

Cita

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[The Short-drama *Cita* tries to showcase the conditions and situations that women undergo in patriarchal, majoritarian nationalistic societies. Though the characters and situations seems to be familiar (Ramayan), it is an alternative fictional narrativewith contemporarycultural criticism. It takes insights fromSanskrit drama. To facilitate the cultural critic it draws strength from Sanskrit and Hindi as it is envisaged for English speaking Indianaudience]

Scene 1

[In Background the mantra ‘OmPoornamadham’ is recited for three times. Four Peetams(peatam is a seat with a height less than of a half feet made of wood or of any other natural material like coir, cane or bamboo) are kept two each in either side of the stage, in such a way that the audience can see all the characters together when they sit on them. They are placed half way towards the front of the stage].

Om.....

PoornamadhamPoornamidham, Poornat Poornamudachyate
Poornasaya poornamadhaya Poornameva avasishyate..

Om... shanti..... shanti..... shanti...hi.....

Sutradhar/ Valmiki enters. Let us get introduced to each other. Though we are all beings or the one and only being in human formsand as it is customaryto name this human form from the other forms let me introduce you to my name. The name as an identification for my human form comes from a small experience whichothers had withme which I came to know much later. I used to enjoy my stillness and someone who did not understand what I was doing and was curious enough,has found me sitting still and peaceful among considerably big anthills. As those human forms who were not introduced to English as we are today, they named their experience in Sanskrit and began to identify me with the anthills... Valmiks(smiles) and they began to refer me as ‘Valmiki’. Though I would have liked to identify myself with the stillness that I enjoyed in the same experience, but challenging and judging others can cause more irritation and restlessness to my own peaceful stillness, I began to accept what is there at every moment which in turn allowed me to be at my peaceful stillness always. I am a forest dweller. My form will appear before you as ‘Valmiki’ for thecoming moments.[Valmiki sits on one side of the stage on a Peetam meditatively one end towards the front of the stage]

[Mob 1 enters with Slogans “Ram raj Sindabad”. “Surya Vansh sindabad”. “Long live Ram Raj” “Ram raj sindabad”. Mob goes back]. (Silence for some moments, Valmiki does not change or open his eyes and continues to meditate. it makes an impression that the dRama enfolds in the

minds of Valmiki) [Mob 2 appears with slogans “Seeta maiya sindabad” “Ram Raj Murdabad”. “Unjust Ram go away”. “Seeta Maiya sindabad”. Mob goes back].
[In Background humming of Om shanti either one or two times]

Om... shanti..... shanti..... shanti...hi.....

Ram Chandra enters. Let us get introduced to each other. Though we are all beings or the one and only being in human forms and as it is customary to name this human form the other forms let me introduce you to my name. It is true that I am born as an aristocrat, as son of great King of Ayodhya, Dasarath and the grandson of King Raghu. As it was customary, I began to grow as crown prince of Ayodhya. I came to know in the process of my growing that I belongs to the caste of Kshatriyas, the ruler’s class and belong to Surya dynasty the surya vansh. More accurately I am called the Crown prince Ram Chandra. If you ask me whether I wanted to be the prince or the son of a king, honestly I would have said a ..NO.... Though I would have liked to be a human who has enough freedom to err as many claims that to “err is human” but challenging and judging others can cause more irritation and restlessness to my own confusion , I began to accept what is there at every moment which in turn allowed me to be politically successful always. My form will appear before you as ‘Yuvraj Ram Chandra ’ for the coming moments.

[Inbackground the slogans of the Mob 1 becomes more clearer “ Ramraj sindabad” Long live Ram Chandra” Ramraj sindabad’ and then fades. The slogans of Mob 2 become clearer. “Sitamaiya sindabad’, ‘Ramraj Moordabad’, ‘Unjust Ram go away’ and fades. Ram Listens to the slogans of the mob in background and shows the smile of political success initially and smile disappears and make thoughtfully self comments.... What can I do, and ask to the public Do you also hear that? Is it not inspiring! Oh no... is it not disgusting? [Goes to his Peetam and sits thoughtfully in oppose to Valmiki]

[In Background humming of Om shanti either one or two times]

Om... Shanti..... Shanti..... Shanti...hi.....

