way? Your end is nearing. Hey king of demons, do you think you will be able to take the well disposed lady with you when I am alive? I will protect Rāma's wife. I am lucky to have to end my life for a matter that is of interest to Rāma and his father Daśaratha. There is nothing to think twice about it. Hey nocturnal being, cease you ten headed one! I will show you how competitive I am in fighting a battle even though I have grown old. You are about to

fall on the earth like a seed from its stalk. Jaṭāyu's words of righteousness enraged Rāvaṇa.

The ten pairs of eyes of Rāvaṇa adorned with the golden earrings turned red like the burning fire. The lord of demons ran towards the king of birds with extreme anger. They came close like two rainclouds hit by a storm. Like a battle between two huge mountains, the Mālyavān with large wings confronted with the demon and the fight was extremely wonderful. A highly powerful demon showered sharp badged arrows of different kinds back to back. While the strong king of birds injured the body of Rāvaṇa in several ways using his pointed and sharp nails. Daśagrīva's rage aggravated and picked up his ten arrows. Those arrows, so sharp like the mace of Kāla, were shot together towards the enemy. This wounded the bird again. But when he saw the face of the grieved stricken Sītā he flew towards Rāvaṇa and broke his bow as if finding a new courage. The King of Lanka took another bow and began to shoot arrows in huge amounts like a hunder or thousand at a time. Jaṭāyu covered by the arrows from all sides got stuck in it like in a cage. The mighty king of the bird kingdom hit hard with his huge wings. All the arrows broke and scattered around in all directions. Jaṭāyu who headed towards the chariot like a might mountain broke Daśagrīva's bow into pieces. He tore into the pieces

the shining, firecut armor of the demon king with the fierceness of its futter and the horses, with a speed like the wind, resembling the face of death and adorned with golden jewellery, turned lifeless.

The divine golden chariot, which flies according to one's wishes and decorated with precious stones, was destroyed to shreds. The demons accompanying Rāvaṇa with the whitish umbrella resembling a full moon, the Ālavaṭṭam symbolizing the emperor's power, Veṅcāmaram, fell down dead. The head of the charioteer had already stuck in Jaṭāyu's beak. Rāvaṇa, who fell to the ground with his bow broken, chariot crushed and horses dead, the charioteer and the followers deceased, quickly carried Sītā in his hands. The goddesses of the forest sung praise of the king of the birds after seeing the destroyed chariot of the brother of Vaiśravaṇa, the proud lord of the three worlds. The demons understood that the old bird Jaṭāyu is getting weaker. He flew up high up in the sky along with the daughter of fire, Sītā, with immense joy. When Jaṭāyu saw the highly powerful Rāvaṇa up in the sky with Sītā in his hands he quickly approached him. Hey Rāvaṇa Rāmā's arrow is like the *Vajrāyudha* of Indra. Your thoughtless, unintelligent attempt to abduct Sītā is for the destruction of the race of demons. What you drank along with your ministers, relatives and friends wasn't the purest water but the poison Kālakūda. Hey Rāvaṇa

your fate has become like those people who act without Innersence leading to their own destruction. You have drowned in the pit of ruin. You who have been stuck in the rope of death wouldn't find any help wherever you go. Your destiny after stepping into this hermitage has become like that of a fish who bit on the fishing bate. You have committed an unforgiveable '*Akṣāntavyamaya*' sin.

All those who are born to the *Raghuvamśa* are undefeatable. You shouldn't turn into a coward by committing a sin which will be despised by the whole world after being born to *Paulastya* into the most pure race. Will the most intrepid and valorous walk on those paths travelled by the greatest thieves? Rāvaṇa, if you have the slightest prowess stand prepared for a battle. Any act by the one who is in the grasp of death would be the reason for her own death. Rāvaṇa, what you are doing now is sinful and despicable even by the common people. Even the God who is powerful enough for creation, maintenance and destruction, wouldn't commit actions which are sinning. None of those words from Jaṭāyu's mouth went through Rāvaṇa's ears. When the king of all birds watched Rāvaṇa's hurry to reach Lanka along with Sītā, it jumped on top of the demon king and made scratches on his back with his badged nails. Rāvaṇa was like the mahout who has climbed over a rutting elephant. Sticking his totṭi like beak on Rāvaṇa, Jaṭāyu removed

all the hair from Rāvaṇa's head. It pressed its nails deep into him. When the bird started disturbing him continuously, Rāvaṇa with trembling lips moved Vaidehi to his left side. He started hitting the bird with his right hands. The bird rotating around Rāvaṇa bit on his left hands and cut them all off to the ground.

But as each hand was cut and dropped down new hands sprout like the snake dancing with its widespread poisonous hood. A highly enraged Rāvaṇa put Sītā on the ground and hit the bird with his hands and legs. That unparalleled war continued for a short while in an astonishing manner. Rāvaṇa with amber like eyes took out the great and famous *Çandrahāsa* from the scabbard. It cut off both the wings and legs of Jaṭāyu which was fighting endlessly for Rāma. Jaṭāyu fell on the ground as if dead been hit by the sword of Rāvaṇa. When Sītā saw blood oozing out of the bird's body Sītā quickly ran to it with immense sadness like a loving relative. The King of Lanka watched the bird which seemed like fire burned out, and wings like the dark rain clouds, and a pale chest. Sītā began to weep loudly embracing the lifeless Jaṭāyu after been attacked by Rāvaṇa.

## **Sītā's Sorrow Due to Jaṭāyu's death**

Rāvaṇa kept staring at the dead body of the bird near the hermitage of Rāma. Sītā said with deep pain, gently stroking her guardian, there are several symptoms to foresee the happiness and sorrow of human beings. Arent you hearing the bird's voice as an omen for a great danger? Arent the birds and animals rushing to inform about the danger which has happened to me? The reprobate Rāvaṇa has killed Jaṭāyu who had come to rescue me from my misfortune. Lord Rāmaçandra, who other than you can rescue us? Dear brother Lakṣmaṇa, please help me. Out of fear, Sītā's wails could melt even the stone hearted and audible to the people nearby.

When the chief of all the demons saw, in between the crushed waste and with dull jewellery, weeping like an orphan, he ran upto her. Rāvaṇa pulled back a crying Sītā holding onto each tree, shouting out aloud for leave. The killer like Rāvaṇa pulled on Sītā's hair stuck on the trees while Sītā was crying out the name of Rāma. But he didn't realize that was the rope of Kāla which he was tying upon his own neck. When the demon attacked Sītā, the world slightly shifted. All the living things were in darkness. The wind stopped blowing. The sun lost its shine. The great saints of *Daṇḍakāraṇya* were at the same time happy and sad. The race of evil minded demons are being uprooted.

The winner of all worlds, Rāvaṇa, is coincidentally to perish. Sītā, been worshipped by the entire world, was attacked by the king of demons. The King of Lanka rouse upto the sky with a wailing Sītā calling out “Oh the greatest lord Rāma! Rāma! Dear brother Lakṣmaṇa”. The daughter of King Janaka, with a complexion of gold and adorned with a yellowish, soft silk, gleamed like a lightning strike.

The golden yellowish silk waving in the wind brought radiance to the king of the nocturnal resembling a fire up in the mountain. Fragrant petals of red lotus fell off the long tresses of Sītā, the abode of fortune, on to Rāvaṇa’s body. Devi’s clothes with golden lace blazed in the sky like the tanned clouds by the golden rays of sun. Sītā, with a nose resembling the sesame flowers, seated near Rāvaṇa seemed pale and dull in the absence of Rāma like a lotus flower with a broken stem. The face of Sītā, seated on the lap of the son of Paulastya, in between the long black hair and the bluish eyebrows with the flawless forehead like the moon on *Pançami* and teeth gleaming white like the flowers of jasmine, shine like a full moon cracked open from the dark locks of hair. Even though tears poured out in streams from that pure face of hers, it brought joy to everyone like the moon similar to a fresh lotus flower shining in the sky on the lap of the king of demons. Yet the body gleaming in golden with the slightly trembling red lips, the ideal nose,



faded like the daytime moon in the absence of Rāma. Sītā stuck in the capture of the demon shivered out of fear. Sītā was seen with that huge, dark demon like a golden girdle decorated on a huge mountain which shined like a sapphire stone. Sītā, radiant like a golden lotus adorned with golden jewellery, brightened the demon king like a lightning in the dark rain clouds. Rāvaṇa carrying Sītā through the sky seemed like a rapidly flying shooting star.

The dropping of the flame like golden jewellery seems like the falling of the worn out stars. The *Çandrahāram* (a special golden necklace) fallen off the chest of Sītā shined like Ganga falling from the sky. The sound of the bird rising when the branches of a tree are moved in a gentle breeze seemed like the words “Don’t worry, don’t worry” uttered with shaking of head. The ponds filled with lotuses standing still due to the hidden fishes out of fear, seemed like the girlfriends in trance after endless crying. The enraged lions, jackals and birds ran after the shadow of Sītādevi. The River streams shed tears, the mountains lifted their hill like hands, sounded like in screams as they watched Rāvaṇa abducting Sītā. The sun turned pale. The goddesses of the forest started asking Dharma has been destroyed, where is the truth, where is kindness, has it been lost by all, isn’t there anymore place for goodness in this world etc in despair. The does shed tears with a wry

face looking upto the sky. The goddesses of the forest shuddered hearing Sītā weeping. Wailing like the sound of a flute, “Ha Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa”, Sītā led those benevolent eyes towards the Earth. A firm willed Sītā, eventhough the locks of her hair were let loose, her Pottu (red paste applied in the middle of forehead by women) had disappeared, and a disorderly figure, was taken off by the ten headed demon king.

Without being able to see Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa a scared Sītā’s face seemed worn out. Sītā trembled with utmost fear while rapidly flying in the sky. Sītā, with her reddened eyes after continuous shedding of tears and rage, said weeping to the dangerous demon. Hey lousy Rāvaṇa, you are the most treacherous one who sent my husband away from me using an illusory deer. Why aren’t you ashamed even after committing al these sinful acts? Proclaiming that you are chivalrous, pretend to be one and then kidnap a woman from a deserted place. Even a normal person wouldn’t do such a thing. Hey demon, if you aren’t a coward stop for a while, but then you won’t be able to return with your life. You won’t be saved even if one of those of the *Rājaputrās* (warriors) arrive here. It is better for you to let go of me for your own life and happiness. If you don’t leave me Rāma along with his brother would not only end you but your entire race. Hey nocturnal,

whatever desire is behind your abduction of me, it is pointless. My husband is akin to God. I doubt if I would be able to live any more without seeing you. Sad! Is there a life for the wife of Rāma in the hands of an enemy? Would anybody enslaved to death be able to think any good? There is no use speaking to you. The rope of death God has fallen on you. Where you got to see fear you find fearlessness. How long would someone live having drunk the most dangerous poison! Are you thinking of hiding from the great Lord Rāma? Where would you find happiness having worn the rope of death around you? Do you think my husband who killed Khara accompanied by his brother and a fourteen thousand army of demons in a blink of an eye, would spare you? Rāma mercilessly carried on with a shivering Sītā uttering harshly the above said words.

When Sītā was looking down to the earth finding nobody to help her from the capture of the demons, she saw two valorous monkeys seated on the top of a mountain. Quickly she took some of her jewellery, tied it up in a piece of cloth torn from her saree and dropped off amidst the monkeys in a belief that Rāma would somehow find them. A baffled Rāvaṇa wasn't aware of this. The monkeys watched a weeping Sītā without a blink of an eye while Rāvaṇa reached Lanka in a quick second carrying Sītā yelling for help. Rāvaṇa was greatly happy

while taking away the goddess of death of his own race. Rāvaṇa, as if carrying a highly poisonous snake in his lap, reached right above the ocean after quickly passing the forest, mountains and the river. It didn't take him much time to cross the large waterbody in which sharks and crocodiles moved around freely.

The tides in the ocean ceased to move when they watched Sītā being carried away in capture. Both snakes and fishes hid themselves. The *Sidhās* and *Cāraṇās* traveling in the sky happily, said for this sole reason that the day of Rāvaṇa's death has come. Rāvaṇa reached his home carrying Sītā who had transformed into the death of Rāvaṇa herself. Rāvaṇa reached a sad and drowsy Sītā to the zenana in his high walled and crowded town of Lanka like how Mayan does with illusionary deer. Rāvaṇa ordered the demonesses who stood around Sītā like dreadful devils, "nobody should see her, may it be a man or woman, without my permission. Elegant clothes and precious jewellery should be given in plenty. Whoever says any word, knowingly or unknowingly, displeasing Sītā, their life for sure will soon come to an end. Later when he thinks about the death of Khara, Dūṣaṇa and Triśirasu, Rāvaṇa's rage gets amplified than his confidence. My revenge for that Rāma has heightened. I am going to take revenge on my birth enemy from now on. I can't sleep until I kill Rāma with my

*Çaturanga* (four folded army) army. When I destroy Rāma I will be happy like a poor person finds a treasure. You should inform me about Rāma at the appropriate time by observing the movements of Rama from ‘Janasthāna’. He thus sent eight demons to ‘Janasthāna’ after giving proper instructions. The King of Lanka lived peacefully, out of ignorance and revengeful of Rāma, after having Sītā in his conquer. He quickly left to the zenana out of uncontrollable desires after having hit by endless arrows of the cupid. Rāvaṇa watched a Sītā, sitting amidst the demonesses, constantly shedding tears in agony having tripped under the effect of a tornado, like a sinking boat in the middle of the ocean, with immense lust imagining her as a doe stuck in the middle of dogs, alone and deserted. The emperor of demons showed Sītā around the palace resembling Amarāvati, forcefully. Not only had that he tried to change her mind with various offers.

### **Sītā’s Sufferings in Lanka**

Hanumān reaches Lanka through air route, in search of Sītā. He hides on top of a big tree and observes Sītā who is surrounded by asura-women. Sītā, who was a raving beauty appears to be gloomy with grief. The sight of the woebegone Sītā sighing often, falls on the eyes of Hanumān as the first crescent moon of the bright lunar fortnight. Vālmīki deals with the subject in the *Sundarakāṇḍa* where Hanumān

repents his action of burning Lanka. He burned Lanka when anger had over run him. Presenting the repenting mental tumult of Hanumān, Vālmīki enlightens the grave danger that lies hidden in anger. In the course of burning Lanka Sītā too had perished, Hanumān thought. The messenger who came to Lanka crossing over hundred yojanās through the sea, facing numerous dangers to rescue Sītā forgot that itself when he became a slave to anger. Here, after the tumultuous adventures of burning Lanka due to the force of fury, he repents and weeps over his reckless action. He considers himself as foremost among the sinners.

The infuriated action of Hanumān made him blind to his very mission making him to forego even the death of Sītā. The intensity of fury made the task of little effort impossible to accomplish. Really there remained a little effort impossible to accomplish. According to Hanumān he was deputed to trace out Sītā. The penitence of Hanumān is flowing endlessly. Unadorned and dressed in tattered yellow silk, Sītā appears to be a blazing flame amidst black smoke. Lowering her soiled face she is burned with grief and frayed pathetically. This delicate, tearful woman seems like the star Rohiṇi afflicted by Mars. Vālmīki depicts this Sītā as imperturbable like river Ganga during monsoon.

“रामस्य व्यवसायजा लक्ष्मणस्य च धीमतः|

नात्यर्थं क्षुभ्यते देवी गङ्गेव जलदागमे ||

तुल्यशीलवयोवृतां तुल्याभिजनलक्षणां |

राघावोर्हति वैदेहीं तं चेयमसितेक्षणा ||<sup>54</sup>

Sītā sits alone under the *śimsāpa* tree in Aśoka grove praying for the destruction of Rāvaṇa, to her beloved husband, who is unique among the kings of *Raghuvamśa*. Rāvaṇa comes to the grieving Sītā and speaks in his sweet words “Wise Sītā, think for a bit, youthful zeal and calibre are alight in you now, don’t waste it. Fleeing time like flowing water cannot be reversed.

“इदं ते चारु संजातं यौवनं ह्याति वर्तते |

यदतीतं पुनर्नेति स्रोतः स्रोतस्विनामिव ||”<sup>55</sup>

Be always ready to sport with me.” Rāvaṇa’s words make Sītā sad. Thus Sītā replies “I, who follow monogamy, won’t do such an inglorious and despicable act. I was born to a great ancestry and is married to a virtuous family.”

<sup>54</sup> Vālmīki, Śrīmad Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa, part-II, Gītāpress, Gorakhpur, India, 2011 p-67

<sup>55</sup> Ibid, Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa p-77

“अकार्यं न मया कार्यमेकपत् न्या विगर्हितम् ।

कुलं संप्राप्तया पुण्यं कुले महति जातया ॥”<sup>56</sup>

Sītā quavers and says.

“न मानुषी राक्षसस्य भार्या भवितुमर्हति ।

कामं खादत मां सर्वा न करिष्यामि वो वचः ॥”<sup>57</sup>

Sītā’s reddened face is streaked with tears and she wails lying on the mud floor. She says “You hags do whatever you like with me. But don’t think that I will go to Rāvaṇa. ”Unable to bear the cruelty of these demonesses Sītā decides to give up her life. But *Trijaṭa* makes Sītā happy with her words about the victory of Sītā’s husband. Later the insults of the hags persuade Sītā to commit suicide. At that time Sītā’s left eye throbs and she takes it as a sign of the union with her husband. This prompts her to live. She shines like the moon liberated from Rāhu. At that time Sītā sees the contour of a beautiful monkey on the branch of a tree. She is terrified and swoons. When she gains consciousness she stares at the profile of the monkey again. She felt that she is dreaming. Since dreaming about a monkey is inauspicious, she prays for the well-being of Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and Janaka. At that time

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid, Vālmīki *Rāmāyaṇa* p-79

<sup>57</sup> Ibid, Vālmīki *Rāmāyaṇa* p-91



Hanumān gets down from the branch of the *śimśapa* tree and crouches reverentially before Sītā and asks “who among the Ekādaśa Rudrās is your husband?” “Sītā is the wife of the son of King Daśaratha, who is a seer and the chief among the kings of this earth and who defeats his opponent army” replies Sītā.

“पृथिव्यां राजसिंहानां मुख्यस्य विदितात्मनः ।  
 स्नुषा दशरथस्याहं शत्रुसैन्यप्रणाशिनः ॥  
 दुहिता जनकस्याहं वैदेहस्य महात्मनः ।  
 सीतेति नाम्ना चोक्ताहं भार्या रामस्य धीमतः ॥”<sup>58</sup>

Sītā, who introduces herself as the spouse of the extremely clever Rāma, explains the reasons for their exile and the appropriations done by Rāvaṇa during the exile. She also reveals with great distress that Rāvaṇa has given her only two more months to live and when that time ends she has to part with her life. On hearing this Hanumān continues his soothing words “I am the convoy of Rāma who is here on the instructions of Rāma” Hanumān also conveys the well-being of Rāma-Lakṣmaṇa to her. Thus Sītā says “Now I believe in the saying that one can have all the pleasures of life if he is persistent about living, even if it

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<sup>58</sup> ibid , Vālmīki *Rāmāyaṇa* p-111

takes hundred years. So one should respect his life even if it offers him sorrows and misery”

“कल्याणि बत गाथेयं लौकिकी प्रतिभाति मा ।  
एति जीवन्तमानन्दो नरं वर्षशतातपि ॥  
तयो समागमे तस्मिन् प्रीतिरुत्पादिताद्भुता ।  
परस्परेण चालापंविश्वस्तौ तौ प्रचक्रतुः॥”<sup>59</sup>

Sītā, who comes to know about the well-being of Rāma-Lakṣmaṇa, from Hanumān, feels extremely happy. Hanumān also feels the same. Again Sītā doubts whether Hanumān is really the messenger of Rāma or Rāvaṇa himself in disguise. She says” if you intent to wound my mind, which is already fatigued by fasting and depressed by alienation, it won't be for your good. If you have really come here as the messenger of Rāma, all blessings be with you.” On hearing this Hanumān started to recount the virtues of Rāma. Then Sītā questions him about the physical attributes of Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa. Hanumān gives a detailed description of both of them. “Rāma will easily slay Rāvaṇa and come to you. Now let me return to Rāma” saying this Hanumān hands over a ring to Sītā. Sītā receives the ring with utmost reverence and love. She felt the approach of her husband. Thus Sītā praises Hanumān with great

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa, p-113

respect-“You are very efficient and wonderfully valiant. Nobody can equal you in your wiseness. You are brave enough to attack Lanka single-handedly. Are they trying to save me from here? I hope that my beloved will approach me soon.” Hanumān replies “if you wish you can sit on my shoulders and we can cross the ocean without any difficulties.” Hearing this every limb of Sītā’s body is filled with happiness and awe. “If I come with you now the infamy will prevail that Rāma, who is born in *Raghuvamśa* is inefficient for the carnage of his enemies. This will be a great humiliation for the family. I also wish that you should be rewarded greatly for your noble deeds. For this, Rāma should come here and slay Rāvaṇa along with his Society of demons and take me home. That is proper for the glory of Rāma. So you bring Rāma here soon.” At that time Hanumān asks Sītā for a sign to be presented before Rāma. Sītā gives her favourite *çūḍhāratna*, a jewel she wears in her hair lock, as a sign. “It is your responsibility to administer matters as suitable.

It all depends on your endeavour. Have mercy to save me from this misery. Rāma is very well familiar with this sign. The moment he, who was born in *Raghuvamśa*, hears my message from your mouth his heart will become gallant.” Hanumān, who understands the essence of Sītā’s words says “daughter of Janaka, I know you are the cause of

Rāma's victory” Thus Hanumān has accomplished the most important work for which he has come to Lanka. Later Hanumān reaches to Rāma, gives the *çūḍhāratna* that Sītā has send and explains everything from the beginning. On hearing this Rāma presses the *çūḍhāmaṇi* to his bosom and sighs heavily. He asks Hanumān to repeat Sītā's words once again. Her words were like holy water to a thirsty man. The misery that Rāma feels when he sees the gem, which Lakṣmaṇa has got from ambudhi or sea, without Sītā to wear it is intolerable. “I can't live even for a moment without Sītā. Take me also to the place where my beloved is. I can't pass even a minute without seeing her. How a faint heart like Sītā will survive among the cruel hags? Her beauty will be diminished by the demones like the full moon which is hidden by dark rain clouds. Rāma praises and hugs Hanumān, who has toiled so much for him, imparting all his love.

Rāma proceeds to free Sītā from Rāvaṇa. When Rāvaṇa comes to know, from his spies, about the procession of Rāma with a large monkey army stationed in Suvelādri, his mind is shaken. He orders Vidyujjihwa to terrify Sītā with the phantom of a bow and arrow with Rāma's head on it. Then Sītā will be slaved to him, thinks Rāvaṇa. Vidyujjihwa presents a head similar in appearance to Rāma before Sītā. Later Rāvaṇa tells Sītā not to doubt him anymore and to fulfill his

wishes. Sītā observes the attributes of the head presented before her and confirms that it is Rāma. She wails pathetically and blames the mother of Bharata. “Hey Kaikeyī be gratified now. Raghukulananda is no more. You termagant mother you have destroyed the family itself. What offence did a gentleman like Rāma do to you? You have send him into exile with me wearing tree barks” Thus Mythili falls on the soil like a broken plantain stem.

When she gains consciousness later she takes the head of her husband on her hands and kisses it wailing. “I am a widow now. No woman can bear the loss of her husband” She requests Rāvaṇa to kill her on the same spot where Rāma lies. When Rāvaṇa leaves Ashoka grove Rāma’s head disappears. A hag named Rāma comforts the wailing Sītā”All these are just an illusion created by Rāvaṇa. Dear Sītā, Rāma will slay Rāvaṇa like Devendra slayed *asurās*.”These words of Rāma relieves Sītā. Sītā asks Rāma to find out the plans of Rāvaṇa. Rāma reports the words of Mālyavān to Sītā. “It is better to parley with Rāma and surrender Sītā to him.” On hearing this Rāvaṇa’s eyes flares with anger. “Even if I am split into two I will not stoop before Rāma. This is my natural quality. Rāma has built a causeway in the sea accidently. What is so surprising about it? Why should it terrify you so much? I promise that Rāma will not return alive from Lanka. The

arrogance and vainglory of Daśagrīva shames Mālyavān and he bends his head without uttering a word. Rāma-Lakṣmaṇa see the Lanka city along with his brave vānara army with awe. Rāma sends Sugrīva to Rāvaṇa with a message “If you yield Sītā and beg my forgiveness I will spare you.” Many *rākṣasās* go to Rāvaṇa’s palace to report that Rāma and his army have surrounded Lanka. Raghuvara gives orders for the effacement of his enemies. In the first battle between *rākṣasās* and *vānarās*, the *rākṣasās* are defeated. Amgada encounters Indrajit. Sampāti, who is excellent in fight, confronts the indomitable *rākṣasa* Prajamgha. Hanumān, the son of Vāyudev, confronts Jambumāli. Vibhīṣaṇa confronts Mitraghna. Lakṣmaṇa confronts Virūpākṣa. Rāma encounters the wicked Agniketu, Raśmiketū, Suptaghna and Yajñakopa. Mainda and Naḷa encounter Vajramuṣṭi and Agniprabha.

The mountain like *vānarās* engage in a duel with *asurās* and the *asurās* are defeated and slayed. Most prominent among the demons are defeated within moments by Rāma. Son of Rāvaṇa showers his thunder-like sharp arrows at Rāma and his army and these arrows bind Rāma Lakṣmaṇa securely. Rāvaṇa, who came to know about this, orders the guards of Sītā to convey this news to Sītā and to take her to the battle field in his *Puṣpakavimāna* to see her dead husband and brother-in-law. Then Mythili will accept me without any hesitation”

thinks Rāvaṇa. When Sītā is taken to the battle field and is shown the life-less bodies of her husband and Soumitra, her sorrows become intolerable. She begins to wail thinking that they are really dead. Trijaṭa comes to comfort Sītā. At that time Vainateya or Garuḍa appears there. As he touched Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa all their injuries disappeared and they regained their previous strength gained a redoubled vigour, radiance, energy and brilliance. Rāma thanks Garuda for saving them from the menace that Indrajit created. Hearing the jubilation of *vānarās* Rāvaṇa sends *rākṣasās* to enquire. They see the Raghavarās, who are freed from the bonds of *Nagāstra*, standing there alive.

