

# SantimmiRamayna

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I have seen Rama in the heart of god Anjaneya, with Sita on the one side & Laxmana on the other side. I heard Ramayna from my grandpa. His name is Maison Narsappa. On Saturday special pooja he used to wear a turban, put a three-line mark on his forehead, carry conch, jagate, lampstand in his hands and go. How great he looked, like a god himself. He never scolded anybody, never even lifted a hand on anybody. He used to play harmonium while reciting Ramayna. So wonderful was his narration that everybody used to listen with open eyes & mouth. He not only narrated Ramayna but also played Sita's role in the play of Ramayna. In the scene happening in woods of Asoka trees, he made every one even men cry.

Are you all wondering why I am telling the story of my grandpa instead of Ramayna? Wait, I am getting there.

Long back, long, long back, when there was no Vidhanasoudha (legislative assembly building), or elections, there was a king called Janaka who ruled the Mithila city. As a king he had all the wealth of food, clothes, and shelter but never had the wealth of children. He was very sad. One day he was so engrossed in his sorrow that he could not sleep the whole night. It was already dawn. He got up, took his plough and went to his land to till. He was a hardworking man, not like our modern kings who sit in a car which moves so smoothly that the water in the tummy will not move an inch & who have grown such big bellies that they can't even walk an inch.

As he was about to stop the plough, he saw a baby girl shining like a star. 'Oh, mother earth has given me a boon of this child after listening to my cries!' thought the king. He bowed down to mother earth to thank her & took the baby home. He looked after the baby with care as though ants will take away her if put on the floor, crows will carry away if held too high & warmth. She grew up & bloomed like a flower of an areca nut tree.

His daughter was now a young lady. Her father wanted to search for a suitable man. He had an idea. Won't you ask what that idea was?

Yes, I will tell you the idea. He had a bow and an arrow with him. It was not an ordinary one, it was a special gift given by god Shiva to his father. Why did he give the gift, don't you want to know?

Once, god Shiva was in some trouble & Janaka's father had helped him. Difficulties do not discriminate between humans & gods. Shiva was very happy so he gave this bow & arrow as gift. It was special. Not easy even to lift. Sita also liked the bow and arrow. She dusted it once in a while. Janaka sent a message to all the princes of different kingdoms: 'the one who lifts this bow & arrow will marry my daughter.' What a fool of an ass is he? Giving away his daughter in marriage to a person who lifts the weight of a bow & arrow instead of someone who can lift the burden of life? Even to this day, who cares to find a proper match for their daughters? Princes came from all over. Rama the son of Dasharatha, king of Ayodhya also came. He had heard about Sita's beauty & intelligence. He wanted to marry her. He not only lifted the bow and arrow but also broke it into two pieces. Janaka felt very happy and celebrated his darling daughter's wedding grandly, fed the people with a grand feast. He sent his daughter along with Rama.

Dasharatha was also very happy. He called his ministers & planned a crowning ceremony for Rama who was fit to become a king in every sense. Dasharatha's third wife Kaikeyi was worried for her son Bharata. 'King is already old, if he dies what will happen to my son? Everybody including King likes Rama. Therefore, this is the right time to do anything for my son.' She was courageous & beautiful. She had once helped the king in setting the wheel of a chariot in the battlefield. King was pleased & wanted to give two boons in praise. She told him that she will take them when it is needed. Now she asked for those: the first is that Rama should go to the forest for fourteen years, and the second is that her son Bharatha should be crowned. Hearing this, the king collapsed. He was in a deep sorrow & felt that the curse of those old, blind parents whose son he had killed by mistake had come true. He died as he could not bear the sorrow of separation from his son.

Rama got ready to go to the forest. Sita who had made a promise of being together on joys and sorrows also joined him, Laxmana, who was like a shadow of Rama, also joined him. Bharatha came running and requested that Rama come back, saying that his mother was foolish enough to ask such things. Rama refused; Bharatha kept on insisting. In the present days, brothers fight & kill each other for a piece of land. Rama told Bharata, 'son is not son if he does not fulfil the words of father so I will go,' & he left to the forest. Bharata also told Rama that he is not going to sit on the throne but will keep Rama's sandals & rule. Having said this, he left crying.