Sita enters and introduces: Let us get introduced to each other. Though we are all beings or the one and only being in human forms and as it is customary to name this human form from the other forms let me introduce you to my name. The name as an identification for my human form comes from a small experience which my father and others had with me, which I came to know much later. I was abandoned as small infant and left to die in the field intentionally by my real parents. I was born as unwanted, abandoned, and left alone to die in the field (sighs and sobs) or I am not sure. Is it a common experience of every girl child in our country, the Bharatvarsh? That the girl child being abandoned and left alone to die?(In voice with anger and sorrow) No ...no... I am sure I was buried alive and left alone to die. (in more clearer voice) I heard my father narrating the story to Valmiki and other forest dwellers that my father found me in the field while he was ploughing. He was congratulated and blessed by all because of me..... I came out of the wet ploughed mud. As those human forms who were not introduced to English as we are today, they named their experience in Sanskrit and began to identify me with the ploughed Mud... ‘Sita’ and they began to refer me as ‘Sita’. I was buried alive and left alone to die. Was it because I was a girl like you? Ma, why did you bury me alive? Papa, why did you abandon me? Whenever I asked these questions, the answer was always..... [Sita stops and listens to the sloka in the background]

[In background the sloka becomes more audible and recited twice]

“Pita rakshati Kaumare
Bartro Rakshati Yauvane

Putro Rakshati Vartakye
Na Stri Swatantryia arhati”.

What about infant girls? Is there nobody to protect them? [Sighs and listens once again...]
(continues) Though I would have liked to identify myself with the feelings of ‘buried alive’ and the name Cita than Sita, but challenging and judging others can cause more irritation and restlessness to my own buried aliveness, I began to accept what is there at every moment which in turn allowed me to be buried alive at all moments. My form will appear before you as ‘Sita’ for the coming moments.[Goes back to her Peetam and sits sadly with Valmiki]

[In Background humming of Om shanti either one or two times]

Om... Shanti..... Shanti..... Shanti...hi.....

[Lav and Kusa enters and introduce].

Lav: I am a forest dweller. I have given a name Lav. In Sanskrit it means a particle or a small bit. I like my name in English, it is love. (Laughs happily)

Kusa: I am also a forest dweller. In saskrit they call me Kusa.It is nameof aGrass. I like my name in Hindi Khush. There I am happiness. Ma used to say that she wanted to call us Love and Khush because she feels that she was mostly deprived of both love and happiness. Whether it was a joke or truth...we do not know. We never asked further about it. (Stops for a moment) ...Every other kid has not only their Ma but also theirPapa. We do not have a papa. Ma says... No... you have a Papa. Where is our papa?. Not here, but there. Where? Not here but there. We do not ask nowadays about the Papa anymore. Nobody knows or everybody knows. Butnobody wants us to know where our papa is. Ma says... you have your ma....do not you? Do’nt youhave your Guruji ? Papa will come..... Will he? Won’t he? At present we don’t ask anymore. It bothers but we have learned not only to live with this question but also to leave it asit is..? Do you people know who our papa is? Where is he now? Why he left us in the forest? Is he dead already? (Filled with sadness in voice) It bothers.... really ... you know..... Whensomeone calls ‘Be bap ka santan’at your face.[shows irritation and frustration on the face and looks into distance...]

Lav:(looking at brother and be silent for a moment) Now we have already learned to live with it. More correctly we have learned to pretend that it does not bother. Because if our Ma hears thatit bothers us, then she will be very upset and restless, sad and depressed. Guruji told us..... though in secret, do you want your Ma to be happy? Then pretend that ‘papa’ do not bother you and live like ‘Ma is enough’. Our forms will appear before you as Lav and Kusa for the coming moments.[Listens to sloka and goes back and sits near to Sita on the floor].

[In Background reciting ofOmShanti either one or two times]

Om... Shanti..... Shanti..... Shanti...hi.....