When the news reaches Rāvaṇa he hisses like an angry snake. Rāvaṇa calls Dhūmrākṣa and orders him to attack Rāma -Lakṣmaṇa with the *rākṣasa* army. Hanumān attacks Dhūmrākṣa and kills him with a smack of his hands. Vajradamṣṭra, Akampa and Prahasta are also killed in the battle. Rāvaṇa decides to take part in the war himself and enters the battle field. “I will burn down Rāma -Lakṣmaṇa like burning a forest down with flames” Like a huge fish that goes ahead by piercing the ocean, Rāvaṇa advances by destroying a large part of the monkey army. Sugrīva rips the top a mountain and hurls it at Rāvaṇa. Rāvaṇa explodes the mountain with a shower of his golden arrows. At once he shoots a serpent-like arrow at Sugrīva, which pierces him. Gavākṣa,

Gavaya, Sudamṣtra, Jyotirmukha, Rṣabha and Nabha each uproots a mountain and hurls it at Rāvaṇa. Rāvaṇa breaks those mountains into pieces. Rāvaṇa defeats the chief of the monkey army with a shower of his sharp arrows. Distressed vānarās go to Rāma for help. Lakṣmaṇa takes up the mission of fighting Rāvaṇa and he enters the battle field to confront Rāvaṇa. Rāvaṇa aims a shower of seven arrows at Lakṣmaṇa. But Lakṣmaṇa shatters these arrows easily. An eraged Rāvaṇa shoots arrows like arddhaçandra, kṣurakarṇi and bhallam at Lakṣmaṇa and Lakṣmaṇa destroys it valiantly.

This surprises Rāvaṇa. In return Lakṣmaṇa sends fiery arrows at the demon who shreds it into pieces. Finally Rāvaṇa employs a weapon presented to him by Brahma, which is like the destructive fire. It hits Lakṣmaṇa on his forehead and his body begins to shiver. Then Lakṣmaṇa breaks the bow of Mahendrāri. Rāvaṇa throws the lance, presented to him by Brahma, at Lakṣmaṇa. Though he tries to block it with his arrows, it pierces into his breast. Hanuman, who reached there at that time, attacks Rāvaṇa with a severe blow which makes him shiver and faint. Rāma himself enter the battle field and begins to fight Rāvaṇa sitting on the shoulder of Hanumān. “Where ever you go you won't be spared for you have caused me trouble” These words, to Rāvaṇa, are like adding fuel to fire. Enraged Rāvaṇa shoots a shower



of fierce arrows at Rāma. Rāma destructs Rāvaṇa's chariot, flag staff, horses, bows, chariot-driver, swords and arrows. Rāma aims the arrow presented to him by Indra at the mountain of Sumeru, at Rāvaṇa and it pierces into his bosom. Kumbakarna is also killed in the battle. Finally Rāma aims the Brahmāstra at Rāvaṇa's chest, which pierces into his breast and kills him.

Rāma asks Vibhīṣaṇa to bring Sītā there at once. When Sītā arrives Rāma speaks” Sītā, I have slayed all my enemies in this battle field to retrieve you. I have done what a gentleman should do. I have absolved the disgrace that befell on me. I have gotten rid of my enemies and disgrace. My endeavour is fulfilled now. Today the world has seen my gallantry.”When Rāma looks at Sītā his eyes flares with anger. In the presence of the monkeys and rākṣasās, Rāma continues his harsh words” I have killed Rāvaṇa and avenged him for the humiliation that he caused me. Don't think that I have done all these for you. I have done this to safeguard justice and to avoid any notoriety that may befall on my family. I doubt your chastity. The very sight of you is intolerable for me like the sight of a lamp for one whose eyes are sore. So Jānaki I give you permission to go wherever you like. I don't need you anymore. No one born in a good family accepts a woman who lived in another man's abode for a long time. How can I who is concerned about

the honour of my family take you back? I have decided to retrieve you for a reason and that reason is justified now. I have no desire for you in my mind. You are free to go anywhere. I am determined about this. If you wish you could serve Bharata, Lakṣmaṇa, Śatrughna or Vibhīṣaṇa or whoever you like. I don't believe that Rāvaṇa kept himself away from such a beautiful woman like you, this long." Sītā, who craves the sweet and kind words of her beloved husband, feels insulted. His words pierce into her heart like thorns." What is the cause of such harsh words? You are behaving like a low-born to me. I promise on my chastity. Don't doubt me as you doubt an uncouth woman. Please give up your misgivings.

The *rākṣasa* king touched me just because of my weakness and not with my consent and desire. That is god's will. But my mind is completely under my control and I surrender it to you unchanged. My physical weakness caused the subjection of my body. If you cannot understand me, despite our growing together, then consider me dead long before. You have sent Hanuman to meet me. Why didn't you abandon me then even after knowing that I am living in the abode of another man? If I have known your mind then, I would have sacrificed my life then and there. Then all these efforts sacrificing many lives would have spared. I, who was born as an as exual from Earth, was

grown as the daughter of King Janaka. You, who has the knowledge of the entire universe and its beings fails to understand my persistent character.” Unable to bear anymore insults Sītā asks Lakṣmaṇa to prepare fire for her.”This is the right solution for all my sorrows. I have to absolve myself from the false allegations levelled at me. My husband considers me as a woman of no character and abandoned me in front of this society. I would immolate myself to prove myself pure.”Lakṣmaṇa prepares a huge fire. Sītā approaches the fire and salutes all gods and goddess. Says Sītā” If my mind is not aloof from Śrī Rāma, let the fire god, who is a witness to everything in the world, save me from this blazing fire. My beloved doubts me, who has been chaste and faithful to him. If his doubts are unreal let agnideva save me. I have never revoked Rāma with my words, deeds or mind.

If so let me be saved. Hey sun, air, moon, night, day, dusk, directions and mother Earth if you believe me to be chaste save me.”Thus Sītā circles the fire and jumps into it witnessed by all the people there. Monkeys, rakṣasās, gods, demigods and sages all cry in pain. At that time Kubera, Antaka, Devendra, Varuṇa, Mahādeva and Brahma all appears before Rāma. They question him” Why didn’t you stop Sītā’s immolation? Are you uncouth enough to abandon Sītā like this?” Rāma answers. “I am Rāma, the son of King Daśaratha. I am an

ordinary human being. Whom am I? To whom do I belong? Why did you come here? Explain to me.” As Śrīrāma tatva is being explained Agnidev appears carrying an unscathed Sītā, shining with her piety and fame. *Pāvaka* tells Rāma that Sītā has never rejected Rāma with her thoughts, words or deeds. And that he wants Rāma to accept her. Rāma replies he knows that Sītā is chaste but the world will consider him stupid who accepted a woman who stayed in someone else’s place without any test, if he accepts her as it is. Sītā is pious and glorious enough to be saved from all trials. He then accepts Sītā and they are happily reunited.

### **The Abandonment of Sītā**

After killing Rāvaṇa, Rāma brought Sītā back to Ayodhya and started living there happily for a while when he comes to know that Sītā is pregnant. He asks Sītā, who was seated like a godly woman in the Aśoka garden, “Dear beautiful one, what do you wish for right now? What should I do for pleasing you?” Sītā smiles and tells that she wants to see the pure hermitages. She says that she also wishes to stay for a few days at the presence of and serve the holy feet of those great radiant saints who are involved in intense *Tapasya* (meditation), eating raw fruits and nuts on the banks of the holy river stream Ganga. This is my only wish to live atleast for a day in the meditating field of the

great saints with concentrating minds, eating the raw fruits and nuts. She says that she finds more happiness in the silence of the woods and the words and acts of the sages than the material pleasures. Hereby Sītā reveals that the material pleasures won't provide a permanent happiness. Rāma agrees after a brief thought. Rāma left to the large court in the middle of the palace the great lord seated on the golden throne were surrounded by several wise people laughing out aloud at various stories with their smiling faces. At that moment Rāma enquires about the news in the villages and town. What are the village and town people taking about me? What are their opinions on Sītā, Bharata Lakṣmaṇa and Śatrughna? What are the people taking about Kaikeyī? Natural talks about the king is habitual in the village and town. Bhadra replies to Rāma there is good news from the town.

The story of the killing of the ten headed demon is being described in praise. Its resounding in each house. Oh *Puruṣottama* (the ideal man), how happily are the people repeatedly singing about your valorous past! Rāma says slightly discontent by Bhadra's reply. Bhadra, please tell me without hiding anything. Be it good or bad the words of the people should be informed word to word. I will do more good and put an end to *Adharma*. Please tell openly what's been taken upon in the village and town without any fear or ill feeling. Hearing

such confident words from Rāma, Badra, bowing down with utmost humility, says,” Please listen to the good and bad been taked by the people. I will make clear what I have heard from the junctions, streets, forests and the gardens. What you have done is a wonderful and highly difficult task which even the gods and demons wouldn’t undertake. You approached the mighty Rāvaṇa, an impossible one, and killed him with the help of armies of sages and monkeys and retrieved Sītā. You brought Sītā back home without any jealousy. But how can you find happiness from Videhi? Didnt Rāvaṇa take her placing on his own lap? Moreover wasn’t she made to live like a slave in the *Aśokavani*? Why dont the ever benevolent Rāma hate Sītā? We will have to accept our wives and live with her even if she lives under another man’s custody for a longer time.

The people have to practice like what the King practices. A few people are talking so in the village and town. Bhadra’s words made Rāma sad. He asks his close friends if it’s right. When he hears from them all, in the same manner, that what he just heard is true, soon sent them off. May all good come to you. Please don’t feel anything bad. Please listen about what the people are talking about Sītā. The people in the palace and the kingdom are talking ill. They have hatred towards me because of that. It’s breaking all my senses. I am born to the great

Ikṣvāku dynasty. Sītā has been born to the respectable Janaka's race. Hey gently Lakṣmaṇa, don't you know about how the evil Rāvaṇa stole Sītā from a deserted *Daṇḍakāraṇya* and how he was defeated in the battle. Then I had this thought about Sītā that how would I take her back to Ayodhya after having lived under the capture of Rāvaṇa. But Sītā's test of fire removed all my suspicions. The fire god appeared in front of you and other gods. They said that Sītā is free of sins. The ubiquitous wind god also repeated for the same. Didn't you see Devendra handing her over to me saying that she is good, in the presence of the holy people like the moon, Sun, great gods, demigods and saints? More than that I am sure Sītā is a committed wife. This is the reason why I brought her to Ayodhya. But such an infamy is worrying me.

The villagers and town dwellers are saying enough badly about me. If songs of ignominy have been sung of a person then she or he is living in decadence. Even the living ones disgrace the one who has been dishonoured. They respect fame. All great people always strive for fame. In order to destroy the bad name I am ready to sacrifice my own life and even you all. Why not then the daughter of the king Janaka. Dear princes, I am drowned in the ocean of agony. I can't see any unhappiness worse than this. Rāma continued firmly with confidence and valor in his eyes. Lakṣmaṇa, please ask Sumantra to

bring the chariot tomorrow morning. Please take Sītā in it and leave her outside the kingdom of Ayodhya. There is the holy hermitage of Vālmīki on the banks of *Tamasa* River across River Ganga. You should leave Sītā in that deserted place and return quickly. May all good come to you. Please obey every word of mine in truth. Please don't utter a word about Sītā against this. Please don't think about anything else. Please travel and return safe. If in anyway you cease to obey me I will be displeased by you. You should promise me touching my feet with life as witness, that you will never utter any words of reconciliation about Sītā in any situation.

Anybody who talks against me should be considered as my lifelong enemies who have stopped my wishes. If you are all under me then please obey and respect me. Please take Sītā away from this palace. Please do whatever I said as it is. Today she had requested about her wish to see the hermitages on the banks of Ganga which could also be granted in this way. Thus with a face flowing with tears Rāma left to the zenana after an elephant like sigh from among the company of his brothers. That long night came to an end. The sun rose from the hills pale and dull. Lakṣmaṇa, with a pale face due to the flames of burning sadness, called for Sumantra to bring the chariot urgently. It had to be spread with the royal mattress as suitable for Sītā. I have been ordered



to leave Sītā at the divine hermitages of the holiest of the saints. Please bring the chariot quickly. Sumantrar obeyed his order and brought the chariot. He said, “I have brought the chariot as per your order”. Please perform your duty. Hearing this Lakṣmaṇa reaches the zenana, bows in front of Sītā and informs her that her wish to Rāma has been granted. I will take Sītā to the holy hermitages on the banks of Bhagīrati as per the approval of the king. Our king has entrusted that task with me. These words of Lakṣmaṇa made Sītā immensely happy. She decides to leave. Sītā prepared for the journey with her invaluable jewellery and superior quality silk attire. Prince, we could give these jewellery and ornaments to the wives of the sages! Saumitri agreed to Devi’s opinion. He helped Vaidehi onto the chariot. The horses ran like the wind. Sītā said to Lakṣmaṇa, who has received all blessings of Mahālakṣmi.

“अशुभानि बहून्येव पश्यामि रघुनन्दना ।  
 नयनं मे स्फुरत्यध्य गात्रोत्कम्पश्च जायते ॥  
 हृदयं चैव सौमित्रे अस्वस्थमिव लक्षये ।  
 औत्सुक्यं परमं चापि अधृतिश्च परा मम”॥<sup>60</sup>

“Prince Lakṣmaṇa, I see many bad omen. Hey, the son of Raghu dynasty, my right eye is fluttering, and body trembling. Mind is in total

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<sup>60</sup> *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇam*, Part II p.826

imbalance. The entire world seem empty. Dear prince, the affectionate one of his brother, has anything ill happened to your brother? Has any of my mothers-in-law got ill? Oh the valorous brother, aren't all people from the town and village doing well? She bowed down and prayed to the gods of the forest for everything to end well.

The prince bowed down and prayed deep inside. Controlling all his sadness within he just said that everything is fine and kept quiet. They stayed at a hermitage on the banks of Gomati for that day. Early morning he asked Sumantrar to prepare the chariot and according to the 46<sup>th</sup> *sarga* of *Uttarakāṇḍa* "I will take Ganga water on my head like Mahādeva, the dweller of Kailāsa." Devi Sītā, brother heard from the court that people are talking ill of you. When he heard such an unexpected disgrace from the court a deeply hurt king gave me orders and left to his mansion. I couldn't open my mouth to utter such unforgivable words from the heart of the brother. I couldn't say that to you. That is the reason why I came here without informing you holding onto all the thoughts to myself. Brother ordered to renounce my sister-in-law, who hasn't committed any sin, in fear of a scandal by the people. Devi, please don't think otherwise. The king's order is to abandon a pregnant Devi in the premises of the hermitage. What we see here is the hermitage of Brahmarṣi near the banks of Ganga. This

is the most pristine, attractive and blessed place. Devi, you the abode of good fortune, please don't be sad. This is the hermitage of Vālmīki, the dearest friend of my father, King Daśaratha, the wittiest of the sages, the greatest saint and eternally glorious one. Devi, please stay blessed submitting to the the holy feet of the great soul and with a focused mind, not deviating the slightest bit from the path of commitment to your husband and chanting praises of brother Rāma. If you do accordingly all good would happen to you. After hearing these kind of harsh words from Lakṣmaṇa, Sītā fell on to the earth unconscious like a cut down plantain.

After sometime with swollen eyes due to crying and a pitiful voice, she said to her brother. Dear brother Lakṣmaṇa, the God has created me for experiencing solely unhappiness. The society always sees such kind of sadness. What sin would I have committed in my past life? To whom would I have caused separation from his wife? Why did you, who is the lord of all people, renounce the good mannered and husband loving, me? In the hermitages of *Daṇḍakāraṇya* I lived worshipping solely the holy feet of *Deva* Rāma. Then unhappiness wasn't an issue for me. I was careless about that pain, dear Lakṣmaṇa. Dear and sweet brother, how will I live in these hermitages al aone? To whom will I tell about my agony drowned deep in the ocean of despair?

What wrong did I do? What will I answer to the question by the great sage why I have been deserted by the great soul Rāma? Now I can't even leave my life in this holy water of river Ganga. Moreover wouldn't that end the entire of my husband? Please obey the orders of the king. Eventhough I am in deep agony you should leave me here and return to the orders of Rāma You should stay for sure and please listen to my words. Please send my regards to all mothers with folded hands high up above the head. Please say my words to the king, the abode of *Dharma*.

“जानासि च यथा शुद्धा सीता तत्त्वेन राघवा ।  
 भक्त्या च परया युक्ता हिता च तव नित्यश ॥  
 अहं त्यक्ता च ते वीर अयशोभीरुणा जने ।  
 यच्च ते वचनीयं स्यादपवादः समुत्थितः ॥  
 मया च परिहर्तव्यं त्वं हि मे परमा गतिः ।  
 व्यक्तव्यश्चैव नृपतिधर्मेण सुसमाहितः ॥”<sup>61</sup>

“You know very well the truth of Sītā's purity. She, who serves you with great devotion, thinks only of your wishes. You, the brave hearted, renounced me for fear of disgrace? It is my duty to keep up your eternal glory without any blemish. In all senses you are my only refuge. Tell

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid, *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*, p.p-830

the righteous King to take care of his people like his own brothers. What will exist in a ruler, is what his people receive from a righteous life. That should be your highest *Dharma*. With that you will achieve glory at every step. I am not worried about my own survival as I was when I heard about the scandal by the people.

One is eternal and the other is short lived. For an ideal woman, her husband but nobody else is her god and relative. He is also her teacher. Especially everything is to be done in favour of her husband even with her own life. You should inform my brief words to your king. Please leave quickly after giving a good glance at a completely pregnant me. The words from the daughter of King Janaka agitated Lakṣmaṇa. He rolled his head on bare ground at the holy feet of hers. He lied there without being able to utter a word. He walked around Sītā three times holding onto his pain close to his heart. Not being able to control anymore he broke into tears and asked thoughtfully “Devi, the abode of all powers what is the reason for such words from you? I haven’t seen your body but only your feet. How can I look at you, who has been renounced by my brother, in the middle of this forest?” After touching the feet of Sītā, born out of fire, he quickly boarded the boat and ordered to move. The prince, burning with the fire of pain, climbed onto the chariot like an unconscious person after reaching the northern

banks. The hoses started running. Nothing was clear in Lakṣmaṇa's eyes who was continuously turning towards Sītā wandering on the southern banks. Sītādevī stood in shock due to immense sadness who was kindly watching Lakṣmaṇa and his chariot moving away from her.

### **Sītā in Vālmīki's Hermitage**

Some young sages who were searching for fruits and nuts found Sītā weeping near the hermitage after being abandoned by Lakṣmaṇa. They ran and informed Vālmīki about the beautiful woman in despair. Which great souls's wife is this beautiful and rare and resemble the real Mahālakṣmi, is weeping with immense sadness. The glow on the face had gone pale due to the tears. The gem of a woman was found on the banks of the river like a goddess who has fallen down from heaven weeping in a pitiful manner. Standing all alone, deserted we feel that she doesn't deserve to cry. She doesn't seem like a woman. Please accept her, who has reached the premises of this hermitage in refuge to the Lord, as our guest with deserving honours. Yourself, please provide shelter to the pristine and precious one, who is looking out for protection. The Brahmarṣi closed his eyes and thought for a while. The saint who is aware of everything through his inner eye quickly started waking towards Sītā picking up the offerings. As he saw Sītā he said the following, *Uttarakāṇḍa* page 889, 49<sup>th</sup> *sarga* – Dear Sītā, the ideal

and perfect wife, the beloved wife of Rāma, the daughter in law of King Daśaratha, the daughter of *Rājarṣi* Janaka, welcome here, everything is clear in my heart even while meditating. I have understood the arrival and its reason through my inner eye. I heard about the truth behind your misfortune. I am able to know even the slightest matter of the three worlds through my meditation.

I have also understood that you are innocent through my divine sight. Hey Vaidehi, you are now in my presence, believe me completely. There are many disciples who live here in meditation. These saintly women will take care of you with utmost affection like their own daughter. Be comfortable like at your own home. Please accept our offerings with true belief. Don't worry at all. When Vālmīki said such surprising and horripilating words, Sītā fell on his feet after replying that let it all be according to what you say. The wives of the sages ran to them seeing Vālmīki bringing Sītā along with him. Vālmīki said to them that Sītā has reached. She is the wife of the highly wise one. She is the daughter in law of King Daśaratha and the daughter of King Janaka. Her husband renounced this innocuous woman. She is always to be protected by me. You all should look after her with innocent love. With dignity of a queen of the king of all kings and the seriousness of my word, Sītā is highly respectable to you. Vālmīki, who

had never repeated any matter until then, returned to his *āśrama* along with his disciples after repeatedly assuring respect and care for Janakīdevi. Sītādevi delivered Lava and Kuśa at the *āśrama*. The young sages went to Vālmīki and informed him about Sītā's delivery and the sage immediately sets out to see the babies. Vālmīki kept watching the sons, like the young moon, bringing coolness to the hearts. The offerings for the wellbeing of the child was immediately undertaken. The divine hands was holding Lava and Kuśa (the tip and tail of *Darbha* grass). I am touching and stroking the eldest of the sons using the *Kuśa* with incantatory spell. And stroking the younger one with the Lava.

The older sagely women should stroke the same and bathe them. The prince with whom I stroked with Lava will be named Lava. These twin born sons will be famous all over the world by the names Lava and Kuśa given by me. Thus these sons were taught all the knowledge and skills like *vedas*, sciences, application of sciences etc. Vālmīki also taught them to recite the *Rāmāyaṇa* like a song. That is when Vālmīki comes to know of the *Aśwamedha* being conducted by Rāma. Immediately Vālmīki set out to the 'Naimiṣa' forest where the *Yāga* was happening along with his disciples in an unprecedented manner and watched the wonderful *yāga* which could even he would find



spectacular. The radiant entrance to Vālmīki *āśrama* was soon filled with *Parṇasāla* (huts made of leaves) and vehicles full of fruits and nuts. The King Rāma worshipped Vālmīki in the appropriate manner and fell down on his feet. Vālmīki's heart was full and called upon the beautiful sons asking them to recite the *Rāmāyaṇa* poetry carefully in a graceful manner. Sing the songs by freely traversing through the holy hermitages of saints, abodes of Brahma, charioting streets, the royal paths, the holy temples, entrance of Rāma's palace, the place where the *Yāga* happens etc especially in front of the knowledged persons, the emperor Rāma if he calls upon wishing to listen to the same. You should begin the song only after the great sages arrive. Each day you have to recite 20 *sargas* in a heartfelt voice.

I created this poetry long back with an intent to include several philosophical gems. But you should be careful about one thing. You should never be greedy for wealth. Why do we need wealth who live on fruits and nuts in he *āśrama*? If Rāma asks you about your father just tell him that you are the disciples of Vālmīki. These sonorous strings on *Vīṇa* are centers of musical notes. Tighten these strings appropriately and sing melodiously without breaking your voice. Start from the beginning. But never dishonour the king. Please keep in mind that the king, who practices righteous acts, is the father of all beings.

Start singing the *Rāmāyaṇa* poetry harmoniously from tomorrow morning with a content mind playing the Vīṇa. The princes agreed to do according to his orders. Thus exchanging good terms, the kids thus ended that night with great excitement, reminiscing it again and again like the twin Vedic Gods Aświni do about śukranīti. Early morning the handsome young princes woke up and started singing the poetry walking all around. The melodious songs fell on the ears of Sītā's husband. It brought curiosity in his mind that these musical and melodious songs written by great teachers of yesterday, which had never been heard until now, are being sung in such a harmonious way in a melodical voice.

He seated them amidst the several scholarly people in his court. Wonder struck on the faces of the great sages and the chivalrous lords who were watching the King and the young sage musicians as if savouring them with their eyes. They started saying the following Look aren't these two kids who resemble our Lord like a mirror and its reflection? Who could have differentiated even by the slightest bit between them and Rāmadeva if these musicians had not been draped in these tree skins and dreadlocks? The divine singing has resonated in the surrounding environment. Everybody went silent. Even the sky turned holy by the waves of this unearthly music. Nobody can stop

wanting for more. Such prodigious is the music. When 20 *sargās* were completely recited by the evening while Rāma listened to them all carefully, he said to Lakṣmaṇa with great love, “Prince, please give these great minds 18000 gold coins. Also you should give them whatever they wish for”. Rāma offered gold but Lava and Kuśa didn’t accept it. Why do we need gold and money when we live in the forest eating the fruits and nuts? The words of the princes made the King and other listeners immensely unhappy. Rāma said, “How long is this poetry? Where does it end? Who is the writer of this poetry? Where is that sage? The young sages replied, “The poetry has been written by Vālmīki. He has arrived at the *Yajñasāla* (the field for sacred ritual) where all the sages are seated.”

All the people enjoyed the children’s honey like music for several days. They came to understand from the melody in their poetry that the musician princes are the sons of Sītā. Raghunāthan called upon the greatest of the well thinkers from the assembly and expressed his thoughts. Please immediately go near Sage Vālmīki. If Sītā has good manners and free of any sins let her purify herself with the permission from the Sage. Please inform me when you understand and confirm the God’s inner thoughts and what Sītā’s heart feels, let Sītādevi take an oath tomorrow morning in order to put an end to the disgrace on me. The

messengers after listening to the most surprising words from Rāma, quickly reached the entrance of Vālmīki's *āśrama*. The messengers bowed down at the feet of the great soul, glowing in his own halo due to his intense meditation, and humbly informed the gentle message from Rāma. Vālmīki understood the thoughts of Rāma. Vālmīki agreed and blessed them well. Sītā will do according to Rāma's words.

