SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY OF A QUEEN AS REFLECTED IN SITA: A CHARACTER ANALYSIS

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Abstract
The Ramayana, an epic narrative, presents its characters as embodiments of virtues and moral lessons essential for human conduct. Each character serves as a school of thought, illustrating qualities that are admirable and those that should be avoided. Central to the narrative is the concept of Dharma, which signifies the moral path one must follow to achieve salvation. While the interpretation of Dharma may evolve with time, the figures of Rama and Sita remain timeless exemplars of righteousness. Rama represents the ideal king, embodying the principles of leadership and care, while Sita exemplifies the virtues associated with sage-like wisdom and selflessness. Sita Devi, a shining example of moral virtue and ethical understanding, showcases a profound mastery of the fundamental aspects of dharma. The teachings of a sage-like existence, imparted by Janaka, equipped Sita with the fortitude to navigate through numerous adversities that lay ahead. Sita represents a multi-faceted ideal of femininity and not only a character in a mythological epic but also a timeless icon of empowerment and moral integrity.
Keywords: *SitaDevi, Dharma, Integrity, Loyalty, Feminine Power*

1. Introduction

The Ramayana, alongside the Vedas, has been instrumental in fostering unity amidst India's vast cultural diversity. Its influence extends beyond the Indian subcontinent, shaping human culture globally. The practice of chanting the Sita Rama mantra in the evenings, often in front of a lamp, subtly instill values of suffering and sacrifice in children from an early age. This epic narrative encompasses not only Rama's journey but also the experiences of Sita and the myriad characters who accompany him, collectively enriching the moral and ethical fabric of society. The enduring legacy of the Ramayana is evident in various cultural practices, both within India and in foreign lands, highlighting its profound impact on human civilization. Qualities like Patience, moral courage, self-control, sacrifice, and dedication to one’s faith influence the development of personality and determine how a person responds to life’s challenges

2. Discussion, Analysis and Findings

The word dharma has played a significant role in Indian society. The essence of life and the incarnation of Gods are revealing the pivot role of dharma which has several faces according to the duty. These crucial facets, namely personal dharma, community dharma, and royal dharma, serve as the guiding principles that illuminate one's path in life. Personal dharma, the cornerstone of individual responsibility, intricately weaves together an individual's essential duties with their inherent nature and life stage. It dictates that a person’s primary focus should revolve around dedicated learning and reverence for their mentors, while a householder is tasked with upholding the traditions and values of their family and community. On the broader spectrum, community dharma encompasses the collective moral compass that unites individuals, fostering social cohesion and cooperation. Adherence to shared values and preservation of cultural traditions play pivotal roles in nurturing a harmonious societal fabric where collective well-being takes precedence. Furthermore, royal dharma, meticulously defined by the responsibilities of governance, places a profound emphasis on rulership marked by fairness and compassion. A just and benevolent sovereign is duty-bound to safeguard their subjects, ensuring

equitable justice and sustainable prosperity for all under their rule. Sita Devi, a shining example of moral virtue and ethical understanding, showcases a profound mastery of the fundamental aspects of dharma. Sita Devi's profound sagacity mirrors a profound comprehension of these timeless principles, embodying the virtues of righteousness and ethical conduct across all spheres of existence.

2.1. The Cultural Heritage of Sitadevi

The word Sita has three letters 'Sa' denotes 'consciousness'. The 'I' represents 'Maya' and 'Ta' denotes 'Mahalakṣmi'. The name Sita was derived from the combined form of these three forms. [1] Sita Devi's cultural heritage was profoundly shaped by her father, the esteemed royal sage Janaka, a figure of remarkable wisdom and virtue. Though he held the title of king, Janaka was far more than a mere ruler; he embodied a rich tapestry of qualities that transcended the trappings of royalty. His simplicity was akin to that of a sage, reflecting a life devoted to spiritual pursuits rather than the ostentation often associated with kingship. Janaka possessed an extensive knowledge of Brahman, the ultimate reality, which he imparted to his daughter with great care and reverence. In the grand halls of his royal court, discussions extended beyond the mundane affairs of governance. The welfare of the people was indeed a priority, but equally significant were the dialogues surrounding spiritual enlightenment and the pursuit of higher knowledge. These conversations were not merely academic; they were infused with a sense of purpose and a deep understanding of the interconnectedness of all beings. Sita, absorbing these lessons from her father, was instilled with a profound sense of confidence and resilience that would serve her well in the face of life's myriad challenges.

