

Sita Jayanti - 21st May 2021

(The Appearance Day of Srimati Sita Devi)



On **21st May 2021** is a very important day in the Hindu calendar and on this day the 9th day of the bright moon in Vaisakha Month falls Sita Navami - the day when the Mother Earth (Dharti Ma) gave birth to Srimati Sita-devi. We all celebrate Raam Navami (the birthday/appearance day of Shree Raam) in such great pomp and splendor yet this day of His wife goes by unrecognized. In my humble opinion I think that this day is as important or maybe even more important than Raam Navami. One cannot go to the father without getting the blessings of the mother and in the same way we seek the divine blessings of Mother Sita to take us to Shree Raam. Without Mother Sita Lord Raam is incomplete and vice versa. We pray to Mother Sita's for Her divine blessings in compiling this article dedicated to Her. Jai Sita-Raam.

King Janaka in the Ramayana explains: "One day, when I was ploughing the fields, I found Her under the plough share and gave her the name Sita. Thus after emerging from the earth itself, She has grown up in my care." Thus was born the most famous Devi in Vedic history. The katha of Her birth, marriage, exile, abduction, (in) famous agni-pariksha (fire ordeal), and banishment is not only known and loved in Bharat (India), but throughout South and Southeast Asia and, indeed, in much of the rest of the world as well. Whether conveyed through music and mime, poetry, popular folk

tales, dramatic performances, video, comic books, epic narrations, the katha of Sita has captured the hearts of billions of people. To this day She is India's most favourite Devi. Jai Shreeeee Sita-devi.

Sita Devi's Lotus Footprint



This pilgrimage site about 100 km east of Bangalore in South India has what is considered a footprint in rock of Sita Devi. At this site Jatayu lost the battle with Ravana and chanted the holy name of Shree Rama until he departed from this world. The footprint over two feet in size brings to mind the Puranic descriptions of the gradual decrease in physical stature of living beings that occurs in the Kali-yuga. The local priests also add that the footprint always fills with water from some apparently underground source even after the water is repeatedly emptied.

Regardless of the accuracy, the fact that the greatest devas, devi's yogis can recognize the authentic Lotus Footprint of Srimati Sita Devi, philosophers and devotees constitute the dust particles in and around Her Footprint.

A brief life katha of Sita-devi.

Janaka Maharaj was ploughing a piece of land and then to prepare it for conducting a Yajna (spiritual sacrifice). He unearthed a golden casket in which he found a beautiful girl and was overjoyed. A land ploughed by the yoke is called 'Sita', and so he named the baby as Sita. With the arrival of the baby, the king's good luck appeared to soar up. His queen also gave birth to a daughter who was named Urmila. The royal couple brought up the children with great affection. They gave them a good education. The two beautiful girls, by their noble qualities, good behaviour and intelligence, endeared themselves to one and all and grew to become ideal princesses. Sita grew up and played

in the palace of Janakaraj. She became well known for Her beauty as well as Her devotion. She could often be seen absorbed in the Deity of the Lord of the Surya-vamsa. She would when on Her own, sometimes lovingly enact the pastimes of the various forms of the Lord and relish His pastimes. In this way She revealed to those close to Her that She was no ordinary young girl. Her fame like Her beauty became well known, and soon it was time for Her to be betrothed and then married. As with Kshatriya kings of those days Janakaraj organized that all the worthy kings and princes would come, there would be a challenge for Her hand, and the victor would become Her husband.

The pastime goes that one-day, revered sage Parashurama came to visit king Janaka. He carried a bow with Him. He left it at the doorstep of the royal hall and went inside. Sita-devi saw the bow, ran to it and began playing with it as if it was a play-horse. Only those with great physical strength and daring could lift and handle the 'Vaishnava' bow. When Parashurama came out, the bow was missing. Ordinary persons could not lift it with ease and He, curiously looking around, spotted Sita-devi playing with it as if it was a play-horse. The sage and the king were astonished. The great Sage Parashurama, who is a partial incarnation (shaktyavesha avatar) of Lord Krsna then blessed Sita-devi and said to King Janaka: "My dear king, only a great, and strong person can wed This girl of such capacity. Arrange a 'Svayamvara' (where the brides choose their spouses for their prowess) for Her and let the most suitable person in the three worlds the marry Her."

In course of time, Sita-devi and Urmila attained maturity. King Janaka possessed a bow said to have been blessed by Lord Shiva. It was a great bow and the king decided to marry his daughter to one who could lift it and charge its arrow. He prepared for a Svayamvara. The challenge was sent out, "The Man Who Conquers the 'Shiva, Bow' Weds Sita", and so all manner of qualified princes and "wannabe's" came from all over the world. But how to find such a heroic young man to wed such a girl? Many noble princes from several kingdoms came aspiring for the hand of the beautiful Sita. But they were awed by the mighty bow and, saluting it turned away. Sage Vishwamitra, accompanied by his disciples Raam and Lakshman, arrived at Mithila. The princes, sons of renowned king Dasharatha, had conquered many demons ('Rakshasas'). King Janaka felt glad at their arrival. Vishwamitra told Shree Raam: "Dear Ramachandra, pray to Lord Shiva and take to the bow." Shree Raam bowed to Vishwamitra and offered His respects. He then prayed for the grace of Lord Shiva, went and raised the bow with ease and thrust an arrow. As He bent the bow, it broke. Sita-devi came and garlanded Him and accepted Him as Her husband. The news reached king Dasharatha who rushed to Mithila with his entourage. The marriage of Shree Rama and Sita Devi was solemnized in a grand manner.