Husband is the god for all ideal women. That ideal messenger reached before the King. The messenger conveyed the sage's message exactly word to word. Rāma also understood the inner thoughts of the great sage Vālmīki. Highly excited, he asked all the gods along with the great sages, and their disciples, the lords along with the ministers, and all those who wish to watch, in person, Sītā taking the oath to be present. The great words of Rāma was such that it could break the entire environment from the ears of the saints and other important lords. Great! Great! May Rāma always be victorious! There has not been a mighty king like you on this earth. Nor would anybody be in the future.

### **Sītā's Descent**

Rāma was present in the assembly for *Aśwamedham*. All the saints who arrived there surrounded Rāma. Many of them have come to

watch Sītā's oath. Each of them seated themselves in the respective positions. Not even a slightest sound emerged from the court assembly. The assembly members are seated holding even their breath. The glorious assembly seemed like to have been carved on a stone. It is at that time Vālmīki arrived with Sītā. When Sītā arrived, following the great sage, with her head slightly bent, placing Rāma firmly on the throne of her heart, with folded hands and vapour filled throat, like *Vedamāta* following the Great creator, songs of praises emerged out of the mouths of the people who watched her. That cacophony cracked not only the earth but the atmospheric layer.

A sadness hit the minds of all people. It increased bit by bit and conquered the minds turning them restless. Even the great saints couldn't find a balance of mind. They submitted their wonder induced enlarged eyes on the figures of Rāma and Sītā. Many of the people who had arrived there began to shout, the god of all gods, may everything be well, Sītā, may all good happen to you, unaware of the surroundings. Vālmīki, who arrived along with Sītā, approached Rāma who was seated in the middle of the assembly and placing all three glances on everyone, smiled and said, Oh the son of the King Daśaratha, your wife, who practices *Dharma* and ardent in serving her husband, and who had been renounced near my hermitage due to the infamy has

arrived. Hey the greatly devoted Rāma, Jānaki will promise you, who is in fear of disgrace by the people, so please permit her to do so. These twin sons of Sītā are your sons and what I am saying is the truth. I, the tenth son of Praçetassu, dear son of Raghu dynasty, would never think about an untrue word. These kids are your sons. I, who have done *Tapasya* for thousands of years, would like to say that if there is any kind of sin committed by Sītā then may all the powers I have acquired through my *Tapasya* be taken back. I would accept the powers of my *Tapasya* only if Sītā has not sinned by mind, or word, or by action. She is completely innocent. Hey Rāma, I accepted her from the forest only after being completely convinced that no evil has influenced her mind, the sixth sense of the five senses. Each of the letters of history of Sītā is a form of purity in itself.

This gem of a woman who has not been affected by even the slightest of a sin will give confidence to you, who is fearful of infamy. I have visualized through my divine third eye in detail that Sītā is an idol of sacredness. Rāma, I also know that you renounced her due to the frustration in your heart for the disgrace by the world even after being completely convinced of Sītā's purity. Hearing Vālmīki's words, Rāma bowed in front of him and glanced at Sītā with great love, and said that let everything happen as he says. You who is the greatest of

the practitioners of Dharma wouldn't say anything which is untrue. I am completely confident of that. It has been proven in front of everyone who have arrived here that Sītā is pure. So I happily accepted Sītā and brought her to my court. But since the infamy of the world was too big I had to renounce Sītā. Please forgive me abandoning her even after knowing that Sītā is pure. I also know who these sons are.

Let Sītā prove herself pure in front of all these people and bring them happiness. They all arrived to watch Sītā performing her oath in the presence of Devendra. All hearts of the people were cool like dew drops but started getting anxious about Sītā's oath. Rāma looked at the Gods who stood up in the skyway and said, hey gods, I have been completely convinced by the words of Vālmīki. Still let Sītā be pure in front of all people! May her give us all the eternal happiness. The wind god blew gently with the sacred fragrance. Waves of happiness filled in all hearts. All the human beings who had assembled there from various countries felt an unthinkable wonderful feeling like in the *Kṛtāyuga*. At that time, Sītā, draped in a saffron cloth, standing in the middle of the court like the queen of queens, looked around her. She saw everyone. Her kind eyes fell on everybody. Creating ripples of happiness in everyone, with folded hands and her sight fixed on the earth, said in clear words,

“यथाहं राघवादन्त्यं मनसापि न चिन्तये ।  
 तथा मे माधवी देवी विवरं दातुमर्हति ॥  
 मनसा कर्मणा वाचा यथा रामं समर्चये ।  
 तथा मे माधवी देवी विवरं दातु मर्हति ॥  
 यथैतत् सत्यमुक्तं मे वेद्मि रामात् परं न च ।  
 तथा मे माधवी देवी विवरं दातुमर्हति ॥”<sup>62</sup>

Oh Mādhavīdevi, if I havent had thoughts on any other soul other than Rāma, please find me a way! If I have worshipped only Swamy Rāma by mind, word and action - oh Mādhavi Devi, please give me a solution. If I have worshipped only Swāmy Rāma by mind, word and action - oh Mādhavidevi, please give me a solution! My word that I haven't embraced anybody other than Rāma with my hands and body if is true – Oh Mādhavi Devi, please tell me a way! Sītādevi, radiant like the Goddess *śakti*, when took such an oath, a wonderful spectacle took place there. A perfect looking and unearthly throne, with a eye dazzling, radiant sheen of the precious gems, carried by revered, giant deadly snakes on their widely spread hoods , arouse from the earth's crust. Bhūmīdevi, the wife of Mādhava, embraced the wife of Rāma, taking her own form. She invited her on to the divinely built, beautiful

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid, *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*, p.919



throne and seated her gently on it. The immortals sang praises and showered the flowers of *Kalpaka* tree incessantly on top of the head of Sītādevi who was descending to the *Pātāla* (underworld) in that inimitable throne. All the gods shouted in ecstatic happiness that the behavior of Janaka's daughter, Sītā, is appropriate for the appropriate and befitting to her race. This created an endless amazement to all the people who had gathered in the *Yāgaśāla*. When Sītā descended into the core of the earth the entire world in fact went unconscious for a brief while. Rāma says with tears in his eyes, with deep fury and despair, "My heart is burdened with an intoxicating sadness which hadn't existed until now. Sītādevi, the incarnation of Goddess Śrī, disappeared in front of my eyes.

Once Sītādevi vanished from sight after reaching the other side of the ocean in Lanka and I brought her back here. What big deal is from under the earth! Dear Bhadra, Bhūmīdevi, please give Sītā back to me. Else you will have to see my rage. Devi, don't you know me? Devi is my own mother. When King Janaka tilled his field using a plough I know who has given Sītā to him and that it isn't anybody else. Please return my wife. Or else give me a loophole too. I will live with her in *Pātāla* or heaven. Please return Sītā quickly. I have gone crazy because of her. I will destroy the earth's core filled with forests and

meadows if you don't bring me back Sītā who disappeared into the earth's ground in her original form. The entire land will turn into water. Suddenly Lord Brahma appears and consoles Rāma. Rāma says that he will accept Sītā if she takes an oath of truth to prove her purity in front of the public. As a reply to this Vālmīki says that Sītā is the most pristine, there is no sin on her and vouches for the truth. But Rāma's reply is that he knows about Sītā's purity, but to prove to his people let her take the oath once more. Sītā hadn't even imagined that she would be asked to prove her purity again after going through the test of fire once. Sītā couldn't agree to this. Sītā was unaware of the oath until she reached Rāmā's court.

Sītā decides that it is better to end her life than taking back the wife status of Rāma by taking such an oath of truth. Probably Sītā considered this oath taking as an insult to her womanhood. Sītā says to Rāma, who asked her to take the oath, out of sadness, People of all the worlds know my history. I haven't thought about a man other than my husband even in my dreams. If what I am saying is true Mother Earth should shower me with a blessing." As she says this, Earth splits open and takes Sītā away in her divine form placing her on the throne. Rāma didn't expect this sudden descent of Sītā. Sītā had once returned without any injuries after entering the fire. Similarly Sītā would have

thought that if she takes the oath and starts living in Ayodhya again, and if tomorrow somebody else poses doubt on her purity, what will be her situation. My sons are with their father. Rāma has also recognized them. They will live the life of a prince the rest of their life was a relief to her. She was not interested in another oath taking in front of the society to prove her purity. Even though she disappeared from this world as a respectful woman to all other women she still exist as an eternal brightness in the hearts of several lakhs of people.

After Sītā's descent Rāma divided his ruling power and responsibilities between his brothers and, in its order, to his sons Lava and Kuśa and seated himself in *Brahmaniṣṭha* (fixing his mind always on the Supreme God – Brahman). Sītā laments on the afflictions she faced. She says goodbye to the world out of despair. Sītā's descent to earth, expelling herself from the worldly life, was an act, and not by word or thought, a protest to her husband. The *Agni-parīkṣa* (test of fire) conducted at Lanka was another way of protest but when Sītā took refuge in earth Rāma cried his heart away trying to get his wife back but Goddess earth doesn't consign. Here we can see that Sītā wins over Rāma.

## Sītā's Identity

Each time we say about Sītā in Rāmāyaṇa her glory seem to increase. During the stage of exile to forest when Rama tries to avoid Sītā she asks him a question “I have listened to many poets reciting several different *Rāmāyaṇas*. In any of them have you heard of a Rāma leaving to the forest without being accompanied by Sītā? Ramānujam says that that reply of Sītā is one which shows the oodles of *Rāmāyaṇa* lessons which happened in India during the medieval period.”<sup>63</sup> But in *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* Sītā shows us through her life experiences that a wife's duty is to stand with her husband not just in the time of happiness and that a woman experiences the real sense of the word wife only when she also accompanies him in times of sorrow. But later when Rāma sends her again on exile to forest (second *vanavāsa*), not uttering anything in reply to her husband she sets out to the forest, by accepting it for keeping Rāma's honour intact which reveals that she is the synonym for tolerance and sacrifice. Similarly hearing about rumours from his spy Rāma appoints Lakṣmaṇa to abandon Sītā in the forest. Even there Vamiki's Sītā remains silent. Later during *Aśwamedha Yāga* (sacred ritual of sacrifice), when Rāma says that he will accept

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<sup>63</sup> Sunil P Eḷayītam, *Rāmāyaṇattinte bahuswara jīvita*, deśabhimāni, 2017 Aug30, wed. P.6

her only if she convinces her purity in front of the public, we can see a Sītā with a firm resolve. This situation reaches high above her tolerance limit. At that moment she tells to Bhūmīdevi,” People of all the worlds know my history. I haven’t thought about a man other than my husband even in my dreams.

If what I am saying is true Mother Earth should shower me with a blessing.” As she says this, Earth splits open and takes Sītā away in her divine form placing her on the throne. A similar situation was at *Aśokavani* in Lanka and what we see is a strong Sītā who doesn’t fall for the temptations. Even later Sītā’s worries were increasing one by one. Sītā kept a secret thought that some day Rāma would come to the *aśrama* after recognizing her purity and take her and her children back. It might be that belief which inspired her to live further. But instead Rāma put forward a demand completely unexpected by Sītā. It was at the same time Rāma recognizes Lava and Kuśa as his own sons. But Rāma let Vālmīki know that he would accept Sītā if she takes an oath in front of the public. Vālmīki agrees to it with complete confidence. But Sītā didn’t expect such a demand to her after having subject to a test of fire once before to prove her purity. Sītā hadn’t known about this oath taking until she reaches in front of Rāma. By then Sītā gave up any interest in existing in this world with her husband by taking such

an oath. Sītā felt that oath taking as an insult to her womanhood. Rāma didn't expect Sītā's descent. Sītā leaves relieved of the fact that her children aren't orphans anymore. The deep agony of Sītā has been described appropriately in *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*. Even in *Uttararāmāyaṇa* during abandonment of Sītā after hearing the decision of her husband a hurt Sītā doesn't utter a word and just prays to fulfill the interests of her husband. But she asks Lakṣmaṇa, "Where will I open up my story which is only based on sadness. What will I reply to the question why Rāma has renounced me? Right now I wish to end my life in Ganga. But I am not doing it as my acts will cause disgrace to the dynasty." Even while in the middle of deep agony here one can find here a Sītā who pacifies her husband by revealing her purity.

### **The Sacrificial Nature of Sītā**

If we examine the life of Sītā we can find the greatness of sacrifice in her life. It is very difficult to find another woman in history who had to suffer such sacrifices. The altruistic nature of Sītā ever since her childhood having to always live for others is highly laudable. *Rāmāyaṇa* draws the picture of a Sītā who serves her husband by making all kind of sacrifices. What is projected from the beginning till the end is this sacrifice. Sītā's sacrificial nature gets clarified during the time of exile to the forest. Sītā doesn't resign, even after Rāma

picturizing the horrific life in a forest, from her decision that only her husband's happiness will be appropriate for a wife. We can clearly see the foregoing nature of Sītā when she donates all her jewellery, which she adorned while she was the queen, to Arundhati. Another example for her self sacrificing nature is: during the exile period in the forest when Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa along with Sītā were living in *Çitrakūṭa* Mountain after building an *āśrama* there, Rāma was sleeping in the lap of Sītā. At this time Indra's son Jayantan reaches the ashram premises and falls for Sītā's beauty. He comes in disguise of a crow and injures her bosom when Sītā endured it so as to not to wake her husband from sleep. Blood oozed out of her bosom and fell on the face of Rāma who wake up with extreme rage and destroyed the right eye of Jayanta by sending a *Brahmāstra* (a supernatural weapon).

This story has been depicted in the 38<sup>th</sup> *sarga* of *Uttarakāṇḍa* of *Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa*. Even though Rāma demands for the test of fire as a proof for purity, Sītā shows us by subjecting to the test of fire that how far can a woman go to prove her purity. We can see that the sacrifices Sītā has suffered is beyond what one woman can experience in one life. After hearing about the killing of Rāvaṇa, Sītā awaits eagerly for Rāma but Rāma instead of enquiring about the difficulties she had, asks her to subject to the test of fire which we see that Sītā agrees to. Even when

Lakṣmaṇa takes her to the forest to abandon a pregnant Sītā, in her reply to Lakṣmaṇa she says that she can make any sacrifice to keep up the glory of her husband. In all these cases we can see that the sacrificing nature of Sītā stands projected.

### **Sītā's Love**

Sītā, who deserved to live in the Kingdom of Ayodhya with all comforts, when decides to accompany Rāma to the forest says some words from which we can clarify the love of Sītā: “I will live in the forest by serving your feet with the sole thought of my husband, and with happiness as if in my father's mansion. It is my nonchalant devotion to you which inspires me to be doing this”<sup>64</sup>. If you don't take me with you during the exile to the forest I will depend on fire or poison to end my life. These words of Sītā shows the intensity of her love. During the situation when Lakṣmaṇa was asked to abandon Sītā in the forest in fear of infamy, Sītā says the following to Lakṣmaṇa, “You should go back and ask Rāma,” she requests, “You know very well the truth of Sītā's purity. She, who serves you with great devotion, thinks only of your wishes. You, the brave hearted, renounced me for fear of disgrace? It is my duty to keep up your eternal glory without any

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<sup>64</sup> C.G. Warriar, *Śrī Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*, vol-1, Sāhitya Pravartaka Co-Operative Society Ltd, Kottayam, 1975.p.243



blemish. In all senses you are my only refuge. Tell the righteous King to take care of his people like his own brothers. What will exist in a ruler, is what his people receive from a righteous life. That should be your highest *Dharma*. With that you will achieve glory at every step.”<sup>65</sup> If anything bad happens to you due to infamy it is my duty to solve it. I don't have anybody other than you. This is not the words from a normal forlorn woman but they are the words which came out of the love of Sītā towards Rāma But in Kumāranāśān's *Çintāviṣṭayāya Sītā*, when Rāma asks Lakṣmaṇa to abandon Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa later speaks out the order, Sītā feels the entire world turning dark around her and falls down on the floor as if thunderstruck. Sītā didn't even have a hint of Rāma renouncing her. When she hears the unexpected she lost her consciousness. But in this context Kumāranāśān says “If I had been conscious, I would have felt extreme rage towards

Rāma who has shown such a cruelty towards her. I would have been embarrassed by the burden of my self esteem. I would have been afraid being in extreme darkness. But unconsciousness helped Sītā to be free of all these.”<sup>66</sup> In *Çintāviṣṭayāya Sītā*, Sītā believes that she isn't

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<sup>65</sup> C.G.Warrier, *Śrī Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*, vol-1, Sāhitya Pravartaka Co-Operative Society Ltd, Kottayam, 1975.p.888

<sup>66</sup> N.Kumāranāśān, *Çintāviṣṭayāya Sītā*, Free Mityam Book Depot & Publishing, Kottayam, 1975. p.23

to be blamed for Rāma's suspicion on her." In this poetry we can find the thoughts of a normal woman in Sītā. Her position is that she can't be blamed for anything. It was not her mistake that they had to live in the forest. It was because they lived in the forest that Rāvaṇa had desires for her. The real reason behind the sin are those who created the situation for such a thing to happen."<sup>67</sup> Rāma renounces Sītā by listening to the words of a mere spy. Rāma didn't try to take a consensus from the people. In this poetry of Sītā we can see Sītā blaming Rāma to have acted like a King who acts without any sense of discernment, without any thought on justice and injustice and by trusting the sole words of *Stuti Pāṭaka* (who sings in praise of the King).

### **Sītā's Sorrow's**

When we walk through the life of "Sītā" in *Rāmāyaṇa* we can see more sorrows than happiness. Sītā makes it clear that the King's palace without Rāma is more horrific and depressing to her than the dense wilderness. Sītā makes Rāma aware of the truth that the biggest guardian of a woman is her own husband. But after having abducted by Rāvaṇa Sītā's happiness sets and delves into deep sadness. The real

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<sup>67</sup> N.Kumāranaśān, *Çintāviṣṭayāya Sītā*, Free Mityam Book Depot & Publishing, Kottayam, 1975.p.59

aim of Rāvaṇa and the demonesses was to torment Sītā mentally. When Rāma started battle with the demons it started making Sītā sad. When Rāvaṇa's army got defeated, conspiring with Vidyujihnan Rāvaṇa places the head of Rāma and his bow by illusion. Sītā became sad thinking that they are real. The pain which goes through Sītā's mind when she understands that her husband has been killed is indescribable. When Hanumān tells her that he would rescue her from this pain, Sītā replies that if she gets freed in that manner it will bring disgrace to Rāma's glory and she took a firm resolve to leave Lanka only when Rāma kills Rāvaṇa. But when she comes to know that Rāma got killed by Rāvaṇa all her hopes were lost. Sītā's pain got relieved when Vibhīṣaṇa's wife Sarama informs her about the illusory acts of Rāvaṇa.

The heartache of Sītā when Rāma asks her to subject to the test of fire after having lived in the Kingdom of Rāvaṇa was severely cruel. The tragedies and miseries that Sītā came to experience after having exited the Kingdom of Ayodhya till the death of Rāvaṇa dont still douse. When Rāma asks to enter the fire to prove her purity, Sītā subjects to it without uttering a word, in total confidence of her own loyalty to her husband. This test of fire was Sītā's protest with the agonizing mindset of her alternate name *Dukhaputri*. Sītā reaches Ayodhya along with Rāma and starts living happily when the

circumstance gets set for her second exile to forest. When Rāma asks a pregnant Sītā if she had any wishes to be fulfilled, she replies that it is her wish to stay in the hermitage along with the sages in the forest. That reply later puts her into deep sorrow. When the servants of the King informs about the doubts on the purity of Sītā her wish for a life in the hermitage turns into forest life. Later every action that Rāma takes made Sītā more and more unhappy. Lakṣmaṇa takes her to the forest as if to fulfill her wishes and hides the truth from her. Later only after crossing the Ganga River that Lakṣmaṇa reveals to her about Rāma's order. When Sītā comes to know that Rāma is renouncing her she falls down unconscious.

The biggest sadness of Sītā was that those moments when she was pregnant, when she most importantly needed her husband's affection and care, she had to live all alone in the forest. That grief cannot be tolerated by Sītā or any other woman. In that situation she even thought what was she living for? But she changes her mind so that her committing suicide doesn't bring disgrace to her husband's race. Even then Sītā's thoughts were about maintaining the glory and tradition of the Sūrya dynasty. Watching Sītā's sorrow even the nature stood still. The birds went silent. The earth went standstill seeing Sītā in blues. Finally Vālmīki's kind words and assuage of sages brought

her a relief. The words of Sītā to Lakṣmaṇa while her abandonment would melt down any stone hearted person.” To whom will I talk about my sorrows left astray into loneliness, with only sadness as refuge? You should go and tell Rāma the following words: “Born in a furrow, there has not yet been a blemish even in my mind. I am highly devoted to my husband and would always continue to live according to your wishes. You left me out of fear of dishonor among your people. I, being your wife, have the responsibility to take care of you without letting any harm happen to you. Staying in this deep agony Sītā also lets Lakṣmaṇa know of another heartbreaking matter. Hey Lakṣmaṇa, you should also know that I am pregnant. Another situation where Sītā’s extreme sadness gets exposed is her descent to Earth.

When Sītā returns to the kingdom from the ashram along with Vālmīki, everybody in the palace were expecting her to take an oath in front of the public that she is pure but Sītā had taken a firm resolve. Sītā, having abandoned by her husband and having gone through immense pain and torment for all these years, wasn’t interested in taking another oath in front of the people to prove her truth. Sītā decides that she doesn’t need such royal pleasures. Bhūmīdevi recognizing Sītā’s pain accepts her. Who else other than Bhūmīdevi can give a better proof to Sītā’s purity?

## Enraged Sītā

We can see, in only one situation that Sītā, in *Rāmāyaṇa*, behaves with extreme rage. Sītā, who is generally calm and steady in other situations, speaks heart breaking words to Lakṣmaṇa, who gives protection to her even better than Rāma: “Hey Lakṣmaṇa, you who pretends to be a relative by appearance and expression is in real a foe to your own elder brother. You don’t feel to rescue your brother who is in danger? You are not reaching upto him or helping him because of your desires towards me. You don’t even have a drop of love in your heart for your brother. You wish for sorrow and destruction of your brother.”<sup>68</sup> At this moment Sītā lets down herself as a normal woman. When we examine the entire *Rāmāyaṇa* this is the only context where we can see Sītā’s weakness.

## Humble Sītā

Janaka gives off Sītā’s hands in marriage to Rāma with great affection and utmost pride. But Rāma receives Sītā as if he has been gifted by someone. Rāma who came along with Viśwāmitra didn’t find it as a great thing. But Sītā takes this matter up with great hope. It will be the same in the case of any woman. Here in *Rāmāyaṇa* preparing for a

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<sup>68</sup> C.G.Wārrier, *Śrī Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*, National Bookstall, Kottayam, 1975.p.555

life in the forest accepts the *Maravuri* given by Kaikeyī and humbly wears it. Similarly when they reach the *āśrama* of Sage Atri and his wife advises Sītā about the *Dharma* of a *Pativrata*, she listens to her with great humility. As a reply to that she says “I know that husband is the god for the entire woman community. It is my duty to serve him even if he deviates from the rituals.

The *Tapasya* (meditation) of an ideal woman is service of her husband. Ideal women who firmly believe in *Pātivratyam* will be revered by others by their own meritorious deeds”<sup>69</sup>. Seeing this kind of devotion in Sītā towards her husband, Anasūya blesses Sītā and gifts her with divine necklaces, clothes and jewellery. The eminent poet of Malayalam, Vayaloppiḷḷi Śrīdharamenon has turned this context of the story into a beautiful moment called “*Ujjwalamuhūrttam*”. Even when Sītā had to prove her purity by giving herself to fire after having lived in the kingdom of Rāvaṇa she remains calm and humble without uttering a word back. Sītā shows us by subjecting to the test of fire that how far can a woman go to prove her purity. Rāma lacked the sense of realizing the truth that if Sītā had been interested in the worldly pleasures her would have lived with the King of Lanka instead of staying with Rāma in the forest. For this reason he asks her to undergo

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<sup>69</sup> C.G.Wārier, *Śrī Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa*, National Book Stall, Kottayam, 1975.p.446

the test of fire. In the situation when a pregnant Sītā was to be abandoned in the forest, in her reply to Lakṣmaṇa she says that she is ready to make any sacrifice to avoid any blemish to happen to the honour of her husband wherein we can see the extent of humility in Sītā. In such a situation no other woman can find self control. Not only that, their actions will be in the lines of a revenge. But when Sītā was questioned on her purity she says with a strong sense of herself that she is not what others understand about her which only comes from a strong self confidence. Thus she was also able to win that test. The second time when she was asked to subject to the test, the woman Sītā displayed a great degree of strength by deciding that she no longer wants to live with Rāma

Here we get to see a very strong woman. In this situation, we find, in Sītā, a woman with great candour.



## CHAPTER IV

### SĪTĀ AS PORTRAYED BY KĀḶIDĀSA AND BHAVABHŪTI

Kāḷidāsa's *Raghuvamśa* and Bhavabhūti's *Uttararāmaçarita* are the two most important works in Sanskrit literary circle that analyses *Rāmāyaṇa*, especially the character of Sītā. Sītā's story is also related in Bhavabhūti's *Mahāvīraçarita*. This chapter analyses how Kāḷidāsa and Bhavabhūti portray Sītā as different from Vālmīki's Sītā.