The teachings of a sage-like existence, imparted by Janaka, equipped Sita with the fortitude to navigate through numerous adversities that lay ahead. She would face the trials of living in the forest, a stark contrast to her royal upbringing, where the comforts of palace life were replaced by the harsh realities of nature. The heart-wrenching separation from her beloved husband, Rama, would test her spirit, yet the wisdom of her father echoed in her mind, guiding her through the darkness of despair. Her time in Lanka, fraught with danger and uncertainty, was marked by the looming threat of Ravana, a formidable adversary whose power seemed insurmountable. Yet, Sita's inner strength, cultivated through her father's teachings, allowed her to maintain her dignity and resolve. Even the harrowing experience of purification by fire, a trial that would challenge the very essence of her being, was met with the unwavering courage that Janaka had instilled in her.

2.2. Sita as a protector of Dharma

In the context of royal duties, the concept of dharma plays a crucial role in guiding a king's actions and decisions. When a ruler adheres strictly to royal dharma, it often necessary Sita prioritizing the welfare of the kingdom over personal relationships. This can lead to challenging situations where the king must make sacrifices that may strain familial bonds and personal connections. Queen Sita exemplifies this understanding, recognizing that the greater good of the kingdom must take precedence, even at the expense of personal safety or comfort. Sita's perspective highlights the inherent conflict between personal loyalty and public duty. A king, as the protector of his realm, is tasked with ensuring the stability and security of his subjects. This responsibility can sometimes require difficult choices, such as putting the needs of the kingdom above those of his family. The implications of such decisions can be profound, affecting not only the king's immediate relationships but also the broader social fabric of the kingdom. Sita embraces her destiny without casting blame on anyone, including Rama, as she recognizes that the decision stems from the obligations of kingship. She understands Rajadharma transcends personal relationship and acknowledges that a king's action must reflect the expectations of his realm. Accepting this, she retrains from protesting, fully aware that duty takes precedence**.** According to her words "The king is always very attentive to righteousness and is worthy of praise from the people. He should behave towards his people as he does towards his brothers. [2]

Ultimately, the commitment to royal dharma, as illustrated by Queen Sita's insights, underscores the complexities of leadership. It serves as a reminder that a ruler's duty extends beyond personal interests, demanding a focus on the collective well-being of the kingdom. By prioritizing unity and safety for all, a king can foster a stronger, more resilient society, even if it comes at a personal cost. In the forest, Sita's solitude became a refuge where she grappled with her emotions while remaining steadfast in her support for Rama's role as a leader. Abandonment did not weaken her resolve; instead, it reinforced her belief that her love should not hinder his responsibilities. Sita's silence in this challenging period reflects her inner strength and the sacrifices she was willing to make for the sake of her husband's duty to his kingdom. Her actions serve as a testament to the complexities of love and duty, illustrating how personal sacrifices can sometimes be necessary for the greater good. Sita recognizes that Rama's choices was driven by his responsibilities as a king rather than personal feelings. She does not hold him accountable, demonstrating her wisdom and acceptance of her circumstances. She perceives herself as a component of a grater cosmic framework in which a king must place the needs of his people above his own personal desires.

2.3. Sita as a symbol of Integrity and virtues.

Sita Devi, a central figure in the epic Ramayana, exemplifies the profound strength and selflessness of a devoted partner. Her love for Rama was not only romantic but also deeply intertwined with an understanding of his responsibilities as a king. When faced with the harsh reality of exile, Sita made the heart-wrenching decision to separate from Rama, prioritizing his royal duty over her personal desires. This decision underscores her steadfast dedication to the greater good, showcasing her character as a woman of immense integrity. When she was asked to prove her chastity before the public once again, Sita's ultimate assertion of purity does not bow to to another test but instead demands upon Mother Earth (Bhumi Devi) to witness her truth. She says that "As I have never thought of anyone other than Rama, even in my mind, may the sweet Mother Earth open up and take me iin."[3]

In front of the public during the Agnipareeksha at second time, Sita expressed her lifelong adherence to dharma and her unwavering devotion to Rama. She prayers to Goddess Bhumi that "If I Have never thought of anyone other than Lord Raghava in my mind, word or deed, may the goddess Bhumi grant me your refuge."[4]