When Sita Devi married Lord Raam She was the perfect wife in every way. She is actually what every woman should aspire to be. At least to a certain degree. She was the chastest woman in the annals of Sanatan Dharma. Even when Lord Raam was told that He had to go the forest for 14 years She didn't mind. She withstood all the pains with Her husband. She didn't mind at all. Not like these days of Kali Yuga. Husbands and wives at the slightest hint of problems want to separate and divorce. Just look at how tolerant Mother Sita was. When She was in the Ashoka garden of Ravan Mother Sita had spent all Her days in worshipping Shree Raam in Her mind. She had patiently withstood Ravana's insults and threats, and other humiliations. She waited long for Shree Raam to come, conquer Ravana and free Her.



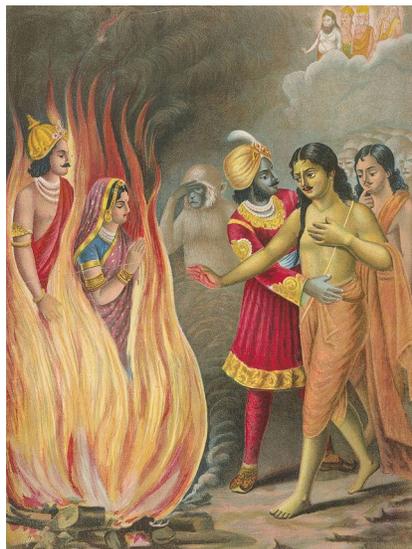
Janakpur - Marriage Spot of Lord Raam and Mother Sita

Shree Hanumanji at one go could have freed Her and Shree Hanumanji said: "O Mother, why should we wait that long? I can carry you on my shoulders and fly to Shree Raam now itself." But Mother Sita did not agree and said: "Anjaneya, it is Raam's duty. That duty should not be interfered with. I will suffer all the hardships here till He comes. Give this to Him as a sign of recognition." So saying, Mother Sita gave Hanumanji a Chudamani (crest-jewel) She was wearing and blessed him. And thus Anjaneya returned back to Rameshvaram (South India). But after Lord Raam won the battle and Ravana was killed happiness still eluded Mother Sita. Vibhishana brought Mother Sita in a palanquin. Armies of Sugriva and Vibhishana stood in attendance. Sita-devi stepped down and going to Shree Raam, exclaimed: "Aryaputra!" She was so overcome with emotion that words failed Her. Shree Raam told Mother Sita: "Good

woman, You are now freed. As a matter of My duty I came to rescue You. It is not because of My passion towards You.

You have been with the Rakshasas for a year. I cannot accept You as My wife as before. You are now free. Go anywhere You like and live." Shree Raam's forest sojourn ended by then. He and others reached Ayodhya flying in 'Pushpaka vimana'. Bharat and the citizens accorded a grand welcome to Shree Raam. Everybody was filled with happiness. All were talking about Mother Sita. Already, preparations for Shree Raam's coronation were complete. He was ceremonially crowned the King of Ayodhya. But can such a kind-hearted soul as Lord Raam speak so cruelly? Mother Sita could not believe what had transpired. "This is a great test for Me. All right. If My husband rejects Me, why should I live? I will sacrifice this body - to Agni" She decided and asked Lakshman to prepare a fire. Lakshman became furious and stared at Shree Raam. Sugriva and others stood shocked. Shree Raam stood like a rock. With tears in His eyes, Shree Lakshman prepared the fire.

Mother Sita bowed to Her husband and prayed: "O Fire God Agni-deva, if I am pure, unsullied and faithful to My husband, protect Me." So saying, She walked into the flames. All were shocked and the women present wailed. But the fire subsided. Agni-deva stepped out carrying Mother Sita. He told Shree Raam: "She is absolutely pure. How can You suspect Her? Here, accept this pure and fine woman." Bugles blew, flowers were showered on them. Shree Rama then said, "I know Sita is pure. Still, I had to do this so that people should not say something bad later." He gladly welcomed Sita-devi.

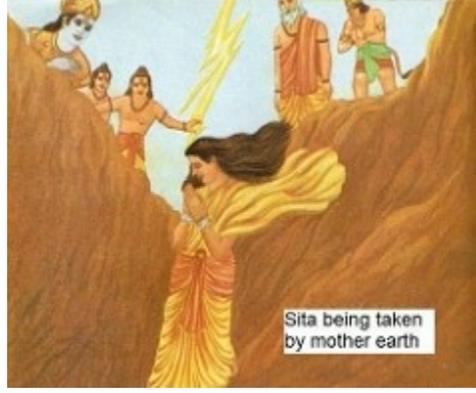


A distressed Rama (right) looks on as Sita (left) protected by Agni, undergoes Agni Pariksha. Maya Sita is replaced by Sita in the Agni Pariksha episode.