#### **Sītā in *Raghuvamśa***

*Raghuvamśa* is an important poetry by Kāḷidāsa, the recognized national poet of India. In *Raghuvamśa* one can find the immense imaginative power and the pleasant architectural skills of Kāḷidāsa. The main objective of the poet through *Raghuvamśa* is to expand on the ideal relationship which should exist between the King and the subjects and to develop noble philosophers and thinkers of kingly values. The *Vidāyakabhāva* (Creator's position) named *Jīvitaharṣam* (joy of life) can be seen mostly in the works of Kāḷidāsa in Indian literature. He advises through his works to identify separately the power positions of a woman and to behave appropriately to her in each of her positions like wife, mother, daughter, sister, friend and advisor. His

ability to portray the vigorous pictures of human nature and descriptions of nature is stupefying. He is a poet who has perceived life in a holistic manner. He reveals through his poetic works that life is a comprehensive phenomenon with the convergence of darkness and light, birth and death, city and saintly place, love and bereavement, happiness and sadness.” The rhythmic waves which can be visualized and listened underlying the diversity and uniqueness of the universe would have undulated inside the brain of Kālidāsa. It is the source of the poised beauty resonating in his poems.”<sup>70</sup> It is difficult to find such a rich portrayal of the country of India in his poems in the works of other poets and writers. In the opinion of Kālidāsa, the beauty of the human beings is an inseparable part of the beauty and elegance of the nature. It was Kālidāsa who first showed us the idea that the benefit of creating poetry is to experience joy.

It was Kālidāsa who laid the foundation for all our poetic movements. Kālidāsa has also been considered to be deserving a significant position among the poets from the world history. His works have been translated into all the regional languages of India. They have also spread to the foreign languages like English, German, French,

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<sup>70</sup> Dr.K.Rāghavan Pillai, *Samīpanaṅal Samanvayaṅal*, Co-Operative Society Ltd, Kottayam, 1986

Danish and Italian. Kālidāsa receives greater respect in the other countries than what he receives in his own birthplace. Even the western countries aren't any short of respecting him. "His kindness while illuminating the emotions and the richness of the power of imagination earns him an elevated position among the poets from all caste."<sup>71</sup> *Raghuvamśa* is Kālidāsa's first poetic work. Vālmīki, the creator of *Rāmāyaṇa*, is the only poet Kālidāsa had been adored of with great respect. Kālidāsa characterizes *Rāmāyaṇa* as the mellifluous story of Rāma and *Kaviprathamapaddhati* (poet's first project). It was Kālidāsa who created proper models for the later poets on the idea of portrayal. Empires are formed and destroyed in several parts of the world. The survival of an empire lies in the *Dharma* which is formed by that empire and its downfall in the abundance of *Adharma*. It is this reality that we have to learn from *Raghuvamśa*.

The poet himself says that the sound (noun) 'Raghu' is formed from the key word meaning to go. So, the poet clarifies in the first sarga itself that, the word *Raghuvamśa* means that race of kings which is attaining provenance. The three duties of a King are to generate kindness in his subjects, to rule and to protect. According to the poet,

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<sup>71</sup> P.K.Nārāyaṇapilla *Prasaṇa Tarāṅgiṇi* Part-1, P. K. Memmorial Press, Trivandrum, 1124.

a King should become like a father to his subjects by the following three acts – to make his subjects kind with the help of education, to provide protection from all influences and to find a way for one's own living. Kālidāsa teaches us that practicing a religion will eventually become a luxury. The description on Kuśa's son Atithi has been depicted in *Raghuvamśa* after the portrayal of 6 kings namely Dilīpa, Raghu, Ajan, Daśaratha, Śrī Rāma, Kuśa. He describes extensively the coronation ceremony of *Atithi* rather than that of the other 6 kings.

We can find a greater prominence of the Brahmins during the coronation ceremony of *Atithi*. What Kālidāsa tries to teach us through the portrayal of the coronation ceremony of King *Atithi* is that undesirable things like the increasing prominence of Brahmins in the coronation ceremony, the availability of opportunities for Brahmin *dakṣiṇa* (*gift*), the luxurious practices of religion etc, are happening in India. We can learn several things from the works of Kālidāsa like a hint on the secrets behind the Dharma, to inform the nuances happening in the religions practices etc. Kālidāsa has been given a unique position in the firmament of Indian literature. The specialty while observing the characters from the poetic works of Kālidāsa is the richness of experience and multifacetedness. What he has attempted is to make, not just the external adornment but also the language, more beautiful

by mixing more imagination according to the style. The usage of simile in his poetry is very famous. No other poet can apply such complete, pristine and beautiful metaphors. His observation skill is highly nuanced and sharp. In the opinion of Kālidāsa, the actual beauty of women is in her chastity.

“प्रियेषु सौभाग्य फलाहि चारुता”<sup>72</sup>

It is Kālidāsa’s view that the reason for mutual love is the culture in the earlier birth. According to him the biggest sadness is bereavement of love. His vision on aesthetics, and the knowledge on the core centers of the human heart makes him equivalent to Shakespeare. Kālidāsa has enjoined etymological skills wherever found comfortable in his own works. Even though the three aural poetry namely *Raghuvamśa*, *Kumārasambhava*, *Meghasandēśa* and the three visual poetry namely *Mālavikāgnimitra*, *Vikramorvaśīya* and *Abhijñānaśākuntala*, have been mentioned in the discussion on thoughts about appropriateness by Kṣemendra, while one poetic work named *Kundaḷeśvaradautya* has not been recovered yet. The storyline of this chapter is how Kālidāsa describes Sītā in *Raghuvamśa* but that radiance she achieved through various hermitages and powers of yoga

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<sup>72</sup> Āchārya Paṇḍit Sītārām Čadurvedi, *Kālidāsa Grandhawali*, Chaukhamba Surbharati Pratishthan Oriental Publishers & Distributors, 2014, P.42.

over a long period has helped her survive as an indefatigable woman. It is this power which helped Sītā to triumph over Rāvaṇa. A woman's success in the power of her mind. The words could die away but the power of mind cannot be waned. It is because of this Sītā could face every adverse situation. Women have also compromised for the sake of wealth, a happy wedded bliss, status and honor and achievements of the family but it finally ends right into the middle of disrespect and inferiority complexes. It is here that Sītā forms a personality of her own. So when a situation arises where while influencing the society she has to let go of even her life, she held on without any weakness and self-destruction. Sītā is one among the few great personalities who ignites her own power by keeping her weaknesses apart. Sītā proves that it is a woman who decides how the society looks at her and not the society.

Sītā reminds us that a woman is capable of turning a weakness into strength. Instead of staying subdued being a woman, Sītā shows us through her own life to turn into a personality with leadership skills, courage and strength. It is a not a problem less life a woman should be dreaming of but she becomes respectable when she develops an empowerment of her mind to turn the problems into inspirations. For the same reason, Sītā still stays respectable. We can see in many parts

of *Rāmāyaṇa*. *Adharma* being described with an aura of *Dharma*. Kāṭidāsa's Sītā became a heroine with unearthly tolerance in a way that she wouldn't reprimand her husband for his faults due to her practice of a high level of chastity and he has described her as the most humane woman. Sītā always keeps her promise to Rāma from the beginning till the end. By absorbing the essence of complete reality of the eternal truth, Sītā lives unaware of the transience of life.

Sītā is also known as Maithili. She gets that name being the daughter of the king of Mithila. Sītā is also called by the name of Vaidehi. In the sense that she is the daughter born to Videha. Sītā is a pure radiance. The true essence of the radiant Sītā is untouched even by the fire. The English Psychoanalyst Ann Marshal says "There is no other imagination like Sītā on whom reflects the peek emotions and vulnerabilities of a woman and human life. Sītā is the eternal truth which imparts warmth and vitality to all the delicate thoughts, intense emotionality's and high purity of standards of an Indian like the inveterate consciousness which hides behind our mind."<sup>73</sup> The emotion of Sītā presented by Vālmīki and that of the other poets aren't of the

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<sup>73</sup> Nitya Çaithanyayati, *Sītā Nūṭṭāndukaḷilūde*, Greenbooks, Thrissur, 2013. P.113.

same Sītā. Let's see how he describes Sītā in one of his own great works namely *Raghuvamśa*.

*Raghuvamśa* is a great poetry with 19 sargās. In *Raghuvamśa*, it describes the main happenings for 30 generations beginning from the founder of the race, Raghu's father, Dilīpa till the last King Agnivaṛṇa's pregnant child. The first half contains the stories of the kings Dilīpa, Raghu, Daśaratha, Rāma, Kuśa and *Atithi*. Succeeding, the ministers make the 9 year old prince Sudarśana the King.

The reason being the death of his father Dhruvasandhi during the hunting by a lion. The last King of Raghu dynasty Agnivaṛṇa is the son of this Sudarśana. The main portrayal in *Raghuvamśa* include *Indumatīswayamvara*, *Sītā Swayamvara*, forest life, Sītā's abduction. Daśaratha's curse, obstacle to the coronation, hearing gossips on Sītā, abandonment of Sītā, assassination of Lāvaṇa, Aśvamedha by Rāma and Sītā's descent to earth. We can say that this is a slight copy of *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*. But due to the seriousness of portrayal this doesn't lie any lower than *Rāmāyaṇa*. When the entire life of Rāma has been portrayed in *Rāmāyaṇa*, the past and future story of the racial tradition has been completely depicted in *Raghuvamśa*. Vālmīki has attempted to present a hero with all desirable qualities. The entire story of *Rāmāyaṇa* has been described in brief from the 9th sarga till 16<sup>th</sup> sarga.



Kālidāsa has made Vālmīki's elaborate descriptions precise and detailing the ones which haven't been described. When we look at it geographically we can find that Kālidāsa has portrayed each part of the Indian subcontinent. *Raghuvamśa* is a tragic poetry in which the glorious *Sūrya* dynasty eventually moves away from the truths of *Dharma* and gets destroyed after getting engrossed in erotic activities. The depiction here is the life story of kings like Dilīpa, Raghu, Aja, Daśaratha, Rāma etc.

The story of Rāma has been detailed from the 10<sup>th</sup> sarga. The specialty seen all throughout the play the practice of government based on subjects' welfare and a firm execution system. Even though the poet touches upon several female characters in this play, only Sītā has been given a refined personality. It was Kālidāsa's Sītā who displayed bravery of asking “श्रुतस्य किं तत् सदृशं कुलस्य” unlike Vālmīki's Sītā. Similarly who responds against unreasonable sacrifices through the *śloka* “वाच्यस्त्वया मद्वचनात् स राजा”? Her reaction was serious and thoughtful projecting the greatness of Sītā's character. Here the first poet has stopped Kālidāsa from the humane emotions. Sītā thinks that the reason for her unceasing despair is some failure in karma in one of the past lives. Sītā enters *Raghuvamśa* during the portrayal of Sītā and

Rāma's marriage in the 11<sup>th</sup> sarga. Janaka who was preparing for the yāga invited Viśvāmitra. Curious, after hearing about Janaka's bow he took Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa with him on his way to Mithila. On their way Ahalya, the wife of Gautama who had been cursed to live as a stone, regained her beautiful body due to the touch of Rāma's feet. Janaka welcomed according to the embodied Dharma welcomed Viśvāmitra along with Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa with wealth and offerings. It portrays the wonderstruck people of Mithila after seeing the princes as if they have come down from heaven. After the rites Kauśika informed Janaka that Rāma is excited to see the bow. In 11<sup>th</sup> sarga 37<sup>th</sup> śloka,

“यूपवत्यवासिते क्रियाविधौ |

कालवित्कुशिकवंशवर्धन ||

राममिक्ष्वसनदर्शनोत्सुखं |

मैथिलाय कथयांबभूव सः||”<sup>74</sup>

He looks at the enchanting body of a famous born Rāma. And thought that it would be difficult for anybody to break his bow. He also spoke about the conditions for the marriage of his daughter. Lord! I am not encouraging a young elephant's aimless behavior in an uphill task for even the chivalrous ones. Then he was informed about the valor of

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<sup>74</sup> Madhavan Ayyappath, K.K. Yathīndran, *Raghuvamśa*, Kerala Sāhitya Academi, Thrissur 2016. p. 251

Śrīrāma and as a response the sage said that the prince will prove his strength on the bow to you like a diamond on the mountains. An understanding happened of the bravery of young Rāghava like the thirst of a flame of the size of a slight firefly. The King of Mithila ordered messengers to bring the bow. As Indra appoints the clouds to show the beautiful rainbow. Janaka gave the miraculously born Sītā's hands away to Śrīrāma, who broke the *śaivaçāpa*, in the auspicious presence of fire. They entered Ayodhya being sucked up by the eyes of the women who had come to have a glimpse of Sītā. Kālidāsa has described the joining of Sītā and Rāma as that of nature and credence. Later Sītā's appearance in *Raghuvamśa* is during the time of entry to *Danḍakāranya*. In the forest, Sītā enamored the bees on the wild flowers with the cosmetics offered by Sage Atri's wife Anasūya. This has been portrayed in *Raghuvamśa* in the 12<sup>th</sup> *sarga*, 27<sup>th</sup> *śloka*,

“अनसूयाति सृष्टेन  
पुण्य गन्धेन काननं |  
स चकाराम्ङगरागेण  
पुष्पो चलित षट्पदं ||”<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid, *Raghuvamśa*, p.272

Once when Rāma was asleep on Sītā's lap due to tired, Indra's son Jayantan attacked Sītā in disguise of a crow. Rāma woke up and destroyed one of its eyes using a grass turned into an arrow. They lived in many hermitages after leaving *Çitrakūṭa* by the thought that Bharata would visit them again. Meanwhile Virādhan, who drinks blood off humans, attacked and abducted Sītā. In return Rāma smashed him and dug him under the earth. After that they left to Pançavaṭi as per the orders of Sage Agastya. While there, Rāvaṇā's sister Śūrpaṇakha approached Rāma with a romantic interest. Rāma sent her off to Lakṣmaṇa as he was married. Being forsaken by Lakṣmaṇa she gained back her demonic form. Lakṣmaṇa mutilated her with his sword. Kālidāsa has described that Sītā's laugh provoked Śūrpaṇakha like the moon rise does to the sea waves resting for lack of wind. Kālidāsa describes that it was this laugh of Sītā which led to the battle between humans and demons. But Śūrpaṇakha says to Sītā, who was scared by seeing her that she finds her laugh as humiliating as a doe humiliates a tigress. When Khara and party came for battle as a protest to Śūrpaṇakha's mutilation, Rāma left for the battle by leaving Sītā in safe custody of Lakṣmaṇa. Rāvaṇa imagined that all his ten heads have been stamped upon by Rāma punished his sister and killed his men. For this reason Rāvaṇa abducted Sītā, even being attacked by Jaṭāyu after

deceiving Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa using the deer turned demon. This has been described in *Raghuvamśa* 12<sup>th</sup> *sarga*, 53<sup>rd</sup> *śloka*,

“रक्षसा मृगरूपेण  
वञ्जयित्वा स राघवौ |  
जहार सीतां पक्षीन्द्रा  
प्रयास क्षण विग्नितः ॥”<sup>76</sup>

When Hanumān, who had been assigned to find Sītā, reached the palace of Rāvaṇa in search of Sītā, he saw Sītā amidst the demonesses like a medicinal plant among the poisonous climbers. Hanumān gave Rāma’s ring of identification to Sītā. He also passed on the message. Sītā shed tears staring at the ring. Hanumān, after energizing Sītā by the messages of her husband, burnt Lanka into ashes. After that he went to Rāma and showed him the *Abhijñānaratnam* (*Çūḍhāmaṇi*) sent by Sītā. This scene has been described by Kālidāsa as “When the precious stone touched the body as it was pressed against the chest, Rāma’s eyelids gently closed and experienced the tranquility of embrace with Sītā where the lips don’t close.”

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid, *Raghuvamśa*, p.278

“स प्राप हृदयन्यस्त  
मणिस्पर्श निमीलितः ।  
अपयोधरसंसर्गं  
प्रियालिङ्गन निर्वृतिम् ॥”

When Rāma heard about Sītā he was eager to meet her and set off for destroying the enemy. When Rāma reached the banks of the sea along with the army of monkeys, Vibhīṣaṇa sought refuge under him. A ferocious fight began between the monkeys and the demons as the monkeys crossed the ocean by building a bridge across it. The battle became dreadful with the use of the ammunitions, rocks and clubs made of iron. At that time Rāvaṇa scared Sītā by showing Rāmā's chopped head by illusion. But Trijaṭa consoles Sītā by telling her the truth. Indrajith tied up Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa using *Nāgāstra*. Garuḍan arrives and frees them.

Rāvaṇa broke open the chest of Lakṣmaṇa using a spear. Hanumān brings medicinal plants and relieves Lakṣmaṇa off the tiresome. Finally Rāma and Rāvaṇa fought fiercely wearing the armors sent by Indra through Mātali. And at the end Rāma rescinded the head of Rāvaṇa using *Brahmāstra* (the arrow of Brahma). Rāma sets off to Ayodhya after accepting a Sītā who has been purified by the test of fire.

After that in the 13<sup>th</sup> *sarga* Kālidāsa picturizes the view from the perspective of Rāma from the top of the *Puṣpaka Vimāna*. Rāma, travelling through the airway, shows Sītā the bridge built across the ocean. He also shows her the seashore filled with palmyra trees, the sea winds bring to her face the fragrance of the flowers of the pineapple plant, and the earth waking up from the withdrawing ocean. He shows her the meditating fields of the sages, mountains and the place where Sītā's abduction happened. He also shows her the places where he had been, weeping, in search of her. Rāma says that the fragrance spreading out from the fire drills when the rain falls, the half bloomed flowers of the *Kadamba* tree (a shade tree), the kind howls of the peacocks were all intolerable during the separation. Not only that the cranes in the Gomati River flew up in patterns to welcome Sītā. Rāma says that his memories of their life together have been rekindled even after he was watching the trees brought up by Sītā, the Kṛṣṇa deer's who are looking up with their face etc. at pañçavati after a short period of time.

Rāma introduces to her the presence of abode of reeds, the pristine river Pampa in which the pheasants swim. He shows her Godāvāri River, Pañçavati and the hermitage of Agastya. He describes the meditation of Sudīkṣṇa, sage, adorned with a chain of *Rudrākṣa*,

from the center of the five fires and the *śarabhangāśrama*. The *Çitrakūṭa* Mountains, river Ganga and the beauties of the mountains around there reminds Rāma of his memories. Later he familiarizes Sītā with the hermitage of Atri sage, the place where Anasūya let flow of the Ganga, the hermitages where sages are meditating from etc. Rāma says to Sītā that he is being reminded of the times when he used to sleep on her lap, tired, while the breeze from the river blew through them in the privacy of the reeds on the banks of river Godāvāri after returning from hunting. After that he describes *Çitrakūṭa*. In the 13<sup>th</sup> *sarga*, 47<sup>th</sup> *śloka*

“धारास्वनोद् गारीदरी मुखोसौ  
 श्रृगाग्रलग्नाम्बुदवप्रपन्कः |  
 बध्नाति मे बन्धुरगात्रि चक्षुर  
 दसःकुकुद्धानिव चित्रकूडः ||”<sup>77</sup>

Kāḷidāsa has equated the serene river Mandākini flowing by the mountains to a pearl necklace worn across the earth’s neck. Rāma shows her the cypress tree growing on the foot of the hills and says that it’s the fragrant scion of this tree that he changed into her earring as bright as ‘*Yavānkura*’ lit up by the radiance of your cheeks. After that

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid, *Raghuvamśa*, p.300



he shows her the banyan tree named *śyāmam* which Sītā had worshipped once. After that he showed her the place at which they began their life in the forest and talked about the highly dramatic scene which had happened there and the father like Sumantrar. He was showing her the Sarayu River, which has remained witness to the *Avabhṛta snānam* (a special consecration) several *Aśvamedha yāga* of *Ikṣvāku* kings. Sarayu River makes Rāma happy like his own mother. Rāma sees the matted Bharata, old mothers, Hanumān who is the reason for everything and the priest Vasiṣṭha. As Rāma said these things to Sītā the airplane landed understanding his wish. He stepped out of the plane, bowed down to the royal priest and embraced his brothers Bharata and Śatṛughna. Bharata bowed at them. The commanding monkeys in disguise of humans on the elephants, the demon kings on the chariots and Rāma on the slowly moving airplane set off to the garden in *Sāketa* (Ayodhya).

Bharata bowed down at a pleasant Sītā seated in the airplane. Everyone reached the garden in *Sāketa* after travelling in the airplane. The next time Sītā appears is the time when they pray worship to their mothers. Sītā prayed salutes to the mothers. Decorated by her mothers-in-law, Sītā brought happiness in the hearts of the women in *Sāketa*. At that moment Sītā tells them “I am the unlucky woman who brings

trouble to her husband” and she prays to her mothers. Here Sītā hints that it’s not her deeds but her ill luck which is the reason for all the trouble and that she is innocent. Here Kālidāsa suggests through the reply of the mothers that it’s solely because of her divine purity that Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa could surpass all the crisis situations. Later Sītā was decorated on a beautiful chariot and welcomed. Then, Kālidāsa says that Sītā lived there happily in Ayodhya for about a half of a month. And Rāma after executing the duties towards his subjects, rejoiced with Sītā in the nights. Kālidāsa has described this in the 14<sup>th</sup> *sarga* 24<sup>th</sup> *śloka* in this way

“स पौर कार्याणि समीक्ष्य काले  
रेमे विदेहाधिपतेर्दुहित्रा ।  
उपस्थितश्चारु वपुस्तदीयं  
कृत्वोप भोगोत्सुकयेव लक्ष्म्या ॥”<sup>78</sup>

Sītā, while staying with all comforts in the zenana, continued to recollect the memories including Rāma’s chivalrous tales, his pictures, stages etc. thus sharing her loneliness of mind. During that time Sītā brought joy to him by hinting that she is conceiving through her

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid, *Raghuvamśa*, p.317

glowing eyes and pale face. Kālidāsa has described this in the 14<sup>th</sup> *sarga* 26<sup>th</sup> *śloka*,

“अथाधिक स्निग्ध विलोचनेन  
मुखेन सीता शरपाण्डुरेण ।  
आनन्दयित्री परिणेतुरासी  
दनक्षरव्यञ्जित दौहृदेन ॥”<sup>79</sup>

When Rāma comes to know that his wife is pregnant he places the beautiful, and slender bodied Sītā on his lap and asks her about her pregnant time wish. As a reply Sītā tells him that’s he wants to visit the hermitages on the banks of the Bhāgīrati River. Rāma agreed to fulfill her wish. It was this time Rāma called for his spy Bhadran to know about the subjects’ opinion about him. When he pressed him upon the matter of taking care of the subjects he said that “the people are singing praises of all of your acts except for accepting Sītā who had lived in the demons’ palace”. He also declares that the people are in praise of all his activities. Infamy of his wife deepened the burden in his heart.

This has been described by Kālidāsa in 14<sup>th</sup> *sarga* 32<sup>nd</sup> *śloka*

“निर्बन्ध पृष्ठः स जगाद् सर्व  
स्तुवन्ति पौराश्वरितं तत्त्वदीयं ।

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid, *Raghuvamśa*, p.318

अन्यत्र रक्षो भवनोषिताया  
परिग्रहानमानव देवदेव्या ॥”<sup>80</sup>

When Rāma hears this his heart has been portrayed by Kālidāsa as

“कलत्र निन्दा गुरुणा किलैव  
मभ्याहतं कीर्तिविपर्ययेण ।  
अयोधनेनाय इवाभितप्तं  
वैदेहि बन्धोरहृदयं विदद्रे ॥”<sup>81</sup>

Rāma was startled by this infamy on his righteous wife. Should he stay restive by taking at ease the statement on the downfalls in his activities or renounce the harmless Sītā? Rāma’s heart kept oscillating between two sides. Sītā has lived for a long time with the evil demons. The people won’t believe that she is chaste. We can’t even blame them for that. People will think that I accepted her because of lust. It is a sin to keep an unchaste wife. If I, who is the protector if *Dharma* commits an *Adharma* act the people will consider me as one among those. How will I tolerate this? This will be an infamy not only for me but for the whole dynasty. Honor is better than life. It is better to destroy life and honor has to remain forever. It is the *Dharma of a Puruṣa* (masculine

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid, *Raghuvamśa*, p.320

<sup>81</sup> Ibid, *Raghuvamśa*, p.320

quality). But Rāma was in a dilemma here about taking an action. Shall I leave her? She has already tolerated a lot of troubles because of me and even if I renounce her will the infamy go away? It will be a matter of discussion that Rāma was incited with lust and that Sītā is unchaste for the years to come. If this bad name has to be erased it has to be proved that Sītā is chaste which is not possible easily. It will take time. Anything that touches our mind will gradually be erased. That is the nature of human beings. The acts of the kings should be praiseworthy by the subjects. Let Sītā secretly live in the hermitage of Vālmīki for some time. People should learn that I have renounced her and even let her think so. I and Sītā will have to tolerate immense pain.

The poet has described that the infamy about Sītā created fear in Rāma of fading his glory and Kālidāsa broke apart that agony like the red-hot iron hit by an iron pot. Kālidāsa draws the fickleness of Rāma's mind in this situation. Who can I ignore such enacts on himself? But on what reason will I renounce the chaste Sītā? Thus he became transient like a swing. When Rāma learns that infamy is larger than his own body and decides to abandon Sītā. Kālidāsa says it in 14<sup>th</sup> *sarga* 34<sup>th</sup> *śloka* of *Raghuvamśa*,

“किमात्म निर्वाद कथामुपेक्षे  
जायामदोषामुत सन्त्यजामि ।  
इत्येक पक्षाश्रय विकलवत्त्वा  
दासीत् स दोलाचलचितवृत्ति ॥”<sup>82</sup>

Rāma thought that there are no other solutions for this infamy and that he would erase the same by renouncing Sītā. For the glorious ones glory is important than themselves. Kālidāsa says that only secondary are the truths of sensual acts. In order to inform about his decision he calls for his brothers and lets them know of the infamy. Kālidāsa pictures that infamy as to the mirror by the humid air, and adds that he who is precise about moral behavior has been disgraced.