Poor Sita, who led a cosy life in the palace, could not bear the hardships of the forest. Stones & thorns pierce the soles of her feet; thorny plants hurt her shoulders. She was lonely with two men always discussing politics, administration, throne and crown. This stupid Laxmana, why didn't he take his wife Urmila along with him? Urmila would have been a good company for Sita, together they would have shared the hardships happily. Anyway, Sita managed by herself. Walking a long way, they reached Devarayanadurga hill in Tumkur District. Sita could not bear the heat, she went & sat under a tree & told Rama she will not move an inch till she gets a mug of water to drink & a bucket of water to wash.

Rama felt pity for Sita, immediately took his bow & arrow & shot at the rock, he was an expert in fixing an aim and hitting it. Water sprang from the rock like a fountain. It's the same Namadachilme (its sacred worshipping place) where the water is as sweet as tender coconut water. Water flows in two different colours- red and yellow. It is the colour of vermilion and turmeric which Sita use to put on her forehead. It's a beautiful place, you also visit when you come.

Sita drank water & quenched her thirst. And bathed. Felt light. The forest was covered with the scent of wildflowers. All the birds were getting back to their nests. Animals were romancing. Sita, in her burning youth, looked at Rama passionately. But Rama was stern. He had taken a vow not to have any family life in the forest. What an idiot he is? Forest or a palace, how does it matter to lead family life? If they had, they would have had a teenage child by the end of 14 years. Poor Rama! What can he do? The promise he made to his father was heavier than his youth.

But Sita never felt bad. She just buried her desires inside her womb. While walking in the forest she observed how a seed sprouts into sapling & sapling grows into a tree; recognized poisonous creepers & medicinal creepers; learnt the language of the birds & animals; learnt the secrets of life by watching the flowing rivers, burning fire, blowing wind; learnt the secret of love watching the tree which gives shade without discriminating, if you throw a stone it gives a fruit! She pressed the legs of Rama when he was tired, used to pluck out the thorns stuck in his sole; while he slept, she kept his head on her lap & took out the lice from his hair and removed wax from his ear; while he bathed, she scrubbed his back with the stone. But Sita had none to care for her other than herself.

Walking a long way, they reached a deep forest where a princess called Shoorpanaka lived. She was a loving sister of Ravana, the King of prosperous Lanka. He was so intelligent that his head was equal to ten heads. Because of his pampering, his sister had become arrogant. To correct her he had built a palace in

the forest & made her live there. While she was roaming around the forest, she saw Rama. She was in her youth, so naturally felt attracted to him. Youth is something which neither has head nor tail. She went & asked Rama, 'hey I love you, will you marry me?' Rama being a most wise person should have told her, 'hey where are you from, who are your parents? You are still too young to decide such things, give me the address, I will leave you & go.' Instead, he wrote on her back, 'cut off her nose & breasts & make her a crow' & sent her to Laxmana. Blind in love with Rama, she went to Laxmana to show the writing on her back.

Laxmana, seeing what was written by his brother, did exactly what was written. Shurpanaka burning with shame, sorrow went to her brother. Her brother got angry. Of course, any brother would be angry. We paint our hair when it greys; we paint our face to hide our age. How many times we peep into mirror? Imagine how insulting, humiliating for young women it would have been.

He wanted to teach a lesson to Rama, so came and took away Sita.

Who is the one who asked to cut off the nose and breasts? Who was the one who did it? And why the hell did he abduct Sita who was in no way responsible? Is it right?

They say that men are very strong, but they cannot take an iota of an insult. They put the burden of insult on women to shoulder it. Yet they claim they are very strong.

He kept Sita in Ashokavana. She was in her own sorrow. Ravana went and asked Sita, 'if you say yes then you can be my queen.' Sita got so wild! She just shouted at him... 'if you go a step further, you will face the consequences! What do you think of man-women relationship? It is not a game to be played. Not a battle to be fought. It is union of mind, body and soul. If you come near me.... I will tear you into pieces and throw it to the dogs & jackals.'