2.4.Sita as a face of Strength, Loyalty and Sacrifice

Sita embodies the essence of resilience, showcasing how an individual can stand strong against the trials of life while holding onto their values and beliefs. Her journey is marked by problems that test her determination, from her exile in the forest to her seizure by Ravana, yet she remains steadfast, illustrating the profound depth of her character. In a world where power often equates to dominance, Sita redefines this notion by demonstrating that true strength lies in vulnerability, compassion, and forgiveness. Moreover, her spiritual power resonates deeply within the cultural fabric of society, inspiring countless individuals to seek inner strength and maintain their dignity regardless of external circumstances. Sita's actions encourage us to challenge societal norms, advocate for justice, and embrace the courage to stand up against oppression. In examining the legacy of Maharani Sita Devi, it becomes clear that her story transcends mere folklore; it serves as a testament to the virtues of loyalty and sacrifice. While many may not be familiar with her life, understanding her role provides a richer context to the epic narrative of Rama and Sita. Her enduring spirit continues to inspire discussions about the complexities of love, duty, and the sacrifices made in the name of righteousness. Sita understands that Rama is not acting out of personal weakness or lack of love for her instead, he is satisfying the responsibility of a ruler, even at the price of own pain. Her unwavering loyalty to her husband, Lord Rama, reflects the ideals of devotion and sacrifice, emphasizing that leadership is not solely about authority but also about commitment to one's loved ones and principles. Sita's trials serve as a mirror reflecting the struggles many faces, making her a relatable figure who transcends the

confines of her narrative. Although intensely hurt, Sita recognizes that Rama's responsibilities as a king differ from his duties as a husband. Sita contemplates the reasons behind her exile, not out of rebellion, but as a reflection of her pain. She understands that individual virtues alone may not suffice; the opinions of the public play a significant role in a king's rule.[5]

2.5. Sita as a symbol of Feminine Power

As the daughter of King Janaka, Sita's journey is marked by trials that test her strength and resilience. Various interpretations of her character reveal the complexity of her role; to some, she is the devoted wife, while others see her as a figure of sorrow or an idol of self-respect. She asked some questions to Sri Rama when he asked to Agnipareekṣa Here she express her power as a devoted wife and her inquiries instill a sense of unease not just in Sri Rama, but in all men present.[6] This multifaceted portrayal allows for a rich exploration of gender roles and societal expectations in Indian culture. Sita Devi's fame is rooted in her remarkable resilience and the depth of her character. Unlike many who might have succumbed to despair when faced with abandonment, she chose a path of silent strength. Sita's ultimate rejection of societal judgment after invoking Bhumi Devi, Sita makes it clear that she will not live in a world where she is constantly questioned and she recognized that truth and dharma are eternal. By leaving, she does not seek revenge or sorrow; rather, she chooses peace over endless trials.

Princess Sita Devi, a figure often overshadowed by her legendary counterpart from ancient texts, remains a subject of intrigue for many. Her life and legacy are intertwined with themes of devotion and sacrifice, particularly in her unwavering support for her husband, Lord Rama. Sita Devi's story is not merely one of personal affection; it reflects a profound understanding of duty and the complexities of royal life, making her a pivotal character in the narrative of dharma. Her decision to endure hardship rather than seek vindication from Rama illustrates her profound commitment to his royal responsibilities. This choice not only set her apart from other women of her time but also highlighted her unique insight into Rama's nature and the challenges he faced as a ruler. Sita recognizes Rama's responsibilities as a ruler when she is informed by Lakshmana that Rama's decision to exile her, she does not express anger or hatred but instead acknowledges that a king must always act in the best interest of his kingdom.

2.6. Sith's Rajarshi Dharma

Sita is the daughter of the Janaka who is a raja as well as a Rishi too. So, the teaching of her father influenced her to overcome the pains and sorrows that she faced in her own life. Despite her sadness, Sita finally admits her exile as part of fate (Vidhi), showing her internal strength and wisdom.

Sita understands that truth and dharma always prevail. Before disappearing into the earth, she reminds everyone that , truth (Satya) and dharma (righteousness) are eternal and will always win.

Sometimes she advices Rama to avoid the violation of ashramadharma during their vanavasa. Sita Devi offers counsel to Rama, expressing her disapproval of the vow he made to the sage Rishi during the Vanavasa to eliminate the demons. She states, "We did not come here as mountain dwellers to engage in combat. It is unjust to take the life of anyone who does not pose a threat to us. Thus, I urge you to reconsider this course of action." In response, Rama acknowledges her wisdom, remarking that her words reflect her noble lineage as the daughter of Janaka. He emphasizes that, in accordance with royal duty, it is the responsibility of kings to protect the sages. Therefore, he cannot refuse their request for assistance.[7]