“राजर्षि वंशस्य रविप्रसूते  
उपस्थितः पश्यतः कीदृशोयं ।  
मत्तः सदाचारशुचे कलङ्कः  
पयोद वातादिव दर्पणस्य ॥”<sup>83</sup>

In order to erase this disgrace, I have decided to denounce Sītā being aware that she is conceiving. I know that she is chaste but there is no use of it. The subjects should be able to believe that and the trust of the people is important. It is the duty of a king to surrender to the opinion

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid, *Raghuvamśa*, p.321

<sup>83</sup> Ibid, *Raghuvamśa*, p.322

of the people even though it is wrong. All the effort until the killing of Rāvaṇa would be considered as to take revenge. It is the duty of a warrior to kill Rāvaṇa who abducted the wife of another man. So you all should agree to the renouncement of Sītā. If I have to live after the disgrace on myself and Sītā gets erased. Hearing such a brutal decision his brother got numb as said in the 14<sup>th</sup> *sarga* 39<sup>th</sup> *śloka*.

“तस्योपनादाय फलप्रवृत्ता  
उपस्थितायामपि निवृत्यपेक्षा |  
त्यक्षामि वैदेहसुतां पुरस्तात्  
समुद्र नेमिं पितुराज्ञयेव ॥”<sup>84</sup>

Rāma knows that Sītā hasn't done any fault and what people are accusing of the dirt on the pure image of the moon is just the shadow of the earth. Kālidāsa says that in the eyes of Rāma what is important is the disgrace on Rāma. Immediately he calls for his brother Lakṣmaṇa who executes any command of him and gave him orders. Sītā wishes to go to the hermitages she had lived before and in the pretense of granting her wish you have to leave Sītā near the hermitage of Vālmīki carrying her in the chariot as described in the 14<sup>th</sup> *sarga* 45<sup>th</sup> *śloka* as

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid, *Raghuvamśa*, p.323

“प्रजावती दोहत शंसिनि ते  
 तपोवनेषु स्पृहयालुरेव ।  
 स त्वं रथी तदवपदेशनेयां  
 प्रापयै वाल्मीकि पदं त्यजैनाम् ॥”<sup>85</sup>

Lakṣmaṇa, who executes the commands of Rāma word to word, sets out to the forest along with Sītā, like Bhṛgu Rāma who believes in his teacher’s words like its unbreakable. When she was carried along the beautiful geography Sītā was saying praises of her husband but at that time she wasn’t aware that she has been renounced by her husband. In the journey along with Lakṣmaṇa, her left eye fluttered slightly which she thought as a bad omen and turned grim while quickly wishing of the wellbeing of Rāma and his brothers. It seemed like Gaṇa was trying to forbid Lakṣmaṇa by her rising tide like hands when he was about to abandon Sītā in the forest as per the orders of his elder brother. Immediately the charioteer stopped the horses and let Sītā climb down near the banks of the river and crossed the river in the boat brought by *Niṣāda*. He later informed her about the orders of Rāma. Kāḷidāsa has described this as the flooded clouds like a lightning. Here Kāḷidāsa is trying to draw the picture of Sītā’s mind at this juncture. After listening to this Sītā dropped on to the earth like the flowers during the storm.

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid, *Raghuvamśa*, p.325



Sītā had lost her consciousness by then. So she wasn't aware of her grief. Later when she regained her consciousness she couldn't bear her agony. But a matured Sītā doesn't blame her husband who has rejected her with no particular reason. She blamed her own ill fate to continuously be in pain. Kālidāsa has described this in the 14<sup>th</sup> *sarga* 57<sup>th</sup> *śloka* as

“न चावदद् भर्तुरवर्णमार्या  
निराकरिष्णोरवृजिनादृतेपि ।  
आत्मानमेव स्थिर दुख भाजं  
पुनः पुनः दुष्कृतिनं निनिन्द ॥”<sup>86</sup>

While Lakṣmaṇa tried to console Sītā and showed her the way to Vālmīki asking her to forgive his harshness for having to execute Rāma's commands. Sītā says according to the 14<sup>th</sup> *sarga* 59<sup>th</sup> *śloka*

“सीता तमुत्थाप्य जगाद वाक्यं  
प्रीतास्मि ते सौम्य चिराय जीव ।  
बिडौजसा विष्णुरिवाग्रजेन  
भ्राता यदित्थं परिवानासि त्वम् ॥”<sup>87</sup>

To Lakṣmaṇa as a revengeful word towards Rāma. I love you and may you live forever. You had to do this because you are dependent on

<sup>86</sup> Ibid, *Raghuvamśa*, p.328

<sup>87</sup> Ibid, *Raghuvamśa*, p.329

Rāma like Viṣṇu due to the elder brother Indra. Also after praying salutes to everybody please inform the following “You should have it in your mind about the seed of a son inside me. You should tell King Rāma my words that was that appropriate to his learning to renounce her due to a gossip even after proving purity by test of fire in his presence? Is it appropriate to the race?

This question need not be a counter question of Sītā. Sītā informs Lakṣmaṇa the possibility of an infamy for Rāma, a learned and hailing from a respectful race, for punishing a pregnant Sītā without any investigation. What caused Sītā to protest is the decision and the method of execution. Moreover Kālidāsa explains that situation as “मोहादभूत् कष्टतरः प्रबोधः”. We cannot find another woman on searching the entire world literature who says such great words like a goodbye message to Lakṣmaṇa with immense emotional equanimity and honor suitable to a queen. Sītā’s words are highly warm, honorable, radiant and spreading light. Sītā’s such mature and easily flowing words during a turbulent situation are continuously flowing into the mind. In 14<sup>th</sup> *sarga* 61<sup>st</sup> *śloka*

“वाच्यसत्वया मद्वचनात् स राजा  
 वह्नौ विशुद्धामपि यत् समक्षं ।  
 मां लोकवाद श्रवणादहासि  
 श्रुतस्य किं तद्सदृशं कुलस्य ॥”<sup>88</sup>

Sītā later consoles herself that it would be as a result of her faults in the previous births. Here Kālidāsa projects the dutiful, poised nature of Sītā. Here Sītā declares three things- that she wouldn't return hence, that's he wouldn't commit suicide, and the firm decision to deliver and bring up the sons of Rāma. So Sītā tries to meditate to the sun after her delivery that Rāma should be her life even in the next birth and prays that there shouldn't be any separation. Through this *śloka* Kālidāsa is trying to say that Sītā doesn't have any vengeance or spite towards Rāma and that she can't think of anybody else as her husband other than Rāma even in the next birth. In 14<sup>th</sup> *sarga* 67<sup>th</sup> *śloka*

“नृपस्य वर्णाश्रमपालनं यत्  
 स एव धर्मो मनुना प्रणीतः ।  
 निर्वासिताप्येव मतस्त्वयाहं  
 तपस्विसामान्य भवेक्षणीया ॥”<sup>89</sup>

<sup>88</sup> Ibid, *Raghuvamśa*, p.329

<sup>89</sup> Ibid, *Raghuvamśa*, p.331

It is the duty of a king to maintain the institution of caste which has been advised by Manu. Even though I have been abandoned from my own life I think that I will receive the consideration of a sage like others at Vālmīki's *āśrama*. Sītā sends her message to Rāma through Lakṣmaṇa in highly refined words suitable for her noble character without missing a bit of muddiness. Here I deserve the protection of a sage which she reminds Rāma. When we try to read through the lines it also seems that what she hints is that she doesn't need any special consideration and that she would accept the consideration been given to the sagely women. But she doesn't talk like in discomfiture. It is by the understanding of the anxiety and precaution in her protection while leaving her in the premises of the hermitage of Vālmīki that she said the above words. When Lakṣmaṇa after receiving the message from Sītā disappears from her vision she broke into tears.

Kālidāsa has described this situation of Sītā by saying that he peacocks stopped dancing. The trees shed flowers. The Deers left the grass they had bitten. The whole forest reflected Sītā's sadness. Here Kālidāsa draws a picture of the philosophy that all the living things in this world are connected to each other. The sage Vālmīki, the poet who had sung his heart's agony, by seeing the bird killed by the arrow of a hunter, in the form of *śloka*, had set out to collect *Darbha* (sacred grass)

and *çamata* (sacred plant) heard the cry and reached in front of Sītā. Sītā stopped crying and wiped off the tears forbidding her eyesight and bowed down in front of the sage. Vālmīki noticed that Sītā is pregnant and wishes her a good delivery by saying that in the 14<sup>th</sup> *sarga* 72<sup>nd</sup> *śloka*

“जाने विसृष्टं प्राणिधातस्त्वां

मिथ्यापवाद क्षुपितेन भर्ता ।

तन्माव्यथिष्ठा विषयान्तरस्थं

प्राप्तासि वैदेहि पितुर्निकेतं ॥ ”<sup>90</sup>

That I come to know by my meditative powers that your husband has renounced you after being enraged by a false gossip. You don't need to be sad about it. You have reached another refuge which is like your father's place. I have reservations against that Rāma who has done injustice towards you unreasonably even though he has killed the enemy of all the three worlds, who stands firm on truth and who does boast about himself as said in the 14<sup>th</sup> *sarga* 73<sup>rd</sup> *śloka*

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid, *Raghuvamśa*, p.333

“उद्खात लोकत्रय कण्डकेपि

सत्य प्रतिज्ञेप्य विकतथनेपि ।

त्वां प्रत्यकस्मात् कलुष प्रवृत्ता

वसत्येव मन्युर्भरताग्रजे मे ॥”<sup>91</sup>

After that Vālmīki says that what will be respected is solely Sītā’s purity and not her husband’s glory or father’s greatness. You can live in this hermitage with a lot of gentle animals without fear if you mingle with the saints. We can also conduct the birth ceremony of the sons of you who hasn’t committed any sins. He says that she can live there along with the benevolent, saintly women by taking bath in the *Tamasa* river and praying salutations, and that she can conduct the birth ceremony when she delivers a child and also you can feel effect of breast feeding even before the delivery by growing the trees in the hermitage campus irrigated using pots with high strength. With a melted heart due to his kindness, Vālmīki took her, the one who thanked him happily for giving protection, to his peaceful hermitage. Vālmīki handed over Sītā, who had become tender due to grief, with immense happiness to the saints like offering the last crescent moon whose juices the forefathers have relished. She was given shelter at a newly built hermitage roofed with the deerskin and where you can find

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid, *Raghuvamśa*, p.334

the lamp moistened with oil. For the sake of her sons Sita lives in the forest wearing tree barks and having only fruits.

Vālmīki had doubts about the statements on the gossip right when he heard about the arrival of Rāma along with Sītā after the battle with Rāvaṇa. He thought that Rāma is tactful enough to take righteous decisions and that he would do something to suppress it. He also thought that in case it doesn't happen he will take necessary actions. The sage was convinced that he himself had to do something when saw Sītā abandoned near her hermitage. He could guess that it was Rāma's intent to leave her in the premises of his hermitage. Else he could have left her anywhere else. Thinking of his love and indebtedness towards the fathers of both Rāma and Sītā, he took up the responsibility of solving the infamy. He tried to hide the matter that Sītā lives in the hermitage. He was thinking how to change the mindset of the people. Vālmīki has no doubts about the chastity of Sītā. He found a way to find trust of the people. He decides to write a poetry named *Rāmāyaṇa* describing the true story of Rāma. He believed that he could propagate *Rāmāyaṇa* as time passes when the intensity of the infamy about Rāma fades away. Living in such a situation Sītā was sure about two things. One that even if he leaves her he will accept her sons and the second that Rāma wouldn't marry again.

But Kālidāsa says that Rāma shed tears in this situation. In it he has describes that like *Pauṣamāsa* moon, Rāma, with fear of infamy, deported Sītā from her house. Even though he has heart full of love, his intelligence is dominated by his pride. In the fight between intelligence and mind, it is always the intelligence which wins. Having everything to live comfortably, this weakness reduces happiness. Meanwhile Śatrughna, whom Rāma had sent to enquire the wellbeing of the sages, while was passing through that forest found shelter at Vālmīki's hermitage. The same day Sītā gave birth to two sons. When Śatrughna was set out to inform Rāma the good news that he has become a father, Sītā said to him that she would take the sons and meet Rāma when the right moment comes and until then not to reveal anything related to Sītā.

“तस्यामेवास्य यामिन्या

अन्तर्वर्त्तिर्म प्रजावती ।

सूतावसूत सम्पनौ

कोशदण्डाविव क्षितिः ॥”<sup>92</sup>

In the 13<sup>th</sup> *śloka* Vālmīki conducted all the necessary rites for the birth ceremony for the two sons of Sītā. Also he named them as Kuśa and

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid, *Raghuvamśa*, p.341



Lava. When their childhoods was about to finish he taught him the *vedas* and also made them learn to recite *Rāmāyaṇa* the work which would be a guide to all the poets. He had specifically told them not to take any gifts from anybody. They sang *Rāmāyaṇa* travelling to various countries. The mellifluous voice of the curious children and the story of Rāma touched the hearts of a lot of people. Later the sons of Sītā also sang around *Rāmāyaṇa*, written by Vālmīki, at the *Aśvamedha yāga* of Rāma as per the intent of their teacher. The court assembly deep engrossed by the recitation, shed tears like the forest where the morning dew drops fall in the slightly windy early mornings. Their regret towards making gossip about the righteous King and Sītā vented out as tears. In some them it was seen as the symbol of happiness. The people were awestruck to find the resemblances between the children and Rāma except for their age and attire. In the 15<sup>th</sup> *sarga* 66<sup>th</sup> *śloka*

“वयोवेष विसंवादी  
 रामस्य च तयोस्तदा |  
 जनता प्रेक्ष्य सादृश्यं  
 नाक्षिकम्पं व्यतिष्ठत ॥”<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid, *Raghuvamśa*, p.349

The people were even more surprised by the way they denied the offers extended by the King pleased by their singing instead of the talent of the children itself. When Rāma asked them who wrote the poetry and who had taught them the same the children pointed towards Vālmīki

“गेय केन विनीतौ वां

कस्य चेयं कृतिः कवेः ।

इति राजा स्वयं पृष्टौ

तौ वाल्मीकि मशंसतां ॥”<sup>94</sup>

Hearing this Rāma offered the entire country except for love as a gift for the poetry.” I am your servant and the entire country is under you” he said. As a reply Vālmīki said that the price for the poetry is to accept Sītā Rāma had expected that. Which is why he excluded his body when he surrendered the country to him, and said to Vālmīki that your daughter had proved her purity by the test of fire. Since the demon was very dangerous the people here haven’t accepted that. So let Sītā prove her chastity in front of everyone. Let the people have trust in her. After that I will accept Sītā along with the sons according to your orders.

Kālidāsa has described this in

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid, *Raghuvamśa*, p.350

“तात शुद्धा समक्षं नः  
 स्नुषा ते जात वेदसी ।  
 दौर्यात्मया द्रक्षससतां तु  
 नात्रत्या श्रद्धथुः प्रजाः ॥”<sup>95</sup>

Here Rāma accepts Vālmīki’s requirement with conditions in 15<sup>th</sup>  
*sarga 72<sup>nd</sup> śloka*

“ता स्व चारित्र मुद्धिश्य  
 प्रत्याययतु मैथली ।  
 ततः पुत्रवतीमेनां  
 प्रतिपस्ये त्वदाज्ञया ॥”

Immediately Vālmīki sent for his disciples to bring Sītā. He then arranged a meeting with the people of the hermitage and the poets. And approached Rāma along with the two sons as a saint with culture and attitude. Sītā, who had fixed her eyes in between her feet, with the saffron attire, already displayed that she is pure. Kālidāsa describes that in 15<sup>th</sup> *sarga 75<sup>th</sup> śloka*

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid, *Raghuvamśa*, p.351

“काषाय परिवीतेन  
 स्वपादार्षित चक्षुषा ।  
 अन्वमीयत शुद्धेति  
 शान्तेन वपुषैव सा ॥”<sup>96</sup>

At that time Vālmīki say to Sītā, for whom her husband’s vision was an issue, to relieve people of their doubts about your purity. As a reply Sītā says the following after drinking the sacred water from the disciple of Vālmīki in the 15<sup>th</sup> *sarga* 79<sup>th</sup> *śloka*

“वाङ्मन कर्मभिः पत्यौ  
 व्यभिचारो यथा न मे ।  
 तथा बिरवंबरे देवी  
 मामन्तर्धातु मर्हसि ॥”

Dear goddess of earth, please hide me if I haven’t deviated from the path of my husband by words, mind or action. Hearing this request the mother earth, who lives in the ocean, appeared before everyone in tears, breaking the earth open like a bright radiance. She disappeared by placing Sītā, on whom the eyes of Rāma was fixed, on her lap. While Rāma was trying to stop them Sītā descends into the earth

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid, *Raghuvamśa*, p.352

“सा सीता मङ्ग मारोप्य  
 भर्तृप्रणिहिते क्षणां ।  
 मा मेति व्याहरत्येव  
 तस्मिन् पातालमभ्यगात् ॥”<sup>97</sup>

Rāma showed his anger to the goddess of earth using his bow but in vain. Rāma had vengeance towards the country when he raised that he had lost Sītā forever. The royal teacher tried to console Rāma when he raised that the country has lost a great ruler by saying it’s all the result of our own actions and that nobody can stop the power of fate. Rāma expressed his love for Sītā on his sons after sending off the friends and sages after the yāga. Kālidāsa enlightens us about the renouncement of Sītā as a secret meaning one and is an omen to greatness.

“फलानुमेया प्रारंभा संस्काराः प्रकृता इव”<sup>98</sup>

Here Kālidāsa has mentioned it not only as a quality of a casted individual but that of the common people. And suggests by the situation that for the rulers it is dispensable. Kālidāsa also projects the fact that because of this secrecy that individual would fall prey to their

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid, *Raghuvamśa*, p.354

<sup>98</sup> Mādhavan Ayyappath, *Raghuvamśa*, Kerala Sāhitya Academy, Thrissur 2016. p.33

disgrace. With respect to Rāma, renouncement of Sītā became the reason for the arrows of gossip and not only during his life but also in the later life this was maintained. Kālidāsa specifically displays the meaning behind it as he considered it as a wrong thing to humiliate something done with good intent. Kālidāsa is lying hidden by hinting upon it here and there in the poetry. The ideal poetry is signified by its metaphors. In that one moment vanished his dream to be reunited since the renouncement. Rāma viewed renouncement as a solution for maintain dharma and not a permanent separation. But a man who completely trusts in the chastity of his wife needn't consider important any infamy about her. By writing *Rāmāyaṇa* Vālmīki aimed at two things namely to eliminate the dishonor on Sītā and to create a model for the greatness of a human being. He could fulfill both his aims. Here when he says according to wish of the people even Sītā is included in it. She is a human being, and so a punishment regarding an accusation is to be done based on justice and not people's wish. That individual has to be given an opportunity to prove her innocence and once proved be punished. That is the *Dharma* executed since Manu.

Here there is no question on the accusation. Letting Sītā an option to resign from her queenly status after informing her about it, the method of execution was like banishing her off the kingdom. That

too not revealing the matter until she has been moved out of the country like cheating. What we see to have been forgotten here are some manners human beings show to other fellow human beings. Here each activity done by Rāma is through power which has been kept by the men of generations together. Here that has been hidden by wrapping it up with the ideal of the wish of the subjects. Was it right of a husband to ensure the gossip by sending her off for protecting the country and himself and to erase the disgrace even after believing in the chastity of Sītā .And then he says that everything is the duty of a King. If that was the case Sītā should have been informed about it before the renouncement. Isn't it the just way? There will be another onto rule Ayodhya after Rāma. No country has become nonexistent being disowned by a ruler so even after knowing the truth behind chastity there was only way to prove to the people again that the gossip is unreasonable by forsaking the kingship. Sītā would have thought that Rāma didn't come wither by leaving the throne to one of his brothers. Humanity is even beyond power and palace and why didn't Rāma leave those outrages which would offend it. Didn't Rāma show the peak of cruelty to Sītā with a pretense of *Dharma*? Rāma was also affected by the desire to become a king. But Sītā even though grew up in a palace, was not born to the dynasty of rulers, she is born from the earth, so the

city and palace is alien to her and what is of her own is the forest and the village. Even in dreams would the status of a queen worry Sītā. It is the reason she could easily accept the descent which would amplify her glory day by day.

In *Raghuvamśa* Vālmīki's Sītā has been portrayed through another perspective. The poet has picturised in *Raghuvamśa* the chastity and emotional explosion of *Rāmāyaṇa* sītā even more by scenes which project them than destroying the feeling. Unlike *Rāmāyaṇa*'s silent Sītā, Kālidāsa's Sītā reacts, and has been changed to a person full of life. Kālidāsa has clarified in the 14<sup>th</sup> *sarga* that renouncement of Sītā is not a justifiable act of Rāma.

In this chapter *Raghuvamśa* written by Kālidāsa has been included as an important work for studying Sītā. Along with that the work of Bhavabhūti's *Uttararāmaçarita* has also been included.

### **Sītā in *Uttararāmaçarita***

Bhavabhūti is a famous poet who made a screenplay for a dram from the story of Rāma. His two works based on *Rāmāyaṇa* is *Mahāvīraçarita* and *Uttararāmaçarita*. Bhavabhūti is a great playwright who lived in the 7<sup>th</sup> century A.D. He was the poet of the royal court of Yaśovarma. He was born at Padmapura. His father's name was Nīlakaṇṭhan and mother's name was Jātakarṇi. His original



name is Śrīkaṇṭhan. According to the statement “Poet till the end of the play”, Bhavabhūti has been considered second after Vālmīki. Bhavabhūti is a poet who has observed the nuanced emotions in human life. He is a poet with poetic sense and expertise in theater. We can find bountiful rhythm in the works of Bhavabhūti.” We can see immense impulse and sentimentality in Bhavabhūti. The character of Bhavabhūti, Rāma, has more humanity than kingly nature.

In Bhavabhūti’s plays, all the descriptions have been heart touching due to the pressure created by the situations and the tension in the emotions. There are so many melodramatic scenes in this play which choke the readers by portraying the despair and poignancy occurring to the heroine and hero due to the impulsive sadness beginning after the renouncement of Sītā in an immensely vocal and elaborate manner. Bhavabhūti is a poet who has influenced Kālidāsa immensely.” “कारुण्यं भवभूतिरेव तनुते” is been said about Bhavabhūti.

He is least interested in humor. He used to write plays based on *Rāmāyaṇa* story since long as mentioned in *Harivaṃśa*

“रामायणं महाकाव्यमुद्दिश्य नाटकं कृतं ।

जन्म विष्णोरमेयस्य राक्षसेन्द्र वधेप्सया ॥”<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Father Kāmil Bulcke, *RāmaKatha*, Kerala Sāhitya Academy, Thrissur 1978. p.157

Several changes have been made from the perspective of the substance of the story compared to the other great poetry. He is a scholar in Grammar, Justice, Logic, Statistics, *Yoga* and *Vedānta*. Bhavabhūti has passion towards theater since childhood. He has travelled a lot along with the actors. There are three main plays of him: *Mālatīmādhava*, *Mahāvīraçarita*, and *Uttararāmaçarita*, *Mālatīmādhava* is a story of his own imagination. The main emotion of the play is love. The storyline of *Mahāvīraçarita* is the story of *Rāmāyaṇa*. The main emotions in this is valour. But unlike all these it is the story of *Uttararāmāyaṇa* which he has taken as the storyline for *Uttararāmaçarita*. It is mainly focused on the emotion of compassion. But he has made some changes in *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*. Bhavabhūti is a poet who has celebrated the idea that there is only one emotion which is compassion. If it would have followed the symptoms of a play it would have been a tragedy. Such a human life imagined by Bhavabhūti is to cry and make others cry. This is the reason behind the success of the play. The compassion of Rāma in *Uttararāmaçarita* is equal to sublimation. *Uttararāmaçarita* is an entanglement between the extravagance of language, the expansiveness of the poetry, the

constancy of the situations and the characters, the uniqueness of the scenes, the tension in the emotions”<sup>100</sup>.

There are 7 scenes in this play. The story of *Uttarakāṇḍa* from *Rāmāyaṇa* has been presented in another form. It is a description of the renouncement of Sītā due to the infamy by the world. The story portrayed is from renouncing Sītā to the reunion. In the first scene, *Çitradarśana*, while sitting near Sītā Rāma’s grief begins as he recollects the old stories. All 5 senses of the hero is full of desire. But there is both clarity and fog in the mind. This is just an early symptom of the upcoming obstacles. This grief turns to a loud cry “Ayyayyo” as Rāma prepares to renounce Sītā after hearing the story of infamy from the cruel demon. Later that grief extends through several addresses. Thus with immense sadness the poet moves to the second chapter.

After the coronation ceremony Rāma and Sītā becomes alone in Ayodhya. Janaka and the other king’s return and Kausalya and other mothers are participating in the *yāga* organized at *Rsiśrngā*’s hermitage due to which Sītā turns sad but Rāma consoles her. At that juncture Rāma receives a message from Vasiṣṭha. The message was that the most ideal way of performing royal duties is to go according to the

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<sup>100</sup> S.K.Nair, *Mullapūmāla*, Giridīpam press, Kadambanad,1978. p.20

people's wishes. Rāma replies that he will act accordingly. Lakṣmaṇa builds a gallery in the palace to make the pregnant Sītā happy. When she watched the picture of her times at the forest she wished to see those pristine places once again. Rāma agreed to fulfill her wishes. Meanwhile the spies who had been sent to know the opinion of the subjects had returned and they inform that people have doubts about the chastity of Sītā who had spent time in the kingdom of Rāvaṇa. Rāma became sad due to his love for Sītā and people's wishes. Finally deciding to prioritize people's wishes he decides to renounce Sītā. Lakṣmaṇa, according to Rāma's orders, leave Sītā near the premises of Vālmīki's *ashram* after bringing her to Pañcavaṭi in a chariot with great reluctance. Being renounced Sītā jumps into the river in the middle of the forest. There she gives birth to two children. The goddess of earth appears along with Gangādevi and take Sītā and her children and hands over at Vālmīki's *āśrama*. Rāma kill the demon Śambhukan in *Daṇḍakāraṇya* forest and rescues the children. Śambhuka who takes his divine form invites Rāma to see the views at *Daṇḍakāraṇya* forest. Rāma becomes restless when he visits the places he had spent with Sītā. Even Vāsanti, Anasūya important character even begins to desire hearing the story of her.