Ravana got shocked and scared to death. He thought of taking Sita back to her place, but being a man with a moustache, how can he accept the defeat? These men care about their moustache so much that they are ready to give up their lives for it! As though they have struggled hard putting water & manure to grow it....fools! After all it's a gift of nature.

God Anjaneya found the address of Sita. To reach Lanka, Rama had to cross a big ocean. He knew archery & he had read big books. He knew politics but never used to work in the hot sun carrying the loads. So, with the help of god Anjaneya, he gathered all the monkeys, built a bridge, went to Lanka...killed Ravana, ruined the city and came back with Sita.

Instead of sorting out the issue rationally, why do these men who claim they are wise and intelligent go for war and destroy lives? Are they really wise? And moreover, who will bear the burden of sorrow? It's only women and children.

Anyhow, whatever happened, happened. By the time they came from Lanka, 14 years had passed. They returned to Ayodhya. All people were waiting at the main gates. They welcomed Rama and Laxmana but stopped Sita. They wanted to check how pure Sita was as she was taken away by Ravana. So, they did an agnipariksha (walking through the fire).

What is this bloody pure and impure.... The food we eat is so pure that it is offered to god. But when it turns into shit it becomes impure. The same impure shit becomes manure to grow food. Sita had burnt her desires to ashes in the prime of youth.....what fire can burn her.... She firmly stood still. Even the fire could not face that firmness.

They were back in the palace. Sita went and met Urmila first. She hugged and caressed her and asked, 'how did you manage to live alone all these years?' Urmila winked at her and said, 'where was I alone? I have got so many children.' Sita was surprised and asked, 'how can it be.... Laxmana was with us?' Smilingly, Urmila took Sita to the backyard and showed her the garden. It was full of green trees. She said, 'each tree I have looked after like a child. Are they not my children?' Sita hugged her warmly.

Bharat was not able to look after the administration properly as he was in deep sorrow and had become so weak that he could fall at a wind blow. Nobody could make out that he was a king unless he was near. So, they had tied a bell around his waist so that they could hear when he arrives and salute him. They saluted him but never paid their taxes. The Treasury was empty. Rama was worried thinking how to manage. Seeing that, Sita told Rama, 'head is not for worrying but for planning. Do not worry I will find a way.' She went and plucked all the pumpkins in the garden and made talda a delicious curry with avare beans and huchchellu powder (kind of an iol seed) and kept all the seeds. do you people make it here? Have you ever tasted it? It's mouth-watering, you can taste when you come to our place. .One morning she called Rama and asked him to distribute two seeds per house and announce that they have to grow the seed and give two pumpkins back to the palace. If they do not grow, they have to give whatever wealth they have equivalent to the weight of two pumpkins. Rama did the same. None of the seeds sprouted. Then everybody felt that they have cheated by not paying the tax, it has angered mother earth. Everybody gave wealth equivalent to the weight of two pumpkins.

Rama was so happy that the Treasury was full. He asked Sita, praising, 'what miracle did you do to the seeds that they did not sprout? You are very intelligent.' Sita looked at Rama.... 'you are a fool....who can't even make out which seed will sprout and which will not. I had fried those seeds and given.'

Good days came into Sita's life. She was pregnant.... Once, Rama went in disguise to find out how his citizens were. He was not like our modern kings, who show their face once in five years during elections. Rama saw a crowd discussing something serious. He went there and stood listening to the discussion. A man was telling another man, 'fight between husband and wife is common. Go bring back your wife.' In response the other man told.... 'I am not a ShriRamachandra to bring back my wife who has gone.'

Rama felt a thorny prick in his stomach. Did he not know what Sita was? If he had asked the dearest friend of Sita inside his heart, he would have known. But that friend was overpowered by Emperor Rama. After all, he was a king to rule the people. So, he was apprehensive of people's word. He ordered Laxmana to abandon Sita in the forest. Throne and crown are not simple things.... They don't care for any bonds.