Living like Sita or becoming Sita is a challenge faced by women across generations. Achieving the qualities she embodies—sacrifice, dedication, humility—requires strength and determination. From a young age, children should be taught essential lessons of sacrifice, wisdom, and simplicity. These lessons come from the example of parents and elders, shaping their understanding of life. The true value of this learning reveals itself when children encounter real-life situations. Their resilience and character

are built through the lessons they absorb at home. These life lessons become their guiding light during times of difficulty. In today's world, acceptance and patience seem to diminish among people, especially women. Small disagreements, trivial misunderstandings, and petty conflicts often provoke intolerance. This reduces social harmony and increases stress. To navigate life's challenges and face hardships with confidence and grace, a balanced approach is needed. Women, and everyone in general, must cultivate both spiritual and material knowledge. This balanced knowledge helps them to endure struggles and to act wisely in different circumstances. For example, Sita's ability to fulfill her duties as a queen were rooted in the wisdom inherited from her father, King Janaka. Her understanding of spiritual principles complemented her worldly responsibilities, enabling her to carry out her role with dignity. Knowledge gained from her upbringing gave her strength, patience, and clarity. These qualities are necessary to manage a household, support one's family, and serve as a moral example. Children learn vital life skills from their surroundings from a very young age. When they witness their parents behaving with patience and honesty, they internalize these traits, shaping their character without even realizing it. Patience, moral courage, self-control, sacrifice, and dedication to one's faith are fundamental qualities for a balanced human life. These qualities influence the development of personality and determine how a person responds to life's challenges. The more a person cultivates these virtues, the stronger and more resilient they become. Each individual's personality is shaped by how well they develop these traits. The stories of Sri Rama and Sita serve as ideal examples of virtues put into practice. Their lives illustrate how spiritual and moral strength can lead to fulfilling daily duties and overarching responsibilities.

The knowledge passed to Sita by her father, King Janaka, was not only spiritual but also practical. It equipped her to excel as a queen, a wife, and a daughter-in-law. Her understanding of duty and morality helped her to face adversity with grace and integrity. Her qualities have inspired countless women in India to maintain their families with love, patience, and resilience. Many traditions and roles women follow today stem from the example set by Sita Devi. Her name is still praised in Indian homes, especially among Hindus, as a model of virtue and devotion. Throughout history, Sita's qualities have become a moral blueprint for women. Her strength, purity, and unwavering faith continue to influence cultural ideals. Indian women, across generations, have looked up to her as an example of how to balance duty, love, and morality. Her life teaches that sacrifices made with faith and resolve can lead to lasting strength. It inspires women to face their own trials with patience and dignity, just as Sita did. Her legacy remains relevant, reminding women of their inner strength and the importance of living a life grounded in virtue and dedication. In essence, Sita Devi's life was a testament to the profound impact of her father's wisdom, a legacy that not only shaped her character but also prepared her to confront the trials of fate with grace and unwavering strength.

Sita is not just a queen in a political sense but a queen of ideals, emotions, and spiritual power. Unlike other queens who derive power from a throne, Sita's influence is eternal—she rules in the hearts of people across generations. Her story teaches that a true queen is not just someone who rules over people but one who rules over adversity with dignity and unwavering faith. Her strength is her character, her power is her purity, and her legacy is her unbreakable spirit. The lessons derived from the lives of Rama and Sita continue to resonate, offering guidance on the practice of Dharma in contemporary society. Their stories encourage individuals to reflect on their responsibilities and the moral choices they face. By embodying the ideals of selflessness, leadership, and integrity, both characters inspire generations to strive for a balanced and virtuous life, reinforcing the timeless relevance of the Ramayana in understanding human ethics and the pursuit of salvation.

3. Conclusion

Ultimately, Sita Devi's story is a powerful reminder of the balance between love and duty. Her determination to not become an obstacle in Rama's path underscores the themes of sacrifice and loyalty

that resonate throughout the Ramayana. Sita's legacy continues to inspire many, as her choices reflect a profound understanding of the responsibilities that come with leadership and the selflessness required to support those we love. In essence, Sita represents a multi-faceted ideal of femininity—one that combines strength with grace, resilience with empathy, and spirituality with practicality. As one explores her story, one can find that her legacy is not just a tale from ancient texts but a guiding light for contemporary society, urging us to cultivate our inner strength and uphold our ideals in the face of adversity. Thus, Sita stands not merely as a character in a mythological epic but as a timeless icon of empowerment and moral integrity, reminding us that the true measure of a queen lies not in her crown but in her heart and actions.

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