The third act is where the peak of despair begin to dance. On one side Rāma and Vāsanti who are prepared to cry, to make cry and to fall for desire and on the other side Sītā and Tamasa seem like they are competing with each other. Even before meeting with Rāma Sītā falls down unconscious to hear the story of her adopted son the elephant calf. Later she meets Rāma in person and listens to his grief, sees him drop down unconscious, and when she returns she falls unconscious again thus the fourth time in the peak of emotion during this play. While Rāma's grief breaks al its boundaries and starts flowing out. Many a times he grieves to himself by telling it all out aloud without even taking a breath. The poet forgot that such unnecessary shrieks would make the listeners indifferent. Even the fourth act is full of despair. The only difference is that the characters change in this scene. Janaka cries due to his separation from his daughter. Kausalya not only cries but reaches the trance. The 5<sup>th</sup> and the 6<sup>th</sup> acts are two acts without the disturbance of any poignant moments. So those two scenes are comparatively better. In the 7<sup>th</sup> act, he again describes Rāma's grief and poignancy through an inner eye into the play.

Hearing about Rāma's arrival Gangādevi brings Sītā along with her. By the blessings of Gangadevi nobody can see Sītā. While she can see everyone. Rāma falls down unconscious to see certain parts of

Pañcavaṭi. All those time Sītā consoles Rāma. When Rāma feels the touch of Sītā he wakes up and cries out aloud by her name. Janaka who comes to know of Sītā's abandonment accepts *Vānaprasta* (monkhood). Vasiṣṭha, Arundhati and Sumantrar reaches Vālmīki's *āśrama*. Janaka feels affection for Lava the son of Sītā. Kausalya could find the similar features of Rāma in Lava. The children go with Lava to see the unique animal in the *āśrama*. Lava ties it up when he comes to know that it is the sacred horse for the *Aśvamedha Yāga* of King Rāma. Lava gets into a battle with Lakṣmaṇa's son Çandraketu who is the protector of the horse. At that time Rāma arrives there and Çandraketu stops the fight and informs him about Lava's chivalry. Knowing that its Rāma Lava bows down in front of him. Rāma feels a soulful connection towards him unaware. At that time all the people from the *āśrama* reach there. Rāma stands there unable to face Janaka and Kausalya. The play has 7 acts written by Vālmīki. The actors here are the fairies. Janaka, Kausalya and Vasiṣṭha comes as per the invitation to watch the play and Śrīrāma, Lakṣmaṇa and other important people from the kingdom arrive there as per the invitation by Vālmīki. Sītā is behind the curtain. The storyline is the story right after the renouncement of Sītā. The play begins with the statement that Sītā jumps into Ganga River after being renounced by Rāma. Rāma falls

down unconscious at each act of this play. How much ever Lakṣmaṇa tries to console him he fails.

Finally Vālmīki himself hands over Sītā and her sons to Rāma. Rāma accept his wife and children with wishes from the people and in the presence of the elites. Thus sends the play *Uttararāmaçarita*. *Uttararāmaçarita* is the best work of Bhavabhūti like the importance deserved by *Śākuntala* from among the works of Kālidāsa. In his works he gives immense care to make the audience understand by giving sufficient details about the race, *Gotra* (tribe), parents, teacher etc. with their name, skills etc. *Uttararāmaçarita* doesn't fall behind in its knowledge on the language, skill of presentation, expertise in creation etc. This work was enough to attract the people of those times. While in the last play *Uttararāmaçarita*, what we see is a poet who is not a great man who feels content after receiving the special recognition of the common people but a playwright who is radiant with a stable brain and with a highly mature mind which survives the back to back grief and tragedies. Even though he has presented other emotions like valour and love nothing is as beautiful as the emotion of sadness. Bhavabhūti has been successful in presenting the true greatness of love and the holiness of the ideal men and precious women reflected in his ideas with changes which would give joy to the hearts of the enthusiasts.

“एको रसः करुण एव निमित्तभेदाद्  
भिन्नः पृथक् पृथगिवाश्रयते विवर्तान् ।  
आवर्तबुद्बुदतरंगमयान् विकार  
अम्बो यथा सलिलमेवहितत् समस्तः ॥”<sup>101</sup>

The poet who makes *Tamasa* speak the above is actually expressing his own mind. The reason why the work was strong enough to make the people say “उत्तरे रामचरिते भवभूतिर्विशिष्यते”<sup>102</sup> about the play is the same. During the times of Bhavabhūti the writer’s ‘*Vamsagīti śāstra*’ (stating of poets family history) had already been enforced. Even the playwrights had to follow many rules like the other art forms. Bhavabhūti was very much interested in obeying each of them.

We don’t feel that Vālmīki’s Sītā and Bhavabhūti’s Sītā are the same. When unreasonably renounced, Vālmīki’s Sītā proudly questions

“वाच्यस्त्वया मद्बचनात् स राजा  
वह्नौ विशुद्धा अपियत् समक्षं ।  
मा लोकवाद श्रवणादहासी  
श्रुतस्य किं तत् सदृशं कुलस्य ॥”<sup>103</sup>

<sup>101</sup> Mavelikkara Aćutan, *Samskrta Vāᅅgmaya*, National Bookstall, Kottayam, 1977. p.80

<sup>102</sup> R.D.Karmārkar, *Uttararāmaćarita* of Bhavabhūti, Ćaukāmba Sanskrit pratiśtān, Delhi, 2002. p.25

<sup>103</sup> Kālidāsan, *Raghuvamśa*, Kerala Sāhitya Academy, Thrissur, 2016. p.329



And consoles herself by saying

“कल्याणबुद्धेरथवा तवायं  
न कामचारो मयि शङ्कनीयः ।  
ममैव जन्मान्तर पातकानां  
विपाक विस्फूर्जरप्रसह्यः ॥”

And cries helplessly as

“शरणार्थमन्यु कथं प्रपस्ये त्वयि दीप्यमाने ॥”

And reminds us of dharma in a peaceful manner as

“निवसिताप्येवमते सत्व याहं तपस्वि सामान्यमवेक्षणीय ”

And takes the oath as

“साहं तपः सूर्य निविष्ट दृष्टि रूर्द्ध प्रसूते श्वरितं यतिष्ये ।  
भूयो यथा मे जननान्तरेपित्वमेव भर्तान विप्रयोगः ॥”

But the Sītā we see in *Uttararāmaçarita* is not the same.

We can't see anything more than a normal Sītā who doesn't exhibit any patience or courage and thinks of committing suicide during her bad times even though she is the dearest of her husband and very benevolent. In the end, the mental state of Kālidāsa's Sītā wasn't allowing her to stay content under the earth after proving her chastity again. We can't find any appositeness in Bhavabhūti's Sītā returning for the worldly pleasures with the blessings of the very affectionate

mothers. We can see this comparison with respect to the characterization in each character of the works of both the poets.

We can find the differences in the works *Raghuvamśa* and *Uttararāmaçarita* in the feelings and characteristic features of the creators of the works. Both the poets describe nature and the kingdom. While Kālidāsa showcases the pure and beautiful pictures of the nature in a very synthetic and simple language. But Bhavabhūti expresses his intent through descriptions which are appropriate to the situation and with extravagance of decorative words. We can't find a place for the jester with an edge for wits which makes Kālidāsa's works beautiful from the beginning till the end. The reason for this would be the great and precise mindset of Bhavabhūti that the world space isn't that smooth that it can be spent alone by laughing. When Kālidāsa's characters express their heart-wrecking pain with a sigh or one two hints, Bhavabhūti's characters melt even the stones by their heart-rending rues. The 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> scenes of *Uttararāmaçarita* are proofs to this. Bhavabhūti has worked his imaginations on making the pots filled with poison, which seem like those of elixir, to reveal themselves by understanding the undercurrents and deep pits lying in the grounds deep under the mind and not considering the peaceful façade.

Even though Bhavabhūti and Kālidāsa have equal expertise, we can understand that their premises of work are like the poles. From the perspective of the story, the most interesting act of the play is the last act. It has been described in *Uttararāmaçarita*, about enacting a play, by merging the stories based on Sītā's story including her renouncement, birth of Kuśa and Lava etc., written by Vālmīki, at his *āśrama* itself in the presence of Rāma and the people of Ayodhya. The entire audience believes the innocence of Sītā and Rāma returns to Ayodhya along with Sītā and Kuśa and Lava. In Bhavabhūti's *Uttararāmaçarita*, this last act has been named "Sammelanam" (an assembly). In this act, the reunion of Rāma and Sītā has been described in detail. Apart from this Bhavabhūti has penned another two plays namely *Mahāvīraçarita* and *Mālatīmādhava*. In *Mahāvīraçarita*, the entire story of the 6 *kāṇḍās* of *Rāmāyaṇa* are presented with slight changes. Here the depiction is the early vengeance of Rāvaṇa towards Rāma due to his desires for a woman. Both of them try to marry Sītā but Rāma wins. For this reason Rāvaṇa tries to destroy Rāma in various ways. These attempts become the reason for the integrity of the story line and the enjoyment of the play.

Bhavabhūti also executes a novel technique by presenting the happenings after the renouncement of Sītā in front of Rāma and other

people through an inner-play .This play became the best play in Sanskrit theater because of its each heartwarming act and the viewpoint based on human compassion. Rāma killing Śambūka and renouncing Sītā have been refined in *Uttararāmaçarita* from a broader viewpoint based on humane values. How much ever spectacular changes happen in the world history the epic works always remain. *Uttararāmaçarita* is such a work. We don't feel any anger towards Rāma even if he does a cruel act by renouncing Sītā. Rāma expresses his ideal of sacrifice in the first act itself by saying that he is ready to even renounce Janaki apart from his happiness and comforts for the wellbeing of the people. But then in a way renounces Sītā who is dearer to him than his own soul. We can see that after renouncing Sītā, the sad memories of Rāma tormenting her. At Pañçavaṭi, weak due her pregnancy Sītā calls out "Dear, please hold me" when she sees Rāma and falls unconscious, and Sītā making Rāma, who had dropped to the ground in the thoughts on a past with Sītā, relive stroking with her own fingers etc. are poet's portrayal using the poetically beautiful words selected from the bottom of the heart. Even though Rāma gets anxious recognizing the touch of the fingers of Sītā he is not able to see her to the blessing of the goddesses of the forest.

“दलितः हृदयं शोकेद्वेगाद्विधातु भिद्यते  
 वहति विकलः कायो मोहं नमुञ्चति चेतनाम ।  
 ज्वलय नितन्दुअन्तर दोह करोति नभसमसात्  
 प्रहरति विधिमम्म छेदीन कृन्तती जीवितं ॥”<sup>104</sup>

This story even though is filled with grief doesn't end sadly which is an idea worth mentioning. Since fun is the life of theater if there is scarcity in that none of the other qualities will be shown. It is beyond argument that the grief due to the renouncement of Sītā is filling beyond bounds. We can find in this play that how many times this grief has reached its peak after flowing in a sinusoidal manner. Until the fourth act, the poet is pulling both Sītā and Rāma from the ocean of grief. We can't blame Rāma even after he has committed a brutal act like renouncing Sītā .The reason behind it is that the poet has made the state of mind due to the renouncement of Sītā as a tolerable pain. Sītā had the desire to travel through the highly pleasant forests after seeing the beautiful pictures of the stories of life in the forest by a painter named Arjuna. Soon the gossips on Sītā reached the ears of Rāma. It has been decided to leave Sītā in the forest in pretense of visit to the

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<sup>104</sup> R.D.Karmārkar, *Uttararāmaçarita* of Bhavabhūti, Çaukāmba Sanskrit Pratiṣṭān, Delhi, 2002. P.82

forest. But here Rāma cries like a barbarian after placing Sītā's foot presence, sleeping tired on his chest, on his head.

He self-appeases that he is meant to be tormented in pain and somehow renounces his dearest Sītā. Rāma's painful reminisces after this moves our hearts. We can't look at Rāma and Sītā, the mother and father, without tears in our eyes or a throbbing heart when they, who are the reflections of sadness, reunite coincidentally after so many years at *Danḍakāraṇya*. This is an emotionally exciting scene in *Uttararāmaçarita*. At Pañçavaṭi, weak due her pregnancy Sītā calls out "Dear, please hold me" when she sees Rāma and falls unconscious, and Sītā making Rāma, who had dropped to the ground in the thoughts on a past with Sītā, relive stroking with her own fingers etc. are poet's portrayal using the poetically beautiful words selected from the bottom of the heart which can't not touch upon any minds. Even though Rāma gets anxious recognizing the touch of the fingers of Sītā he is no able to see her to the blessing of the goddesses of the forest. When Sītā enjoys the words of love from Rāma, Rāma is wrenched in pain of that situation. The sadness is ripping the heart apart. But doesn't breaks it into two. It puts the body in trance but doesn't kill the life. Even though being hit by a heart-rending blow, death doesn't happen. We can see that Rāma has been enslaved by the emotion of sadness. Unlike

Vālmīki's Sītā, Bhavabhūti's Sītā not only doesn't descent to the earth but we can see Rāma happily accepting Sītā, Lava and Kuśa.

### **Sītā in *Mahāvīracarita***

It is a play written by Bhavabhūti with 7 acts. It describes the story from the marriage of Rāma and Sītā till the coronation ceremony. The seed of the story in this play is the vengeance of Rāvaṇa towards Rāma. Rāvaṇa awes also present in the *Swayamvara* of Sītā. Rāvaṇa's anger towards Rāma begins as he was denied the marriage. Rāma was in love with Sītā even before this. They had met for the first time at Viśvāmitra's hermitage. Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa meets Sītā and Ūrmiḷa at the hermitage, it has been described in the play the story in which Rāvaṇa's messenger arrives at the hermitage and that of striking the bow for Sītā *Swayamvara*. It has been depicted that Paraśurāma comes to Mithila after the marriage. Later Mālyavān made Śūrpaṇakha to be in disguise as Manthara and reaches a letter to Rāma in Mithila as if from Kaikeyī. The two requirements as per the letter were to make Bharata the next king and that Rāma should live in exile in the forest for the next 14 years. Even though Bharata and Yudhājith decide to make Rāma the next King, by then Rāma returns to Ayodhya and makes a firm oath that he is going spend his life in the forest as per the orders of Kaikeyī. In the forest, after the abduction of Sītā, Bāli and

Rāma gets into a dual at Ṛsyamūkācala due to the conspiracy by Mālyavān.

In this play the hatred between the hero and the villain is visible right from the first act. Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa meets Sītā and Ūrmiḷa at the hermitage of Viśvamiṭra and falls in love with them. Rāvaṇa sends a messenger to King Janaka requesting for giving Sītā's hand in marriage to him. Meanwhile Rāma kills Tāṭaka and receives divine arrows from the sage and prepares to strike the bow for getting Sītā in marriage, Rāma breaks the bow and the messenger returns in anger. In the second act Rāvaṇa's minister Mālyavān plots a plan along with Śūrpaṇakha, Rāvaṇa's sister, to solve this defeat. In this stage a letter from Paraśurāma acted as a guide to them. They encouraged Paraśurāma's anger in breaking the bow of Śiva and a proud Paraśurāma trapped in their net reaches Mithila and challenges Rāma after humiliating him. In the third act their humiliations and challenges to the battle continues of both Rāmas. Vasiṣṭa, Viśvamiṭra, Śatānanda, Janaka, Daśaratha etc. try to avoid a battle. In the fourth act Paraśurāma is defeated and bows in front of Rāma whom he considers as undefeatable. Later Mālyavān thinks of another way to defeat Rāma. Śūrpaṇakha enters the body of Mantara, the servant of Kaikeyī, and create an inner tear in Ayodhya.



When Rāma was living with his father-in-law at Mithila, Śūrpaṅakha in disguise of Mandara reaches there. And asks Rāma to fulfill the two boons of Daśaratha to Kaikeyī. There is also a letter informing the same. One of the boons is to make Bharata the next king and the second to send Rāma to live in the forest for fourteen years. Meanwhile Bharata and uncle Mātula requests Daśaratha to make Rāma the next king. By then Rāma requests Daśaratha to make Bharata his heir. And lets him know of Kaikeyī's wishes to make Bharata his heir and to send him to the forest along with Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa. In the fifth act, the old and weak Jaṭāyu and Sampāti informs us of the matters of the killing of the demon by the forest living Rāma etc. Sampāti advises Jaṭāyu to take care of Rāma. Jaṭāyu gets killed while fighting with Rāvaṇa when he was abducting Sītā. Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa walked around the forest and knows about finding Sītā. Vibhīṣaṇa sees Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa after having been banished from Lanka at Rṣyamūkācala. Succeeding, the killing of Bāli, Agastya's arrival and advice and the battle between Rāma and Rāvaṇa happen. After Sītā proves her chastity by subjecting to the test of fire Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa excitedly return to Ayodhya, Vasiṣṭha conducts the coronation ceremony of Rāma, Śrīrāma feels content by the blessings of *Mahendra* and Daśaratha and party all have been described in the 6th and 7<sup>th</sup> acts.

In this play we can see Bhavabhūti appearing with great imaginative powers and skill of creativity for example in *Rāmāyaṇa* Bāli get skilled in *Rāmāyaṇa* by the arrow of Rāma who is honest and a follower of *dharma*. This matter created different opinions among the reviewers but in *Uttararāmaçarita* Bhavabhūti has made Bāli Rāvaṇa's friend and thereby an enemy of Rāma. It is the peculiarity of this play that due to this reason, the constantly rising conflicts between the brothers in *Rāmāyaṇa* and the inappropriateness of Rāma killing Bāli disappear. Also it's attractive to see that Kaikeyī hasn't been accused for the crime. We can say without doubts that the acts where Bharata decides to rule the kingdom as an altar-man of Rāma, the love affair depicted in the first act, the friendship established in the fifth act etc. are highly divine and heartwarming. When the entire field of literature is running behind the emotion of love, Bhavabhūti uses "रसेष्य करुणो रसः" and "एको रसः करुण एव"<sup>105</sup> while beginning to write the plays. In this play Bhavabhūti made several changes to the story of Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa*. In this story the reason for the exile to forest and the killing of Bāli is Rāvaṇa.

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<sup>105</sup> R.D. Karmārkar, *Uttararāmaçarita* of Bhavabhūti, Çaukām̄ba Sanskrit prasthān, Delhi, 2002, p.27

### ***Mālatīmādhava***

*Mālatīmādhava* is the first play of Bhavabhūti. During that era the poet wasn't so confident about his own works. The poet himself has said that some people look at my works with a version, such people are ignorant and I don't write poetry for people like them. The time doesn't end. The world is diverse and therefore there will someday be people who enjoy my works. It is a big play with 10 acts. The storyline has been taken from '*Bṛhatkatha*'. The story of *Mālatīmādhava* is purely imagination. The subject of the story is the romance between the son and daughter of two ministers. Their names are Mālatī and Mādhava. The King decides to give the hands of Mālati to his righteous friend. But Mālati didn't agree to it. Makarandan, the friend of Mādhavan, appears in disguise of Mālati and marries the friend of the King. Finally everything ends well with the help of a Buddhist monk. The storyline has been adopted from *Bṛhatkatha*. The minister of the King of Padmāvati, Bhūrivasu, and Devarājan, the minister of the King of Vidarbha were classmates. They wished that Mālati, the daughter of Bhūrivasu to marry Mādhavan, the son of Devarājan. But the righteous friend of the king of Padmāvati, Nandan liked Mālati immensely. It was Mādhavan's friend Makarandan who stood as an obstacle to this. Anyways the king wished to marry Mālati off to Nandan. Makaranda

was in love with the sister of Nandan similar to that of Mālati towards Mādhavan. One day while Mālati was going to the temple, Nandan got married to Makarandan who was in disguise of her. Meanwhile Mālati eloped with Mādhavan. Madayanthika left the kingdom when she comes to know that her brother has got married to her own lover. Finally the lovers get married with the permission of the king.

Bhavabhūti's *Uttararāmaçarita* is the greatest of the works which has happened in Sanskrit based on the story of *Rāmāyaṇa*. Here is a poet who has carefully observed the nuanced emotions of human life. We can see the influence of Kālidāsa in Bhavabhūti. Wordily meanings have been given importance in the works of Bhavabhūti. Bhavabhūti describes the dangerous and fierce form of nature. If one examines the three descriptive plays of Bhavabhūti, we can find the dreadful pictures of nature. Bhavabhūti stays excellent mostly in the emotion of sadness. When we read the poetry of Bhavabhūti, the bereavement of the characters have been portrayed such that even the audience tend to cry heartbreakingly. In the opinion of Bhavabhūti, a woman is seen as "इयं गेहे लक्ष्मी". Bhavabhūti's language, filled with conjunctions, is precise, prestigious and glorious.

He mostly uses strong words. He shows his unparalleled expertise in the emotions of love, humour and sadness. Bhavabhūti's love is creative, pure and filled with ideals. What shines in the works of Bhavabhūti is the ideal side of art. According to the science of domesticity Bhavabhūti's Rāma and Sītā is an ideal couple. Each character of Bhavabhūti are representatives of the social situations, methods and practices and good manners which existed during his times.

Bhavabhūti is a poet who stays more close to the foreign poets in his vision on love. Bhavabhūti's plays have sufficient amount of poetry and drama. About Bhavabhūti: “उत्तरेरामचरिते भवभूतिरविशिष्यते”. Bhavabhūti has made the melancholic end of *Rāmāyaṇa* look like a good spirited one. Rāma has been portrayed not only as a valiant hero in this play, but also as a perfect administrator who doesn't hesitate to sacrifice his own wife and personal life, which shows the respect that he renders to the opinion of his countrymen. Bhavabhūti's deep sense of sacrifice and his brilliant creative acumen that glorifies the emotions have made *Uttararāmaçarita* a perfect opus. Even though the play is essentially *Uttarakāṇḍa*, it has been suitably

adapted to the style of drama. The skill of the poet to portray the internal conflicts and heart-breaking experiences are amazing.

The destiny of Sītā post her banishment and the consequential mental disturbances in Rāma reveals this. Bhavabhūti projects the humanity in Rāma more prominently than his kingship. One can see *Alankāra* and *Çandas* (metaphor) changing according to the usage of language in the works of Bhavabhūti, who has effectively handled both the qualities of valor and astonishment equally. Every single change made by Bhavabhūti in the design of the story (of the play) has contributed to its dramatism. The poet has promoted the “*Karuṇa Rasa*” (sentiment of Pathos) in *Uttararāmaçarita* while keeping the emotions of Valor (*Vīram*) and Love (*Sriṅgāra*) as its added components. In totality, there has been no such successful Sanskrit play in terms of the arousal of emotion and blissful experience of *Rasa*. He is undoubtedly the most prolific poet after Kālidāsa. One can see a terrific amalgamation of creativity and wisdom in Bhavabhūti. The grief of Rāma post Sītā -banishment in Bhavabhūti’s *Uttararāmāyaṇa* can even melt the hardest of the rocks; such is the quality of poetry.

The first chapter tells about the meeting of Saints Agastya and Kaṇva with prince Rāma wherein they inform Rāma of the *Rākṣasās* aka demons. It also briefly speaks about the stories of Bāli and

Kārtavyāraṅga. Evolution of *Rākṣasās* is also mentioned here. The second chapter of *Uttararāmaçarita*, wherein Rāma sends the rulers back to their own kingdoms is parallel to none. Such simple yet elegant description of aforementioned storyline packed with innovative improvisations has never been such tasteful. Spring and water games are described in the third chapter. The fourth chapter begins with the narration of dusk and ends with that of dawn. The emotion of Love is also stressed here.

The narration of dusk is the word of Rāma to Sītā. The song of *Sūta* is the narration of dawn. Renunciation is the key element depicted in the fifth chapter. It describes the pregnancy of Sītā, her defamation, the decision to renounce Sītā, abandonment and the melancholy of Sītā. The content life of Sītā at Vālmīki hermitage is the final part here. Even predatory animals come around and try their best in taking care of Sītā while she mourns and eventually, Vālmīki arrives and consoles her.

“सीते त्वदीयं चरितं समस्तम् ।”

## CHAPTER V

### THE CHARACTER OF SĪTĀ: COMPARATIVE AND PERSPECTIVE VIEWS

This chapter conducts a detailed and critical analysis of Sītā as portrayed in *Rāmāyaṇa* by Vālmīki, Kālidāsa, Bhavabhūti and other writers. Besides there is a comparison between the characters of Sītā portrayed by different authors. It also analyses the identity and the inner turmoil's of Sītā from a feminist perspective and modern concepts of womanhood.

Sītā has played an important role in *Rāmāyaṇa*. In order to understand the character of Sītā, it becomes essential to understand how she is portrayed by Vālmīki, Kālidāsa, Bhavabhūti. Since Vedic period the name of Sītā has been traced, it is specified in *Ṛgveda*. Therefore 'Sītā' is stated as the Goddess of agriculture. Sītā sustained by taking courageous decisions. She could be considered as a lady capable of taking bold decisions. She is also projected as the efficacy of sacrifice. The study of Sītā in the present scenario becomes essential due to the quality of ethical decision making and the ability to remain courageous in the midst of the hurdles. The first and foremost decision taken by Sītā is when she decided to go along with Rāma for exile. She



ever had an option to abstain from that decision but it was her ardent trust and affection towards her husband that lead her to go along with Rāma. The responsibility that was entrusted up on Sītā was to wait for Rāma till his comebacks from exile. The dauntless Sītā rejected all facilities and comfort, she selected to remain with her husband Rāma. Taking up the charge of a responsible wife, she was aware of the life that she has to face in the jungle and yet was bold enough to overcome, it along with her husband. It was her sole decision to remain with Rāma.