This Laxmana should have left Sita at least where people lived, rather than the forest. Is it right? Sita was not scared of the forest. After all, she lived in the forest for 14 years. She knew the pulse of the forest. She was concerned about the baby in her womb. She prayed to mother earth, not for her life, but for the safe delivery and life of her baby. It was fine for her to give up life if the baby reaches safe hands. As if Sita's prayers were heard, saint Valmiki came in that direction. He felt sad for Sita and took her to his ashram where she delivered twin boys. She named them Lava and Kusha, taught them all the knowledge she learnt in the forest. Valmiki taught them reading and writing. Sita was both mother and father to her children. Many women are single parents even to this day.

One day, Lava and Kusha came very late. Sita was waiting, worried. They came with varieties of fruits. She asked, 'where did you go? From where did you get these fruits?' 'Mother we had gone very far. We saw a beautiful fruit garden inside the forest. We went inside wondering who has made such a beautiful garden inside the forest. There was a woman who took us around and gave us lot of fruits to eat and to carry. But she never showed her face. She hid it behind her veil.' Sita smelled something, took the address from the children. The next day she reached the garden. She could make out just by the sight that it was Shurpanaka. 'Why are you covering your face Shurpanaka? People who kill should be ashamed, not the

people who give life, you have given life to so many trees.' She lifted her veil and hugged her, had a long chat with her and came back.

While Sita and her children were living like this in the forest, there in Ayodhya Rama had become a very famous Emperor. No one dared to question his power but still he wanted to check if anyone was there to challenge him. So, he sent two white horses with a notice.... Whoever wants to challenge Rama can wage a war by tying the horses. If they lose, they have to handover their kingdom.

The horses came to where Lava and Kusha were living. They were excited. They read the notice tied to the horse. Do you know where this place is?.... It is Avani in Kolar district. The stone they tied the horse to is still there! Soldiers of Rama came running told the boys, 'do you know these horses belong to great king Rama. It's not kids' play. Leave the horses.' The boys said, 'we tied the horse after having read the notice. Go and tell your king to wage a war...lets us see who will win.' Rama got wild listening to this and said, 'what? Is it two young boys. I will break their bones in two seconds with my little finger.' But how can the old Rama win against two young boys? He lost the fight and felt ashamed as his moustache was soiled. He collapsed for the insult. By that time his soldiers came running and told him, 'lord Rama do not worry after all you have lost to your own children'... Rama got up immediately and proudly said that the boys won only because they were Rama's children.

Not even for a single day did he feed them or take care of them. He did not even know of their existence until a few minutes ago. But now they are his children!

Sita was watching and laughed at Rama thinking only his hair has ripened not his mind. Saint Valmiki came and greeted Rama, hosted him, and asked him to take his children and wife. Rama went to Sita and said, 'come to your home,' very casually. Sita said, 'which is my home? Mother earth is my home. The children have grown up. They need me no longer. As Sons of a king they are fit for the palace. You never felt the need for me even at the peak of your youth. I am not angry. The idol of me which you substituted for me during the holy offering is enough for you...not the living. When the crown becomes a headache for you and when the throne becomes a thorn in your buttocks, the same mother earth will be a home for you also. Till then let the food you eat & water you drink keep you in good health. I wish you a good happy healthy life. Goodbye.'

When everybody left, Sita finished all her daily chores and came and sat near a stream, dipping her leg into the water. The sun was setting, the sky was red. She looked at the sun and felt how beautiful even the setting sun was. It was like an adamant child cried all day now feeling sleepy.

All the birds were getting back to their nests. Cool air carried the scent of flowers. In the happiness which was lighter than the coolness of the air & the scent of the flower, she flew away. While she was flying away in that happiness, I am telling the story of Ramayana and you are all listening to it.

This is my Ramayana. Wherever you get sweet water well, Rama would have shot an arrow. Wherever there are rocks, Bhima would have stepped in.

Carrying all these sweet water wells, rocks, burning fire, blowing wind, flowing water, mother earth keeps on rotating on and on in rhythm. Sita is one such element of mother earth. This is the story I was telling you till now.

Forgive me for anything wrong. I will take leave, have to get back to my home, people and cattle. please have the dish and go. Namaste. Bye...