[Lakshman enters and introduces]

Lakshman:Let us get introduced to each other. Though we are all beings or the one and only being in human forms and as it is customary to name this human form from the other forms let me introduce you to my name. They called me Lakshman and it meant in Sanskrit ‘have lucky marks’ or to be lucky. Devi Lakshmi has a similar name. Whether I was Lucky?[Stopsand acts like trying to remember]. It is true that I am born as an aristocrat as son of great King of

Ayodhya Dasarath. I always admired my Great brother Yuvaraj Ram Chandra. He is my model. Because of my enchantment with Ram even my wife Urmila used to comment..... you love your Brother..... not your wife. I never encourage these kinds of talks. I knew these are dangerous. Because you know, it might sound funny, but I see the marriage not as a love relationship alone. Marriage is more a love- hate relationship and more accurately that this relationship oscillates between love and hate and luckily or unluckily we become addicted to these love- hate oscillations too. As you know, I apply my principle of Lakshmanrekha always. Some say it is a very useful moral principle. Principle is very simple. The freedom that we enjoy or exercise has always a limit. That limit is connected to the context of our lives. We are free to do or not to do, but how to do is the bigger challenge than what to do. If our action and how we do our action is inside the limits of Lakshmanrekha, then we have safely exercised our freedom, and we do not create further pain and sufferings for ourselves. I remember at Panchavadi, when my beloved Bhabhi Sita accused me of being jealous of Ram that I do not want to help Ram chandra on the pretext of protecting her, she had already crossed the Lakshmanrekha of that context. So I literally draw a Rekha and told my Bhabhi, not to cross the Rekha at any circumstances. You know she crossed and she suffered. The principle has proved to be right always. At Ayodhya when I try to convince my Great Brother Ram not to divorce my Bhabhi Sita because the people speak ill about her that she is no more pure because she lived for less than a year at Lanka in the palace of Ravan. I tried to make Ram understand that he was crossing Lakshmanrekha but he asked me Lakshman be in your limits means I should not cross the lakshmanrekha. Result is the same intense pain and suffering for my brother. You know... My form will appear before you as 'Lakshman' for the coming moments. [Goes and sits along with Ram in the peetam]

[In Background humming of Om shanti either one or two times]

Shanti..... Shanti..... Shanti,, hi.....

Valmiki opens his eyes and speaks: As we know all of us each other. Let us start the Kalaroop to elevate us to truth. .Let the play start. [Everybody leaves the Peethams and stage]

[In background, Mantra is now clearly audible to the audience.]

Om.....

Poornamadham Poornamidham, Poornat Poornamudachyate

Poornasaya poornamadhaya Poornameva avasishyate..

Om... Shanti..... Shanti..... Shanti...hi.....

Scene II

[Sita enters with a bundle of 6 firewoods approximately 3 to 4 feet of length on her shoulder supported by one hand and a broom and a cleaning cloth in the other hand. Sita keeps the fire woods in the middle but close to behind wall of stage, so it is visible to audience. She keeps the cloth with it and takes the broom and brooms for a while then goes to the stage door and leaves the broom and enters back, takes the cloth and sits in the middle of the stage and starts wiping (but thoughtfully) the floor. In the Background the sloka is going on.]

“Pita rakshati Kaumare

Bartro Rakshati Yauvane

Putro Rakshati Vartakye

Na Stri Swatantria arhati”.

[She cleans the floor with the small piece of cloth and looks to the door every now and then as she is expecting someone. She starts to speak on herself.]

Sita [self taking]: Guruji is teaching. Where are my kids? Someone told that they have gone for collecting food and firewood with other Munis . They could have asked me before they left. Guruji told me my kids are very good at Dhanushvidya and in using all other kinds of weapons. How can't it be? It can never be the other way ... they are the kids of Ram Chandra. 'Jaise Papa Vaise baccha'. Kids are kids..... They will forget everything when they are playing. They remember Ma only when they are hungry but the mother will worry all the time they are away. But Ram..... I loved you and I loved only you. Is it a mistake? Why did you abandon me? Don't you love me anymore? No... I know you loved me. You See Ram..... Your Sita, Queen Sita is alone. When kids are with me I do not get time to think all those things. But Now I feel lonely, why did you leave me Ram? I hate you... hate you..... Hate you.....

[Someone calls from behind and distance], Sita listens...