During exile, Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa went for hunting and Sītā was assigned with the domestic works. A fine morning on seeing golden deer, she expressed her desire to touch the deer. Rāma left Sītā to catch the deer, due to the negative feeling that remained between Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā, while leaving their home, Lakṣmaṇa drew *Lakṣmaṇarekha*. The motto behind it was to save Sītā from all dangers. Sītā was innocent at the same time bold in nature. Sītā is reflected when she crossed the *Lakṣmaṇarekha* in order to give alms to the Rāvaṇa who came in the form of a male Hermit. *Lakṣmaṇarekha* denotes the boarder of freedom assigned to Sītā in the absence of male .Couldn't Sītā be saved if the matter be conveyed properly to her? It denotes the negativity that remained between Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā. The attitude of

Sītā towards Lakṣmaṇa was not appreciable. Lakṣmaṇa remained humble and while Sītā sustained as an authoritative character. When the character of Sītā assessed in depth she could be considered as integral part of woman's psyche. In Indian culture, the concept of women is often compared with Sītā. It suits the political as well as the societal norms of the day. Some consider Sītā as the ideal women being *Pativrata*, some consider her as victimised. Sītā was an outspoken lady who freely expressed herself. She was tempted on seeing the golden deer, she spoke harsh words to Lakṣmaṇa. She remained faithful to Rāma even in the midst of glamour and material objects in Rāvaṇa's palace. She faced angry and suspicious husband. She tried to appease him but later she accepted the separation and raised the well balanced children as a single mother.

Sītā proves her identity wherever she goes. Sītā's greatness consisted in her strength that she attains through truth, sincerity, self-sacrifice and other virtues. Sītā is portrayed as a greater power of endurance. Sītā had a special capacity to face the hurdles of life. Usually every human being in the midst of difficulties feel desperate but with the time one learn and regain the strength. The hurdles faced by Sītā, strengthened her identity and she emerges as a confident and courageous personality. *R̥gveda* considered to be one of the ancient

literary discourse mentions the word ‘Sītā’ in the context of ploughed lands and furrows. Hence Sītā is closely associated or linked to agriculture and its multifarious activities. In *Sītapaniṣad* Sītā is the all-powerful *mūla prakṛti* the all-powerful *yogamaya* and also considered as Mahālakṣmi. In *Amarakośa*, Sītā is visualised as the path of ploughshare. In *Purāṇa Saṃjnāgamakośa* it is said the term Sītā is derived from mud or slit. In *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* Sītā is picturised as an embodiment of all pure qualities, showing at most devotion to her husband as well as virtuous and chaste. To Vālmīki, she was his foster child. *Sītā Ārita* to Vālmīki is a story of ordinary human mortals. Even when Sītā is in grave agony and sufferings, he used words of consolation and assuagement in a well loving manner, in which the emphasised on justness and fairness and equalitarianism.

In *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*’s *Yuddhakāṇḍa* Sītā is portrayed as a person who is very dynamic, skilful lady. Who can expostulate and defend herself with her husband and in fact get indignant, if her husband behaves properly to her. From that space, a great transformation occurs in the male dominated society. Women became the slave of man and loses all her integrity and freedom, a change from the early Vedic times. Here women enjoyed the position of equality, without distinction with her male counterpart, in both political and

social matters. From that prestigious position women's condition deteriorated a lot in the later Vedic period with the dawn of Brahmin superiority or their dominance in the society. In all probability *Uttararāmāyaṇa* have been penned in this time. The reason to believe in that, Sītā's personality undergoes a change here. From a position from where she could converse well and argue well with her husband, she choose to become very silent, suffering all her woes by herself without uttering a word of protest.

On all occasions especially during *Sītā Parityāga* and *Agniparīkṣa*. She becomes an epitome of patience. That is why it is believed that *Uttararāmāyaṇa* was written or added during a later period. In *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* birth of Sītā is described as *bhūmija* or a person taking birth from Mother Earth. The marriage of Sītā – Rāma was in *Āryadraviḍha* culture. Rāma was banished to forest about which Daśaratha the king was silent. It was left to the queen Kaikeyī to indict or allege the same and here Vālmīki avoids Daśaratha to convey the tragic news and entrust the matter of the banishment of Rāma to forest. To Kaikeyī. Violation of the oath was the reason cited by Kaikeyī to induce Rāma to go to forest. Then was it not a violation of oath to Sītā? Many a times Sītā was made to turn back instead of allowing her to accompany Rāma to forest, at one stage Sītā was seen commenting to

Rāma about not to behave like a weak-minded woman and not to utter meaningless words as a person having no virility or courage or heroism, To which Rāma replies that ladies of noble birth cannot leave without their husbands by their side and he wanted to know about the mind of Sītā on this aspect. It seems Rāma was seen probing the mind of Sītā. At one point Sītā says that she sees a flaw in the character of Rāma, that is, even if one does not indulge in directly doing a sin, he was mercilessly killed by Rāma. To which Rāma replies that hearing the lamenting of the Brahmana, he took up the issue and was even willing to sacrifice or abandon his life, Lakṣmaṇa and even Sītā to keep his promise, a promise which he was not ready to break.

When Śūrpaṇakha approached Rāma, the way Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa made fun of her not ever giving the concession or consideration that she is a women. At that moment it seems even Rāma had forgotten that Lakṣmaṇa had married Ūrmiḷa. Is it not a violation of oath on the part of Rāma, who is the upholder of truth and justice? At the time of abduction of Sītā, the craving she felt for the golden deer, which was a rākṣasa in disguise, is portrayed by Vālmīki as a nature or character of fickleness associated with ladies. It is this desperate yearning she had for the deer that proved to be cataclysmic in her life. In *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* we come across a part in which Sītā speaks very

rudely to Lakṣmaṇa, compelling or coercing him to go in search of her husband and here the author explains the situation as a natural act and also blaming the women for this particular behaviour. But actually the love and devotion that Sītā felt towards Rāma made her speak in such uncompromising tone to Lakṣmaṇa.

During the time of Sītā's *Parityāga* Rāma entrusts that task to Lakṣmaṇa and asks him to comply with his orders, not to utter envy word in defence or to champion the cause of Sītā and the one violating this order will be treated as lifelong enemies of Rāma and obtains a promise from Lakṣmaṇa to this effect. Here Rāma denies or restrains Lakṣmaṇa to think or act independently and also made Lakṣmaṇa shoulder the responsibility of abandoning Sītā. At that time Rāma once again ask Sītā to prove her purity, Sītā never expected Rāma to do so. She was unaware or oblivious to this. She did not confirm to the orders of Rāma, as the gossip- mongering suspicious people would again allege Sītā of being impure. Sītā considers that it would be better to disappear in lap of *bhūmidēvi* rather than being Rāma's wife.

We here find that Sītā is triumphant against Rāma. Kālidāsa in his work *Raghuvaṃśa* opines that the real beauty of women lies in her chastity. Even though we come across many women characters in Kālidāsa's works, it is to Sītā alone he gives an innate personality

which distinguishes her from other women. Unlike in *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*, Kālidāsa picturises Sītā differently as a person who reacts and responds to one's sacrifice, this reflects the serious character and highlights that nature. In the scene, where Sītā returns from Lanka and sees the royal mothers she underlines the fact that it is this misfortune that is responsible for her present plight and hints at her innocence for all the outward incidents that had occurred. Not only that, it is the pure and chaste character of Sītā that had helped Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa tide over many difficult and wearisome situations according to Kālidāsa. The scandal associated with Sītā led to extreme agony and mental grief to Rāma and he greatly feared about his own fame and prestige. Sītā too was greatly agitated by these happenings.

Forsaking or abandoning Sītā in the context of a scandal evokes a series of responses from her, even Vālmīki was aggrieved by this attitude of Rāma and considers Rāma as a person who has done injustice to Sītā. Even though Rāma destroyed a ferocious Rāvaṇa, even though Rāma was a strong and righteous man and he destroyed ferocious Rāvaṇa, still according to Vālmīki, Rāma failed to understand the chastity of Sītā. The behaviour of Rāma can be attributed to the male-dominated society of the age which is connected by the virtue of a welfare state. It is argued that Rāma is not suspicious about Sītā's

Chastity, but in order to alleviate all doubts in the minds of his subjects that he is renouncing Sītā. But in reality Sītā's renunciation had the adverse effect of substantiating of giving credence to the gossips or the casual, unconstrained conversation of the people. By this action of Rāma a question arises that, is it befitting of a husbands behaviour?

The desire to retain the power and authority of the monarch greatly perturbed Rāma. Sītā who was silent and patiently restrained in *Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa* takes a shift in Kālidāsa's *Raghuvamśa*. The reticent Sītā becomes somewhat belligerent Sītā. The renunciation of Sītā is a great wrong opines Kālidāsa and it should be avenged. Here Kālidāsa is along with humanity.

Another literary personality Bhavabhūti also closely observes and analyses about the human feelings and emotions. In Bhavabhūti's portrayal of Rāma the humane feeling is outstanding. Whereas Sītā's act of renunciation or *Parityāga* is viewed as a common suicide. Rāma is depicted in a good light. He is shown as a very sympathetic and compassionate man and portrays the character in the Rāma connecting them to the social setup and institutions of the country.

*Rāmāyaṇa* had appeared in many forms and types in international, national and local levels. All characters are portrayed in



different metals, in different styles. *Rāmāyaṇa* has got many versions in folklore also. All this different versions greatly contributed to the development of culture and society of that time. With the passage of time many changes crept in to these *Rāmāyaṇas*. In our neighbouring regions like Burma, Tibet, China, Malaysia, Thailand, it has become a part of their culture. *Rāmāyaṇa* was greatly patronised in different regions of Asia. Apart from this, paintings, dance forms, Rāma's, puppet shows, shadow Rāma's etc. are there. Outside India we find a change in the characterization and depiction of *Rāmāyaṇa*. Orally also this was transmitted and there exist oral songs, folklores, etc. This was able to create or evoke a great influence in the minds of the people. We come across *Rāmāyaṇa* in different genre *Māppiḷa Rāmāyaṇa*, *Wayanadan Rāmāyaṇa*, *Pātāḷa Rāmāyaṇa*, *Sītādukham Kīḷipāṭṭu* etc. imprinting its own place, its own influence on humanity.

Following *Kamba Rāmāyaṇa* we find the emergence of *Tolppāvakkūttu* or puppetry in Kerala. *Çākyārkkūttu* came up following lines of *Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa*. Those who are illiterate produce their own versions of *Rāmāyaṇa* and we find examples of it among the tribal and Dalits. Independent versions were also found. These folksongs and folklores had the ability to go deeper in to the minds of

the people and examine a lot of intricacies there. We also have different versions of *Rāmāyaṇa*, having a feminist approach or viewpoint. These literary works left a deep imprint in the minds of the people. Sītā's character could also be analysed.

With the passage of time much changes have crept in to the *Itihāsa* of *Rāmāyaṇa*, many additions and deletions were made and these changes can be considered to be an unending process of rewriting, interpreting and reinterpreting and this process continues on and on. The study of Sītā further helps us to understand the leadership quality that she possessed. The values she inherited, the maturity of her character, the rights of women everything contributed to the culture. There is vast scope for the study of Sītā, because time could not fade the qualities portrayed through the character of Sītā. She is considered as the role model in Southern traditional cultural concept. Sītā had the strength and courage and even made tough decision to keep up with *Dharma*. She was devoted to her husband in thought and deed.

*Rāmāyaṇa* is popular as the first literary work which marked the beginning of Indian literary tradition. Vālmikī's *Rāmāyaṇa* is predominant in popularity and prevalence. *Rāmāyaṇa*, which pictures man's fundamental disposition and thought processes, also propounds thoughts on moral philosophy, economics, aestheticism, sociology,

history and culture. *Rāmāyaṇa* has remarkable popularity in the major regions of Asia. *Rāmāyaṇa* had and still has a tremendous influence on folk culture and other literary circles like myths, folklores, dramas, puppetry, Kūṭiyāṭṭam, and ritual songs.

Based upon *Vālmīkī Rāmāyaṇa*, various versions of *Rāmāyaṇa* have been written in many Indian languages. These narratives varies in accordance with the social, cultural and political environment that existed in each period. In Indian literature, *Rāmāyaṇa* made its presence known through various literary genres like drama and verse.

Myths and legends express man's fundamental feelings, experiences, problems and pains. Women characters are given utmost importance in Indian literature. Sītā is a powerful female character created by Vālmīki. Sītā upholds her individuality while sustaining values like righteousness and chastity. *Sītā's* life was full of ordeals and trials and she was always haunted by miseries and sufferings. In spite of all these she demonstrates how a woman should confront and overcome such complex situations. As a woman she is unable to unfold the weaknesses and injustice of her husband. Vālmīki represents the chaste and devoted Sītā as an excellent model for others. The character of Sītā is mentioned also in folk lores, folk art forms and other literary

works. This thesis aims at unravelling the identity of Sītā as portrayed in these works.

Studies have been conducted about the character of Sītā in various languages. But in Sanskrit there has never been an extensive study relying on research methodology. This article describes how Sītā has been portrayed in the verses of Vālmīki, Kālidāsa and Bhavabhūti since the beginning of Vedic Age. It also analyses the symbolic use of the name Sītā since Vedic Age and its relevance in *R̥gveda*, *Upaniṣads*, *Purāṇa Saṁjnāgamakośa* and *Amarakośa*. It can be seen that in Vedic Age the name Sītā is used in the sense of a word related to tillage, which means ‘furrow’. From this we can infer that Sītā was honoured as the Goddess of Agriculture during that period. *Sūkta 57* of *maṇḍala 4* heralds Sītā as

“अर्वाची सुभगे भव सीते वन्दामहेत्वा ।

यथा न सुभगा ससि यथा न सुफला ससि” ॥<sup>106</sup>

Various versions of *Rāmāyaṇa* from India and other foreign countries have been evaluated and thus a tangible forward is prepared for the detailed analysis of the character of Sītā.

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<sup>106</sup> *R̥gveda Saṁhita Vaḷḷattol Transilation* Vol-II, Vaḷḷattol Sāhitya Academy, India. 1956. p.321, 322

Various versions of *Rāmāyaṇa* describes the birth of Sītā differently. Sītā is depicted as an ordinary woman in *Vālmīkī Rāmāyaṇa* whereas in *Adhyātmārāmāyaṇa* she is the incarnation of Mahālakṣmī. In *Atbhutarāmāyaṇa* she is the iconic form of Śakti and in *Ānanda Rāmāyaṇa* she is portrayed as *Agnija* and the reincarnation of Vedavati. *Mahā Rāmāyaṇa* depicts Sītā as a goddess with tremendous power. In *Swayāmbhuva Rāmāyaṇa* Sītā is born from the womb of Maṇḍodari and in *Rāmakīrtti* also Sītā is the daughter of Maṇḍodari. In *Jaina Rāmāyaṇa* Sītā is presented as the daughter of Rāvaṇa. *Agastya Rāmāyaṇa* depicts Sītā as *Padmaja*, the one who is born from a lotus. In the *Kannada Rāmāyaṇa* titled *Pampa Rāmāyaṇa* Sītā is given more importance than Rāma. *Khotani Rāmāyaṇa* which is influenced by Buddhism describes Sītā as the daughter of Rāvaṇa. In *Tibat Rāmāyaṇa* Sītā gets her name only after her marriage. Sītā *swayāṃvara* / Sītā's marriage is a remarkable pageant of *Rāmāyaṇa*.

As differed from *Vālmīkī Rāmāyaṇa* in *Bhāvārtha Rāmāyaṇa* Rāvaṇa also participates in Sītā *swayāṃvara*. In *Tuḷasīdāsa Rāmāyaṇa* the poet is seen as closing his eyes while depicting the renunciation of Sītā. In *Jaina Rāmāyaṇa* and *Kamba Rāmāyaṇa* Sītā's portrayal of Rāvaṇa becomes the cause of her renunciation. In *Vālmīkī Rāmāyaṇa* Sītā's renunciation takes place near the hermitage of *Vālmīki* whereas

in *Kamba Rāmāyaṇa* the renunciation takes place near Goutama's hermitage. In Malaysian *Rāmāyaṇa* after renunciation Sītā is protected in the monastery of sage Kali. In Laos *Rāmāyaṇa* the abduction of Sītā is done by Indra. As for the vanishment of Sītā there are variations in different versions of *Rāmāyaṇa*. In *Vālmīkī Rāmāyaṇa*, *Adhyātmarāmāyaṇa* and *Adbhutarāmāyaṇa* Sītā is vanishes by splitting the earth. But in *Ānanda Rāmāyaṇa* Sītā is returned to Rāma by the Goddess Earth. Thus *Ānanda Rāmāyaṇa* ends on a happy note. The self-immolation of Sītā does not take place in *Vyāsa Rāmāyaṇa*. In *Vālmīkī Rāmāyaṇa* real Sītā causes the slaying of Rāvaṇa. But in *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa* Sītā's protection is entrusted with *Agnideva* and instead the illusionary Sītā is kept at the frontline for slaying Rāvaṇa. In *Tatva Saṁgraha Rāmāyaṇa* Sītā is seen as hiding in the bosom of Rāma. The slaying of ten-headed Rāvaṇa is also described in this *Rāmāyaṇa*. In *Kālanirṇaya Rāmāyaṇa* the dates of all important events are implied.

In *Bhūsuṅṅi Rāmāyaṇa* Sītā and her companions are seen as feeling great joy while engaged in festive dance with Rāma. Rāma draws a portrait of himself and sends it to Sītā using a bird as his emissary. Sītā becomes love-struck at the sight of this portrait. The plot and characters of *Rāmāyaṇa* are represented differently in various

versions. Sītā's birth, marriage, renunciation, and disappearance differ in each *Rāmāyaṇa*.

Visual art forms like Kūṭiyāṭṭam and Čākyārkūttu, folk literature and folk art forms like Porāṭṭu nāṭakam give special emphasis to the plot of *Rāmāyaṇa* and the character of Sītā. *Rāmāyaṇa* has a great influence on folk literature. This deep rooted impact can be seen in Indian social and cultural life in the form of oral and written tradition. As a result of social reformations variants of *Rāmāyaṇa* still exist in different regions in the form of folklores, ritual songs, dramas and other art forms. Allusion to Sītā is present in all these art forms. Besides these liberal narrations of *Rāmāyaṇa* are seen among Indian tribal groups and marginalised people, in the form of songs, tales and ceremonies. In folk literature, songs and folk art forms *Rāmāyaṇa* is used as a tool for the manifestation of feminine experiences and desires. When *Rāmāyaṇa* is transfused with folk literature, the plot and events are changed without the situation.

These changes are enjoyed by the audience or the listeners. The diversity of *Rāmāyaṇa*'s feminist teachings can be seen in these works. In folk legends and songs there is an intermingling of experiences, knowledge and anxieties of common populace. As these art forms are passed on orally they are subject to changes continually. Sanskrit epics

and plays, which are related to *Rāmāyaṇa*, delineate the details of Sītā. It can be said that the splendour and vitality of *Vālmīki*'s story-telling style makes Sītā such an excellent character. The study also analyses how, in *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*, the character of Sītā has been portrayed from *Bālakāṇḍa* to *Uttarakāṇḍa*. It tries to find out the various factors that are assimilated into various situations by *Vālmīki* for the originality of this character. It also evaluates how Sītā is different from other female characters who have been represented as the symbols of womanhood by the poets of various epochs. This study describes how emotions like sacrifice, love, humility, anger and sorrow are stamped in the character of Sītā contextually by the poets keeping the emotive façade at the front-line.

Various circumstances of *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* unfold the identity of Sītā. *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* also portrays how a woman like Sītā, who sustains values like righteousness and chastity, overcomes the insults, problems and questions that she confronts in the social environment of that era. Sītā's chastity and endurance are represented as an excellent model for women. Sītā's charismatic personality proves that *Rāmāyaṇa* is not just about the journey of Rāma it is also about the journey of Sītā. In an era of male dominance and power exploitation, Sītā offers passive resistance against it. *Vālmīki* describes Sītā as a



maiden who is both *Ayonija*, the one who is asexual and *Avanija*, the one who is born from earth.

“एषा वेदवती नाम पूर्वमासीत् कृते युगे त्रेतायुगमनुप्राप्य वधार्थं तस्य रक्षसः |

उत्पन्ना मैथिलकुले जनकस्य महात्मनः सीतोत्पन्ना तु सीतेति मानुषैः पुनरुच्यते” || <sup>107</sup>

The marriage of Rāma and Sītā is an attuned congregation of *Āryadrāviḍa* culture. In *Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa*, till *Yuddhakāṇḍa*, Sītā is represented as a woman with the prowess to reason and to express her resentment when her husband misbehaves with her. But the Sītā in *Uttarakāṇḍa* considers even the heinous behaviour of her husband as an adornment. This change justifies the opinion that both *Bālakāṇḍa* and *Uttarakāṇḍa* are not written by Vālmiki. The discrepancy in Sītā’s reaction also supports the fact that these two works are written in two different eras. The Sītā, who reasons with her husband in order to allow her to follow him into exile, accepts her faith silently during the time of her self-immolation, renunciation and vanishment. Sītā’s vanishment can be considered as a powerful protest, of women in

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<sup>107</sup> Vālmiki, *Śrīmad Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa*, Part II, Gītā Press, Gorakhpur, India, 2011. p.739

general and of Sītā in particular, against a sceptic man. Here Sītā's refined soul wins over Rāma's agnostic mind.

Kālidāsa's renowned work *Raghuvamśa* mahākāvya is used as an important source of reference for the study of Sītā's character. The great poet Kālidāsa's verses are rich in Rāma and how this dramatic element differentiates the Sītā portrayed in *Raghuvamśa* from other portrayals is also analysed. In contrast to *Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa* Kālidāsa presents Sītā as a character who is strong and bold enough to question Rāma. *Uttarakāṇḍa* in *Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa* contains many allusions to the sacrificial life of Sītā.

Many works were written in Sanskrit based upon *Uttarakāṇḍa* and one such prominent work is *Uttararāmaçarita* written by the famous dramatist Bhavabhūti. Sītā in Bhavabhūti's *Uttararāmaçarita* and the Sītā in Kālidāsa's *Raghuvamśa* are studied using research standards. The relevance of the character of Sītā as portrayed by Bhavabhūti and Kālidāsa is also discussed in this chapter. The only real female character emphasized by Kālidāsa in his *Raghuvamśa* mahākāvya is Sītā. Vālmiki's Sītā observes silence in many situations but Kālidāsa's Sītā uses these situations as an opportunity to express her opinions. The harmony between Rāma and Sītā is described by Vālmiki as the meeting of nature and credence. Kālidāsa's Sītā who

protests and responds unlike Vālmīki's Sītā, thinks that the situation of her *karmās* done in the previous birth is the reason for her sorrows.

“ममैव जन्मान्तरपातकानां विपाक विस्फूर्ज्यरप्रसह्यः”

In *Raghuvamśa*, Sītā's smile at the arrival of Śūrpaṅakha provokes her and causes *Naraniśāçara* war, says Kālidāsa.

“संरभं मैथिलीहासः

क्षणसौम्यां निनाय तां ।

निवातस्तिमितां वेलां

चन्द्रोदय इवोदधे ॥”<sup>108</sup>

Kālidāsa paints Sītā from the perspective of Rāma. At the time of her renunciation Sītā, with the decorum and emotional forbearance suitable to a queen, offers her questions to Lakṣmaṇa, to be raised before Rāma.

“ वाच्यस्त्वया मद्बचनात् स राजा

वह्नौविशुद्धामपि यत्समक्षं ।

मां लोकवादश्रवणादहासि

श्रुतस्य किं तद् सदृशं कुलस्य ”॥<sup>109</sup>

<sup>108</sup> Mādhavan Ayyappatt, K.K.Yathīndran, *Raghuvamśam*, Kerala Sāhitya Academi, Thrissur, 2016. p.274

<sup>109</sup> Ibid, *Raghuvamśa*, p-329

“ उद्खातलोकत्रय कण्डकेपि  
 सत्यप्रतिज्ञेप्यविकत्थनेपि ।  
 त्वाम् प्रत्यकस्मात् कलुषप्रवृत्ता-  
 वसत्येव मन्युर्भरताग्रजे मे ”<sup>110</sup> ॥

Here Sītā tries to hint at questions that are likely to be raised against her husband in the future. The grief of the lonely Sītā after her renunciation is described by Kālidāsa as the grief of the entire nature. Kālidāsa’s representation exemplifies the philosophy that all the beings of this world share a connection with each other. Kālidāsa’s Sītā is assertive in three matters-that there will be no going back, that she won't commit suicide and that she will breed and feed Rāma’s children. This determination of Sītā exemplifies the fact that the messages of modernity were present in Indian writings since the time of Kālidāsa. Through the composition of *Raghuvamśa* Kālidāsa tries to obliterate Sītā’s infamy and to create a model for human dignity. Differed from *Vālmīki*s Sītā, Kālidāsa presents his Sītā as stout and well-mannered. Kālidāsa does not justify the renunciation of Sītā. He says that Rāma’s weaknesses and desire for fame and honor, are not because of his mistrust of Sītā, but a result of his fear of losing his nobleness. Though

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<sup>110</sup> Ibid, *Raghuvamśa*, p-334

Kālidāsa's story is narrated from Rāma's perspective he speaks on behalf of Sītā. The heart of Kālidāsa is revealed through the portrayal of Vālmīki, who expresses his resentment towards Rāma for the injustices done to Sītā. Bhavabhūti, who closely observes the emotional finesse of human heart, sustains Rāma while presenting Sītā. While the original story of *Rāmāyaṇa* ends on a tragic note by the renunciation of Sītā, Bhavabhūti ends his work in a happy note with the union of Rāma and Sītā. Bhavabhūti's play is composed by incorporating events and situations which are not logical.

