

## Sita in the Ramayana (A Comparative Analysis of Two Ramayanas)

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### **Abstract**

A Comparative analysis of two Ramayana Shrimad Valmiki Ramayana and Ramkirti.

A literary creation does not come into existence by itself. It's emergence is determined by social situation. The determinants giving birth to a literary creation arise on the basis of a number of socio-economic and political conditions which ultimately explains the genesis, form and content of the work. An attempt has been made to compare the personality dimensions of Sita in two different Ramayana viz Shrimad Valmiki Ramayana and Ramkirti.

The difference between Valmiki's Sita and Ramkirti's Sita is probably due to difference between the norms, values and behavioural pattern prevailing in both societies.

"A Literary creation does not come into existence by itself. It's emergence is determined by social situation. The determinants giving birth to a literary creation arise on the basis of a number of socio-economic and political conditions which ultimately explain the genesis, form and content of the work"<sup>1</sup>.

"There are four broad aspects of relationship between the writer and the Society -

- a) Author takes his/her matter from the society. (Impact of society on writer);
- b) Author her/himself is the product of the society. (Impact of society on the writer).
- c) Author selects such aspects as are linked with his/her attitudes, aspirations and ideologies. (Impact of writer on society).
- d) Author's writings serve as an instrument of social change (Impact of writer on Society).<sup>2</sup>"

In this paper, an attempt has been made to compare the personality dimensions of Sita in two different Ramayanas viz., Shrimad Valmiki Ramayana and Ramkirti (Thailand) written in different periods. Shrimad Valmiki Ramayana was written in Hindi before the 2nd Century during the Sung period. Sung were Brahmin Kings. In that society, Sung those who were considered as ideals, occupied a dominant position in the Ramayana.<sup>3</sup>

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It appears that at that time the status of woman was not very high. She was submissive, docile, meek and dependent on males for her security. She had very little say in personal and general affairs. She was expected to be loyal to her husband and serve him in all the **circumstances**.

Ramkirti was written in 1781 in Thailand. It becomes evident that the image of the Thai Woman was different from that of the Indian woman. Although she too was expected to be meek, docile, submissive and obedient to her husband, at the same time, she is shown to be **aggressive, revolutionary, protesting and egoistic**.

Valmiki's Sita is always remembered as an ideal woman, an uncomplaining and silent sufferer. She would die rather than question the justification of her husband's conduct or waver in her loyalty to him. If sorrow is an index to greatness, then Sita is the greatest of all women. Her life is nothing but a succession of sorrowful experiences. But in RamKirti, she is not shown as a silent sufferer. She even questions her husband's conduct and revolts against his unfair deeds.

In Shrimad Valmiki Ramayana, Sita has been depicted as extremely beautiful but in Ram Kirti, Sita's physical aspect has not been given much importance by the writer.

In Ramkirti there is a controversy regarding the birth of Sita. In this Ramayana she is said to be the daughter of Ravana. She was born of the spritual food which one of his Rakshasis had stolen from Ayodhya during the performance of the Yagya which was eaten by his wife Mandodari. 'In the other Ramayanas including Valmiki's, however, we find no such event which proves that Sita was the daughter of Ravana.

In Valmiki Ramayana when Sita is informed by Ram about his banishment, she is taken aback. Ram requests her to stay back at Ayodhya but Sita is determinent to follow him in the jungle. She is ready to give up the luxurious life in order to stay with her husband, but at the same time, she has to seek the permission of her husband in order to follow him in the Dandak. In Ramkirti, Sita decides her course of duty without consulting her husband and mother in law and does not make a humble recuest to Ram to take her along with him to the jungle. This incident indicates her independent judgement and action.

In Valmiki Ramayana, Sita is depicted as a religious minded woman, but in Ramkirti, no such event can be observed which reveals that the Thai Sita is very religious minded.

When Ravana abducts Sita in Valmiki Ramayana, she keeps on threatening Ravana off and on by describing her husband's physical strength and valour. She is also shown as dejected, depressed and overwhelmed with grief, when she is tortured by Ravana and the Rakshashis, but in Ramkirti, she does not threaten Ravana, rather composes herself and tries to face the situation bravely and with confidence. This is due to the fact that the Indian woman was expected to depend on her male counterpart for her physical as well as emotional security and that is why she is submissive and docile.

Sita of Ramkirti is also somewhat submissive but not as much as Valmiki's Sita. This change may be

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due to the difference of norms and values in both the societies and the fact of their periods being different.

In Ramkirti Sita is called as witness by Malivraj in order to settle the dispute between Ram and Ravana. No such event can be seen in the Valmiki Ramayana. Thus, it can be said that in Thai culture the woman enjoyed an equal status with that of her male counterpart and had some say in political and social activities of a given society.

In Ramkirti when Sita goes to meet Ram after his victory over Ravana, she becomes suspicious whether Ram will accept her or not but Valmiki's Sita does not suspect any such thing. This difference may be contributed by the fact that there were certain norms, values and behaviour patterns which forced her to be doubtful whether she would be accepted by her husband or not as she had stayed in an other man's custody. It appears that she could not argue for her self respect.