Sitamaiya, be happy... get ready.... be ready ... Let all hear.. Lord Ram Chandra is coming to take back Sitamaiya to Ayodhya as the Queen be happy. Acche Din Ayenge. Sitamaiya be happy.

Sita: (with surprise and happiness) What !!! Ram Chandra is coming? Is it true? Where are my kids? I will show them their Papa? Where are they? [Go to the door and call to Valmiki] Guruji, Where are my kids? When will they come?

[Valmiki enters. Sita touches the feet of Valmiki. [Valmiki blesses 'Mangalam Bavantu' keeping his hands above her head].

Valmiki : It is a great news Sita. All your misery is going to end. Your husband Ram has listened to his kids. Through their song he came to know about you and all the sufferings that we had. Now he is coming back to take you back as wife and Queen. Be happy Sita. Ash Ram is getting ready to receive the Lord Ramchandra the King of Ayodhya.

Sita: Guruji, I am happy that my husband comes again to take back me to Ayodhya. But But Guruji what is the guarantee that he will not abandon me again.... because of some other reasons. No Guruji I am confused I do not know what to do.

Valmiki : (smiles) Mangalam Bavantu.. Be happy everything is going to be fine.. [Valmiki leaves]

[Somebody laughs in the background loudly 'ha... ha... ha' and it echoes. Sita listens to the voice and moves forward to hear the voice.]

Voice: Sita... do you remember me. {And laughs again 'ha ha ha Ha and echoes.]

Sita : Ravan? Why are you here? You are dead. My husband has killed you.

Ravan: I am dead Sita. Your husband has killed me and I got a heroic death. I am grateful to Lord Ram for that. But what about you? Didn't he bury you alive? You are no more Sita. You are a Cita. Are you not burned alive in utter misery? Queen of Ayodhya, abandoned by her husband for his honour, lives with her two kids in the forest once again. Last time when I met you in the forest, I was enticed by your gracefulness and decided such a graceful flower should blossom in the palace of Ravan not in the forest and never vanish without even no one knows about it. Sita, listen... Ravan realized the gracefulness of Sita and even asked the queen of Lanka

Mandothari to assist you Sita... Do not you remember that? Sita I knew this is going to happen... now who is your hero? The one who kidnapped you and wanted to protect you forever happily or the one who you loved and abandoned you for his own glory?

Sita: Ravan.. Do not play your tricks with me. I am Sita. Whatever you might say, you are Ravan not Ram. Sita loves only Ram. Sita is Sita and is and always will be with Ram, and for Ram. You Ravan... can never understand that. Now you go away.

[Laughs fade in the distance]

Sita: See Ram, your Sita is now an object for everyone to mock at. Sita can withstand blames and flames But Ram when you also blamed and mocked I felt like 'buried alive'. Ram do you remember 'Agnishudhi'? When you proposed an 'Agnishudhi' I with full heart accepted it. For me your love and your nearness was everything. When I felt that your love is getting shaded by the fact that I was in Lanka for an year, I was willing to do anything just to have your love in its fullness. When I loved you and you loved me as wife I forgot my past that I was abandoned in the field and buried alive as a kid. But you know Ram,, Agnishudhi in reality is such a draconian brutal and cruel ritual that no husband should ever ask to any wife at any times. To prove the love and the purity of love you have thrown me into fire alive. I could have burned and died. For me the flames and death was nothing before the love for you. You know Ram, In Agnishudhi while I was surrounded with flames Agni reminded me ,, Sita you are mad in love with Ram but not Ram. Listen Sita, the one who puts conditions for love, does not love. It means he cares himself more than you. For him his image and honour is that which counts supreme. Love and care falls far below than honour in Ramraj. That is the danger of the Ramraj. For honour of father, brother, husband and family many Satis and wives and innocent girls who are in love will be sacrificed for generations to come now. The honour killings of Women will be gratified and celebrated in across Ramraj now. Sita, You could not see that. You were blinded by the love for Ram. ... Sita... as wife of Ram Chandra, the queen of Ayodhya you should have never accepted Agnishudhi. Sita, do you hear that sloka 'Bartro Rakshati Yauvane' [in background the line is audible again and Sita listens]. [Silence for a minute and continues] Bartro rakshati yavane' A woman shall be protected by her husband in her Youth. But see Sita, in Ramraj now and for coming generations the Patis will protect and love their Patnis till it serves their honour. Queen Sita, you had a chance to correct the Ram from this danger. Ram, you know... I replied and asked Agni not to cross his limits. And argued in favor of you saying my Ram is not like the way you think. He is a man of words and principles. His love shall protect all beings and all creatures will breathe happiness and freedom. Ram will ensure Ssaf Nityat and Sahi Vikas for all. Agni... Just wait a little bit more, I will prove you that you are wrong in case of my Ram. Agni apologized and said. Sita, your love and purity is purer than my flames. Let me give the permission to leave. And Agni receded. Then I came out of Agnishudhi, I was happy that now you will love me with your full heart without slightest shade of any doubt. I could see that in your eyes that you were happy too. But Ram if you would have asked now an Agnishudhi I would have restrained from it. This act is a dishonor for all the wives. A wife should be allowed to prove their love by loving. They might be willing to risk their life for her husband in dangerous situations but that should never be for a show, as an entertainment for the public or even as a test by the husband. [Silence for minute. Sita sits down on the floor. Background the sloka]