On occasions Lord Raam dressed Himself like an ordinary person and began wandering within Ayodhya to understand what impression the citizens had of Him. By chance one night Shree Raam heard a man talking to his wife who had gone to another man's house. In the course of rebuking his wife, the man spoke detrimentally about the character of Sita devi, saying that he (the husband) is not like Rama who allows his wife to come back after staying at another's house. Shree Raam immediately returned home, and fearing such rumours, He externally decided to give up the company of Sita Devi. He sent Her away to the 'ashrama' of Valmiki Muni. Mother Sita, who was pregnant at the time, later gave birth to twin sons named Lav and Kush.

Shree Rama continued to perform many sacrifices during His ruling of Ayodhya. At one such sacrifice, some fifteen years later, two boys came into the arena of the sacrifice while Shree Raam was sitting on His 'asana'. Valmiki had taught the boys the whole poem of the Ramayana and had put the story to a very beautiful and melodious 'swara', tune. Valmiki, accompanying the two boys, asked Shree Raam's permission so the boys could recite his poem. Shree Raam gave permission, and the boys commenced in perfect unison. Shree Raam was deeply stirred by the depth of the knowledge of Him and His pastime. Night after night the recital continued until it came to Mother Sita's abandonment to Valmiki 'ashrama'. Shree Raam was then convinced they were His very own sons born to Mother Sita. He sent word to Valmiki that He should come with Mother Sita and vouch for Her purity and faithfulness. If Mother Sita was willing to come before the assembly and give proof of Her innocence, She could resume Her rightful place at Her Lord's side. Everyone agreed and the next day Srimati Sitadevi came. Everyone was touched at the sight of Her, Her head and eyes downcast, tears running down Her beautiful face, Her long hair chastely adorning Her back.

Valmiki Muni respectfully approached Shree Raam saying, "O son of Dasaratha, here is Your wife Sita. She has been staying in my 'ashrama' since You abandoned Her, performing austerities. She is completely without blame and is pure and innocent. Due to Your position as King You played the part that You feared public opinion may be detrimental for You, and so You have also performed severe austerities. However, it is now proper that Your impeccable wife be allowed to prove Her own innocence." (Valmiki Ramayana Uttara Khanda 7:87:14-15.) Mother Sita stood in silence, Her eyes transfixed on the ground without blinking. With folded hands She said, "If Shree Raam has always been foremost in My heart, then may My Mother Earth (Bhumi) Herself deliver Me. If I have been only true to Him, wholly, mind, body and soul, then may My Mother Earth deliver Me. If I have loved none but Him, then let My Mother Earth deliver Me." As Mother Sita spoke, the earth rumbled, shook and cracked open where Mother Sita stood. Srimati Bhumi devi (Mother Earth personified) then appeared, seated on a throne of incredible natural earthly opulence, surrounded by 'Nagas' (snakes), and She invited Sita to take Her seat along side Her.



Mother Sita, entrusting Her children to Valmiki, ascended the throne supported by 'Nagas' adorned with fiery eyes and jewels on their heads. There, seated besides Her mother, Bhumi and Mother Sita disappeared from sight. The earth closed up leaving not even so much as a furrow on the surface as though nothing had happened. Let us offer our humble prayers to Shree Raam and Sitadevi.

Raghupathi Raghava Raja Raam, Patita Pavana Seetaa Raam
Jaya Raam Shree Raam Jaya Jaya Raam, Patita Pavana Seetaa Raam

How to observe this auspicious day?

On this day one performs a half-day fast where one abstains from water. At noon one breaks one's fast by consuming the prashad of Mother Sita. Below is a simple prayer format to perform on this day to Mother Sita and Shree Raam. Firstly have a bath and then wear clean clothes...at your prayer place already have a picture/murti of Sita-Raam and before hand make sure the prayer place is already clean/tidy and ready for your worship...Light incense/agarbatti and play in the background devotional music of Shree Raam... this is to give the prayer a special feeling...

When you are standing in front of our Eternal Parents Sita-Raam chant:-

1) Om swagatam su swagatam - Om (Sita-Raamaya) namah

(swagatam means O Sita-Raam I welcome you.)

Then offer flower or flower petals (Pushpam)

2) Om idam pushpam – Om (Sita-Raamaya) namah.

Then offer incense (Dhoopam)

3) Om tato dhoopam aghraapayaami – Om (Sita-Raamaya) namah.

Then offer lamp (Deepam)

4) Om pratyaksha deepam darshayaami – Om (Sita-Raamaya) namah.

Then offer sweet food/ sweet/ fruits (Naivedyam)

5) Om naivedyam samarpayaami – Om (Sita-Raamaya) namah

6) Offer prayers for forgiveness

Om yaani kaani cha paapaani janmaantara kritaane cha, taani sarvaani vinashyanti
pradakshinaa pade pade//

Then offer your personal prayers to Mother Sita and Shree Raam and end.

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Compiled for the upliftment of Sanatan Dharma
Narottam das & Arjun Nandlal
T.C.

Email info@dipika.org.za