In both the Ramayanas Sita's chastity has been questioned by Ram. Ram is more worried about his honour and prestige. Though Sita obeys his commands she is disappointed at his behaviour and She feels frustrated because the hopes or desires which she had cherished are not fulfilled. Though insulted and injured, she does not lose her self-possession and faces the challenge with great dignity. She herself says that she would prove her chastity by entering into the fire.

In Valmiki Ramayana, Sita keeps a twig between herself and Ravana whenever she talks to him. This may be due to the traditional norms and values of Indian culture. In keeping with it, the Indian woman keeps certain reservations when she talks to any male stranger but in Ramkirti, no such event has been portrayed by the author. This indicates the broad outlook of Thai culture.

In Ramkirti Ram asks Sita to show all the precious gifts given to her by Ravana. This behaviour of Ram hurts her feelings. She compares his attitude with Ravana's attitude and says that Ravana had never hurt her feelings in the manner that Ram has. Thus we can say that she had courage to revolt against the wrong deeds of Ram.

In Ramkirti, the reason behind the banishment of Sita is that she had once drawn the picture of Ravana on slate when she was requested by Rakshashis (in the disguise of maids). As soon as she had drawn the picture, the Rakshashis disappeared and entered into the picture. At that very moment, Ram came and he found that Sita had drawn the picture of Ravana and all this inspired him to kill her, whereas in Valmiki Ramayana, Ram exiles her when he hears that his subjects are talking ill about him for having accepted Sita after her stay at Lanka. The objection raised by the subjects is that they too will now have to ignore such events in connection with their wives which would be blasphemous. In Ramkirti, Ram exiles her, probably because of jealousy whereas in Valmiki Ramayana, he exiles her for the sake of his fame and honour.

In both the Ramayanas her plight is miserable for she has no hopes of a reunion. Despite this, she is ready to perform her duties as a wife and a queen. Her message to Ram does not sound so spirited as her words before the fire ordeal. It seems that as a docile wife, she submits to his cruel command but here also, she stoops to conquer. Her message is indicative of supreme maturity that does not seek

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reciprocation. Even towards such husband, who does not give her the right of hearing, given even to hardened criminals in ordinary courts, she performs her duty of a Sahadharmini. In Ramkirti when Ram comes to the jungle and requests Sita to return to Ayodhya, she bluntly refuses him. She sarcastically remarks as to how he can accept her now that she has lived in the jungle all by herself for years, She further adds that she is not as hard heartened as him who had ordered to kill his beloved wife. At last when Ram plays a trick to call Sita to Ayodhya, her self-respect and self pride is so much injured that she finally enters the earth. In Valmiki Ramayana however Ram asks Rishi Valmiki to bring Sita to Ayodhya and prove her chastity in front of all the subjects. Sita comes to Ayodhya on Valmiki's request to prove her chastity. This desire of Ram hurts Sita's feelings and as a result, she enters in to the earth.

After the exile she has no desire to live. She has no mind to be the queen of the same people who after all were responsible for her disgrace. She has given proof of her innocence more than once and she thinks that her life's mission has been fulfilled. Sita does not go back to Ram and in her own way gives him a terrible punishment, which he so rightly deserves and which no one else could have pronounced on him.

In Shrimad Valmiki Ramayana the writer has portrayed the character with such traits which are far above the ordinary human traits in order to present an ideal for the Indian society. It appears that the writer has projected such ideals because it was the need of the Society. at that time.

In Ramkirti the writer has presented the characters with personality traits, which are nearer to social reality. Such depiction gives an impression that the writer has picked

the characters from the society in which he lived. From the above depiction of Sita in Shrimad Valmiki Ramayana, Sita continues to be a model for an Indian woman. Valmiki has presented an ideal for the Indians which is far from social reality underlined with spirituality and divinity. She is shown as submissive, docile, soft spoken, subjugated and obedient to her husband. It may be due to the fact that such behavioural pattern was expected from an Indian woman because she occupied a lower status than man in the Society. Valmiki's Sita has been depicted as religious because religion has played a very important role in the Indian Society to maintain coherence, harmony, equilibrium and to regulate the behavioural patterns of the members of the Society.

It was considered ideal for an Indian woman to surrender to any command of her husband whether fair or unfair. She was also expected to depend on her male counterpart both for her physical and emotional security. She has a self sacrificing spirit. She gives up all the leisures and luxuries and happiness in order to follow and keep her husband happy. Perhaps this is the reason why Sita has been depicted by Valmiki as subordinate and meek but at the same time, she is expected to maintain her self respect and self pride.

Through Ramkirti we can observe the socio-cultural set up of the Thai Society. From the depiction of Sita in Ramkirti it becomes evident that human qualities and traits which were closer to social reality were given much importance than the ideal traits underlined with spirituality and divinity.

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