Apart from presenting Sītā as the favourite wife of Rāma, she is not given a unique identity. He also tries to depict Rāma as extremely good. In Bhavabhūti's Rāma his humanness dominates his kingship. Bhavabhūti's Sītā, who is broad-minded and devoted to her husband, becomes an ordinary woman, without courage and strength, ready to sacrifice her life at the fave of disasters. Even after committing the gross act of renunciation of Sītā we can't disdain Rāma in *Uttarakāṇḍa* because Sītā makes it appear as less poignant. Here Rāma is subjected to pathos, which demands our sympathy. The informations, images and legends related to *Rāmāyaṇa* are included in this thesis. These are collected from the people of Pulppalli region, Wayanad, Kerala, who are closely associated with folk tradition.

In this study Sītā is interpreted on the basis of how women tradition perceived Sītā. The Study is based on two major portions they are influence of oral tradition on Sītā and concerns over Sītā's apparent lack of choice throughout her life the prevailing sentiments of the women in this study are that Sītā is an ideal of the tradition and her lack of impact as role model due to apparent lack of choice of life. This thesis contributed to the field of study on interpretation of specifically Sītā, and about women tradition. Sītā the heroine of *Rāmāyaṇa* is the ideal wife and women. Sītā is considered to be the icon of wifely duty in the tradition. This thesis uses a feminist methodology. Feminist methodology means exploring women's roles with in a religious tradition to here they use their voice to lead discussion and analysis.

Women in the study used Sītā as a conduct to express their own concerned trials, tribulations, joys of achievements. Folk songs and oral narrative have expressed male authority over women in the tradition. Women have used oral tradition about Sītā as a screen on which to project their own stories as they identifies Sītā's life experiences with themselves. The narrative tells Sītā's story from her birth to her exit from earthly existence. But in the more well-known textual versions of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. The major events in Sītā's life revolve around men and the details that would relate to women's

experiences are lacking. The oral tradition about Sītā provides these missing details and in many cases tells Sītā's stories without references. Women's oral tradition about Sītā also represents choice for many women as they become the inventor of their own stories and methodology. There are many different ways that one can tell the story representable the values of the people that are marginalized. If one wishes to hear the voice of women, to understand how women situate themselves with in society and religion. One must turn away from the text and towards the oral tradition. Sītā's character is developed and discussed in the both the textual and oral tradition. Though Sītā is described to possesses all the qualities of the ideal wife, she is much more than that or in many case her wifely virtues are elaborated by narrators and story tellers alike who imagine her through a complex of qualities like loyal, devoted, in love, doting, beautiful and strong yet fragile.

Sītā is the ideal wife and ideally rooted in religious righteousness that continues to hold meaning for many women, Sītā for many is beloved because her story reflects the concerns of women within the Indian Cultural milieu. She faced the pressures that women of the tradition faces the marriage relationship with one's husband her extended family and her children. The expansive oral tradition makes

Sītā a personal icon, as orality allows for interpretation, Cooperation, appropriation, acceptance and rejection. The *Rāmāyaṇa* maintains a beloved status as a story and as scripture because of this malleability. Sītā's chastity and purity were proven by her emergence from the fire, not a singed petal of her flower garland in sight. Sītā prays that the earth takes her back, reminding us that Sītā was ploughed from the soil as an infant.

The earth does open up, a throne rises from the chasm and Sītā is lifted bodily on to the throne. The gods have again come to witness Sītā's powerful feat, cheer her on and shower her with blossoms. The earth closes up again and Rāma is left despondent and bewildered, he takes his sons into the palace, but he never remarries. As a mark of Rāma's regret, he has made a golden statue of Sītā, This study is meant to situate Sītā within this narrative framework. Outline of religious law and women, provides some framework for thinking about normative models of women within Hindu society in their roles as wives and how Sītā might exemplify then in that role. Sītā represents a normative wife model, she personifies the dependent, devoted, and chaste wife that the law books describe, yet as we will see in the coming chapters, the Sītā of the many various *Rāmāyaṇa* 's does not always line up with the Sītā of orthodox tradition or even of the popular imagination. Rāma's duty



as a husband is not a theme in the narrative in the same way as is Sītā's duty as an ideal wife. If one wants to look for examples of the perfect husband, one has to look outside the *Rāmāyaṇa* narrative.

*Rāmāyaṇa* through Sītā's eyes as she recounts her life experiences unfolds through the generally accepted plot line of the narrative. Most songs deal specifically with Sītā and depict a woman's experience, from her youth to maturity, through Sītā. Songs dwell on moments in Sītā's life, great and small, such as her wedding and wellbeing. There are also songs that tell about major events from the *Rāmāyaṇa* from Sītā's perspective, songs about Sītā's trial by fire, events that took place in Lanka, Rāma's coronation, and Sītā's pregnancy. . When the women of palace hear of Rāma's plan they all come to Sītā's defense and plead with Rāma to see how the strange ascetic woman had tricked them all and created scandal where none truly existed. Feminism is made largely to address concerns of western women and there are many helpful ideas and theories in feminist methodology, there is also a limited scope when applying this method to the study of religions in India.

The *Rāmāyaṇa* in many ways propagates the patriarchal norm, yet at the same time it challenges notions of male-domination and good wife behavior. Women's roles in many Hindu social groups are very

clearly demarcated and there exists very high expectations that women (and, to be fair, men also) should fulfill their roles. The above diversion from the topic of women's oral tradition and Sītā is to reinforce the fact that these songs and the meaning of these songs have for the women who sing them, are religious in nature. Emerging from women's oral tradition is an appropriation of the mainstream Sītā by women who then mould Sītā into their own ideal. The mainstream Sītā already mirrors the life experience of the women in the tradition; the songs discussed here show how women identify with Sītā because several aspects of Sītā's life reflect the experiences of Hindu women. The women in the study who discussed Sītā's final scene positively interpreted her actions as evidence of Sītā's ability to stand up for herself. Sītā may be an ideal, or a goddess or at least a semi-divine being, but she is not a real woman in history and should not be seen as such.

Sītā's strength and her fragility and it echoes in some interesting ways how Sītā has been interpreted. Sītā's fire ordeal is a controversial episode that many have trouble interpreting positively because of the potential violence indicated by fire and strongly associated themes of women's purity. As the women in this study felt that Sītā's fire ordeal is detrimental to the struggle for equality have indicated, it is a reminder of violence, carried out or threatened, linked to oppression

through impossible standards of wifely purity and the expectation of submission to those standards.

The women in this study have a similar approach in talking and thinking about Sītā as the central figure in a story, from which they draw conclusions about conduct based on her stories (and these conclusions can be positive or negative). Sītā is often depicted in terms of her strength or stoicism as well as her beauty and delicacy. Sītā's kindness and generosity are positive character traits, but she is too obedient, and this makes her look like an abused wife. Although Sītā is considered to be ideal of the tradition, because of her personality, her situation, prevents her from making her own decisions.

The descriptions that were given by the participants pull together an image of Sītā's ideal nature as a combination of beauty and strength. Sītā's character in relation to her trial by fire, depicts that Sītā must have possessed a great amount of courage to prove her innocence in front of so many people. In this way courage is equated with strength. When I asked to the participants to describe Sītā, key words "strong, virginal, morality, innocent, pure and obedient was highlighted. Sītā is powerful with her own birthright and royal lineage; however, she is ultimately forced to be subservient to Rāma. For instance, one of the prophets criticizes Sītā's decision not to allow Hanumān to rescue her,

instead preferring to wait for Rāma to defeat Rāvaṇa. In a world where the role of women is still being redefined Sītā's character teaches us valuable lessons for the contemporary society. Sītā as the ideal and chaste wife, whose good qualities have become landmarks for women to follow. It is important to know how the women have themselves defined the ideal woman and whether this ideal woman challenges the one constructed by the religious text. Sītā, endorsing qualities like strength, courage, resistance, etc. which one can see in a lot of contemporary women's writings? Sītā's qualities over the many years have been presented in texts over and over again not to give strength to the women through the character but to propagate the idea of the submissive wife.

A relentless reminder of the husband's superiority is played throughout the epic.' Over a period of time many myth's, stories, plays, etc. have added to the already mysterious character of Sītā making it even more complex to understand but the underlying principle remaining the same. She has become the model which men expect each and every woman to follow. Sītā has become a model that women attempts to copy to the present day and are expected to live up to her standards. Sītā is still seen as an ideal for every woman to strive for, but she is far from quiet. She exhibits strength as she endure. She is

strong as she endures a trial by fire to prove her faithfulness, and is strong in character, as she defies her husband when he asks her a second time to walk through the flames. In many ways, this moment within the text can be used as a focal point from which to see the various ways in which her image is manipulated popularly in both feminist and traditional reads of the text. She is not a meek woman who allows herself to be enslaved and mistreated by her husband. She is a fierce woman with a sense of pride and duty, whose rejection of Rāma is the ultimate representation of dignity. The idea being pushed is that of a strong woman who stands up for herself, but also understands her place within the larger scheme. Sītā is a character that does not receive the full development of the character, which she deserves within the text of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. When she is understood in the hearts and minds of the readers, her personality and actions are elaborated in ways that are not always the way that the text intended. She can be used by the most traditional of men to set forth an example of their perfect, subordinate wife, while simultaneously being used as a rallying point for women who have had enough of their husbands. All who read her story carefully witness the strength within her character, but the way her image is employed in the popular arena illustrates the variations to be found within this ancient text.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION

This thesis attempts an extensive study of Sītā, one of the splendid characters in world literature. It examines how Sītā is portrayed in Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa*, in Kālidāsa's epic poem *Raghuvamśa* and in Bhavabhūti's play *Uttararāmaçarita*. The article is divided into six chapters. The introductory chapter includes Scope of study, Aim and objective, Review of Literature, Hypothesis and Plan of the thesis.

The second chapter titled 'Sītā in Literary Discourses' attempts a detailed analysis of how Sītā is used as a symbol in *Purāṇasaṃjnāgamakośa*, *Rgveda*, *Upaniṣads* and *Purāṇās*. It also analyses the various versions of *Rāmāyaṇa* in India and other regions and how Sītā is portrayed in these versions. The peculiarities Sītā as portrayed in indigenous cultures and folklores related to *Rāmāyaṇa* are also emphasized. Sītā in other verses and plays related to *Rāmāyaṇa* and in folk theatre are analysed. It also evaluates how the writers of Sanskrit literary works, describe Sītā in their works. In addition to this there is an evaluation of the depiction of Sītā in other Sanskrit dramas like that of Bhāsa's *Pratima Nāṭaka*, *Abhiṣeka Nāṭaka*,

*Āścaryaçūḍamaṇi, Kundamāla* etc. The prominence given to Sītā in Sanskrit epics related to *Rāmāyaṇa* is also studied.

The third chapter titled “Sītā as portrayed by *Vālmīki*”, examines the sequencing of events from Sītā’s birth to her disappearance as portrayed by Vālmīki in his *Rāmāyaṇa* and the situations that helped in the formation of Sītā’s personality are analysed with examples.

In the fourth chapter “Sītā as Portrayed by Kālidāsa and Bhavabhūti” Sītā’s character is analysed in the light of Kālidāsa’s *Raghuvamśa* mahākāvya. This is compared with the Sītā in *Uttararāmaçarita*. In contrast to *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*, Kālidāsa presents Sītā as a character who is strong and bold enough to question her husband Rāma. Kālidāsa presents Sītā from a feminist perspective. He is of the opinion that Sītā’s self-sacrifice is a mistake which needs to be corrected. Bhavabhūti’s *Uttararāmaçarita*, which is a careful study of human consciousness, portrays Sītā from the perspective of Rāma.

The fifth chapter is titled as “The character of Sītā: Comparative and Perspective views”. This chapter conducts a detailed and critical analysis of Sītā as portrayed in *Rāmāyaṇas* by Vālmīki, Kālidāsa, Bhavabhūti and other writers. Besides there is a comparison between the characters of Sītā portrayed by different authors. It also analyses

the identity and the inner turmoil's of Sita from a feminist perspective and modern concepts of womanhood.

The last chapter contains the conclusion and major findings of the study. A selected bibliography and an appendix is also attached.

### **Major findings**

1. The name Sītā is hailed as the goddess of agriculture in Vedic age. Sītā is closely associated or linked to agriculture and its multifarious activities.
2. Sītā's story is presented differently in various versions of *Rāmāyaṇa* in accordance with the social, linguistic and periodic changes.
3. In folklores and indigenous art forms Sītā's tale is sung by the common folks. This is an evidence of the effect that the character of Sītā has on the heart of common populace.
4. *Rāmāyaṇa* and the tale of Sītā, which have been passed on orally and in written form has a great impact on Indian culture and society.
5. *Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa* portrays Sītā as an ordinary woman.
6. Sītā is portrayed as having greater power of endurance. Sītā has a special capacity to overcome the hurdles of life. Usually human



beings become desperate when faced with difficulties but as time passes we learn to overcome it and regain our strength.

7. In *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*'s *Yuddhakāṇḍa* Sītā is presented as a bold and responsive woman. But in *Uttarakāṇḍa* Sītā changes into an unresponsive and stoic character. This change in character justifies the fact that *Uttarakāṇḍa* is added later to the *Rāmāyaṇa*.
8. Kālidāsa's *Raghuvamśa* mahākāvya presents Sītā as an excellent woman character. Vālmīki's Sītā observes silence on many occasions but Kālidāsa's Sītā breaks this silence and strongly expresses her opinions in these situations. This is an aftermath of social reforms that occurred from time to time.
9. Kālidāsa's Sītā, at the time of her self-sacrifice, gives hints to Lakṣmaṇa about the questions that are likely to be raised by the society against the injustices done by Rāma. This is the proof of the fact that Kālidāsa has extensively studied the character of Sītā.
10. In *Uttararāmaçarita* Bhavabhūti doesn't attempt to analyse Sītā from the perspective of a woman. He only tries to praise the glorious deeds of Rāma, who mercilessly abandoned Sītā.
11. If Kālidāsa was on Sītā's side, Bhavabhūti was on Rāma's side.

12. Vālmīki and Kālidāsa end the epic with the separation of Rāma and Sītā whereas Bhavabhūti ends his epic as the self-sacrificing Sītā being rendered to Rāma. This is a deliberate effort to dispel the public indictment that Rāma might have to face in the future and to present him as a gentleman, who is a model to mankind.
13. The renunciation of Sītā is a great wrong opines Kālidāsa and it should be avenged. Here Kālidāsa is along with humanity.
14. Sītā is a symbol of art, culture, literature, and society in India.
15. Sītā had the strength and courage and even made tough decision to keep up with *Dharma*.
16. There is vast scope for the study of Sītā, because time could not fade the qualities Portrayed through the character of Sītā. Sita is considered as a role model in Southern traditional cultural concept.
17. The Epics and myths portray women as subordinate because they were written by men of the patriarchal society Sītā is the central female character of the *Rāmāyaṇa*.
18. The values she inherited, the maturity of her character and the rights of women everything contributed to our culture greatly.

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## Appendix

According to belief of people from Wayanad the saga *Rāmāyaṇa* echoes in nook and corner of the region. This region is known as ‘Pulpalli’. There are traces of existence of the epic *Rāmāyaṇa*, and also there is a temple where the deities are Sītā, Lava, and Kuśa. It is believed that the region exists, even before *Rāmāyaṇa* came into existence. The connection of the region and *Rāmāyaṇa* begins after Sītā being criticized by world. The *āśrama* of Vālmīki still exists in the region. It is perceived that Sītā gave birth to Lava and Kuśa in this *āśrama*. This *āśrama* is currently the devasom’s *Pūrvasthāna* and *Ācāryasthāna* of Pulpalli Moūrikkās’.

North-east part of Wayanad district which is proximal to Karnataka is known as Pulpalli. The Pulpalli Mūrikkās’ originated region is ‘Çeṭāṭṭinkāvu’. The origin of this temple is connected with *Rāmāyaṇa*. Once Rāma sent horses for victory of *Aśvamedha Yāga*, these horses were captured by Lava and Kuśa. Çandraketu who followed the horses, finds that the horses were caught by the children. He asks the children the reason of capturing horses, Meanwhile Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa set out in search for Çandraketu. Soon Rāma finds out that the horses were captured by his children, as a father of love he decided to take Sītā and his children back to Ayodhya. For that he

decided to conduct a purity test. Whereas Sītā boldly rejects going back, and cries calling her mother Bhūmīdevi saying that if ever she was pure she needed rescuing. Bhūmīdevi, knowing the innocence of her daughter comes to the rescue. She gives Sītā a throne, and takes her home. Rāmā tries to stop them by words and also grabs tip of Sītā's hair which gets ripped and falls off to Rāmā's hands. Hence Sītā is also known as '*Muṭiāṭṭa*' (Hair-ripped) '*Jaṭāṭṭa amma*' which was further evolved as '*Çeṭāṭṭilamma*' the deity of Çeṭāṭṭinkāvu according to the legend.

From birth of Lava and Kuśa till Sītā Devi rising to heaven is the duration that is believed to happen in Pulpalli. Hence Vālmīki and other deities during this period are present in Çeṭāṭṭinkāvu. We can find the divine footprints of each of the deities related with legend at Çeṭāṭṭinkāvu temple. It is perceived that the land of Pulpalli has become divine due to presence of all deities during the legend. The place is devoid of leeches. It is assumed that the curse once Sītā put against the leeches due to biting her children has not wearied off. Along with the deities of the legend we can also see '*Saptamātas*', '*Gaṇapati*', '*Vīrabhadra*' also as deities in the temple. There is bath called '*Pançatīrtha*' where according to sources Sītā and her children bathe. This is situated at the eastern part of the temple.

## Vālmīki Āśrama

*Pūrvasthāna* of Çeṭāṭṭinkāvu is four meters away from its current position. It is believed as the former Vālmīki *āśrama*. The epic *Rāmāyaṇa* was written from here according to legend. The *āśrama* was also a shelter that protected Sītā. It is also the birth place of Lava and Kuśa. One who possesses pure heart and soul can hear *Rāmāyaṇa* chants from the *āśrama*. The *āśrama* is roofed once a year with ‘*Darbha*’ (special kind of grass). There is a Bauhinia (‘*Mandāram*’) tree which blooms all type of seasons with only two flowers which according to people of the region is representing Sītā’s children Lava and Kuśa. The cave near to the *āśrama* is the place where *Rāmāyaṇa* was born. Near to it there is also a rock ‘*Munippāra*’ where according to legend Vālmīki meditated.

A hunter named Ratnākaran who meditated for years long acquired blessing and became Sage Vālmīki as per the belief. We can find reeves there in Pulpalli which acknowledges the presence of Vālmīki. The main deity of the temple is Sītā. Once we enter the eastern Gopura we can see bejeweled deity *Çeṭāṭṭamma*. In olden days the deity was in mirror form (‘*Kaṇṇāṭi Pratiṣṭha*’) and later on the sculpture was made out of stone (‘*Śivavighraha*’). To the left of the temple we can see a theatre where art forms such as ‘*Kūttu*’ and ‘*Antaryoga*’ were

held before. Mūrika's *Śrīlakam* is situated vastly on the right side. Interior of *Śrīlakam* is decorated out of copper sheets. According to worshipping methods of Pulpalli Lava and Kuśa is '*Talaçi Pratiṣṭa*'. South-west of the *Śrīlakam* has multiple deities such as '*Vetṭakkorumakan*', 'Gaṇapati', 'Subramanian' and so on. Finally at the north-east section of temple we can find the serpent king ('Nāgarāja') as deity. There is a deity named '*Vellāṭṭu*' which is seen as secondary deity in the temple. It is believed that it was once Mūrikā's Playground. Here is the place where permission is requested in the beginning '*Dhanumāsa*' for '*Kulakuthal*'. People who belong to '*Kallnadi*' also conduct '*Vellāṭṭu*'. On the occasion of '*Viṣu*' special kind of dances (according to heredity of tribes) are seen to be performed.

The people also conduct '*Villuṇāral*' ceremony. This symbolizes Lakṣmaṇa and others who protected Sītā at western entrance of the current temple location according to the legend. The group of people who belong to '*Çetti*' conducts this ceremony. There is a place in Wayanad called 'Erulam' it is believed that this is the place where Sītā and her children came to this place for collecting flowers and Landslip ('*Urulpoṭṭal*') occurred. 'Āriapaḷli' is the place where marriage of Lava and Kuśa is conducted according to legend. The place is famous for

popularity of ‘*Çeṭṭi Rāmāyaṇa*’. Main offering of people from this area is ‘*Tira*’. People who belong to ‘*Paniya*’ group also participate in this. When Sītā was left alone by Rāma, She cried at the banks of a river which is currently known as ‘*Kannārapuzha*’ which is stream of ‘*Kabani*’. About fifteen kilometers away from ‘*Meppādi*’ there is hole known as ‘*Sītāmmakuzhi*’. It is believed that it is the location where earth was split and Sītā was taken inside the hole. The hole also includes a lake and a beautiful waterfall. The waterfall is known as ‘*Lakṣmaṇatīrṭha*’. Tirunelli is the place believed as the same where Bharata came to inform death of their father and together all the four brothers went to drop the ashes in ‘*Pāpanāśini*’ river.

The people of Wayanad still believe that there is footprint of Rāma near the river. Wayanad got its name because ‘*Mayan*’ created region. It was initially called *Mayanād* refers *Mayan*’s land, later it evolved to ‘*Wayanad*’. ‘*Rāmpaḷli*’ got its name because it was the place where Rāmā took rest while he was tired during travelling. The place where hunter shot the female bird with an arrow is currently called ‘*Ponkuzhi*’ which evolved from ‘*Peṅkili*’. Near this place there is a Banyan tree. Sītā was banished here, and she cried in wrench under the Banyan tree which is now called ‘*Āltara*’. ‘*Śāsimala*’ a place near *Vālmīki āśrama*, where according to belief Lava and Kuśa played.

Initially it was 'Śiśumala' later on evolved to the current name. 'Varaṭūr' is the place where Sītā was abducted according to the legend. The name was coined from '*Varaykudūre*' which means far from the line. Line here refers to 'Lakṣmaṇarekha'. '*Çetālayam*' is a place near 'Pulpalli' which was initially '*Sītālayam*' which has the meaning 'Sītā's shelter. Pulpalli got its name because Rāma slept on the grass, near to this a place called '*Vayal*' is said to be the place where Sītā was found.



**Photos in connection with the Visit of *Vālmikiāśrama*  
at Wayanad**



***Vālmikiāśrama* at Pulpally**



***Mandāra vrkṣa* at *Vālmikiāśrama* Pulpally**





*Vālmīkipāra near Vālmīkiāśram at Pulpally*



*Sītā-lava-kuśa-kṣetra at Pulpally Waynad*



*Sap̄tamātr̄kkal*



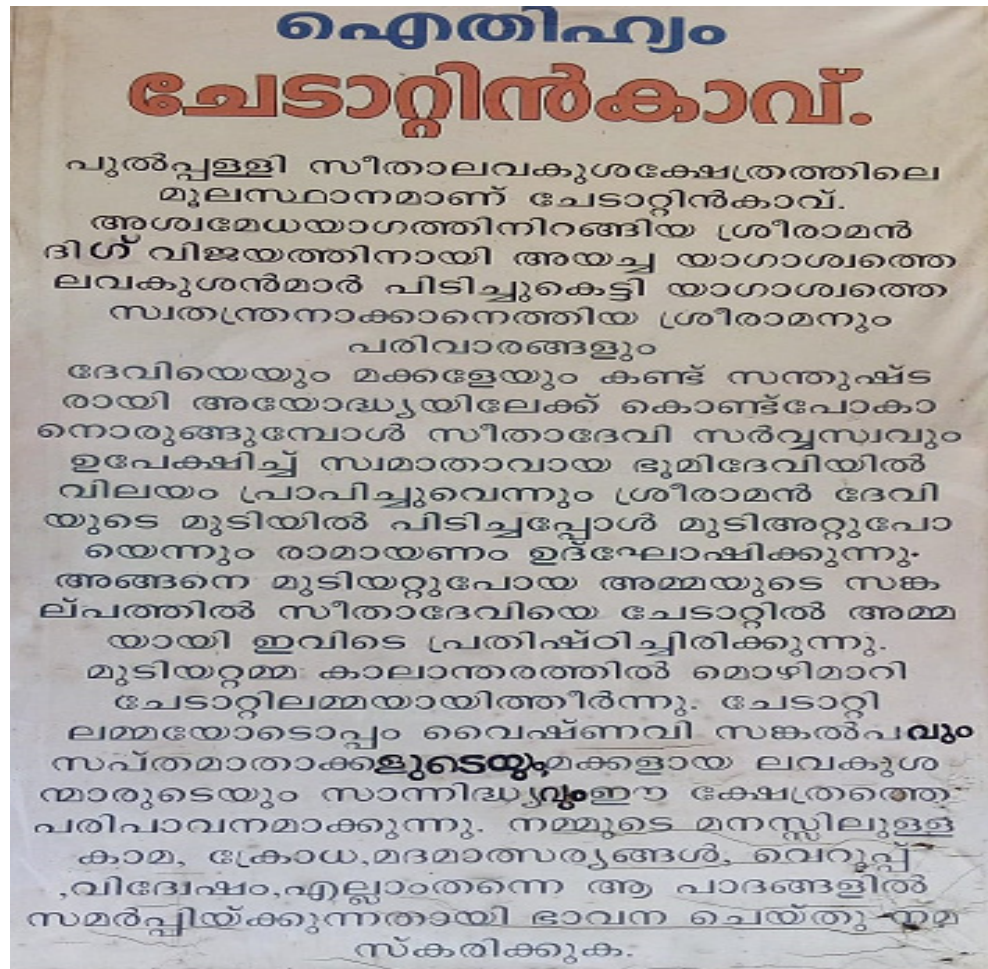
*Çeṭāṭṭinkāvu*



*Chēṭṭilamma/Sītādevi*



*Çeṭāṭṭinkāvu*



*Çeṭāṭṭinkāvu / Jaṭayattakāvu legend*