“Pita rakshati Kaumare
Bartro Rakshati Yauvane
Putro Rakshati Vartakye

Na Stri Swatantria arhati”.

Sita :[listening to the sloka] No Ram, you could not protect me. You were the prisoner of your honour and Image and popularity. You knew that I was pregnant. You knew that I was carrying your kids. But when others began to doubt about my pregnancy and began to make stories I thought and fully trusted you as My Ram will stand with his Sita, at least in the pregnancy. One Night before the day you ordered to abandon me alone in the forest among wild animals and darkness, Anuj Lakshman came to me and said. This is very dangerous. Why Ram is behaving like this. He is sacrificing the wife and the kids for nothing. Just for the vain glory of honour. Instead of standing with and protect the innocent and needy, Raja Ram is concerned with his popularity, honor and image. Bhabhi, who will make Ram to understand the essence of Rajdharma? Rajadharma, good governance is not being with the wealthy, mighty and majority but protecting the freedom of minorities, weak and poor, women and kids and protecting them from the suppression of the mighty and wealthy. Standing with and for the truth and lead the nation towards the truth and truthfulness is the essence of Rajdharma. Bhabhi you should not accept this decision. But next day he himself came to me and requested that the Ram has ordered to abandon me in the forest and do not make any scene in public and please accept it. It was the saddest moment in my life. My world has ended. My hopes were buried. But I could not cry Ram.... Still I could not believe it. In futile hope, I wished that it might after sometimes you will come back and correct the mistake or resign the kingship and come along with me and show the world the 'love is the supreme'. Though weeping bitterly inside, I smiled at the people who were so silent and sobbing with weeping hearts, all the way through the Rajpath in the chariot led by Anuj Lakshman, struggling to act it better so that people should not doubt the authority and justice of Ram. But the women could not stop sighing and weeping to see me dressed like a disowned woman, accused for her extramarital affairs (misconduct) and punished to be abandoned in the forest alone. You see Ram, I waited at the same spot where Anuj Lakshman left me, long hours even after he had left, hoping that you will come gloriously to take back Sita as you did in Lanka. Without food without sleep with at most fear of wild beasts in the night and being pregnant I would have lost my consciousness. When I woke up I see Guruji Valmiki and other sadhus. I can still remember that vividly that I rejected the food and madly insisting to leave me alone in the same place in the forest. Because I did not want to miss you when you would have come. They consoled me saying don't worry. We have a Muni in duty there so that whenever somebody comes in search of you he will guide them to our Ashram and to take rest. But you never turned up. When Guruji came to know that you have made a Sita out of Gold, he withdrew the Muni from the duty. And I lost all hopes on Ramraj. I delivered my kids and they became the centre of my life and I was somehow trying to live peacefully now and learning to forget the past. Why do you want to come now? Your Kanchana Sita (Golden Sita) doesn't work anymore? Or do you felt ashamed by the story of your own deeds? Now I got it. Once again your popularity and honour are at stake? You want another popularity gimmick? No Ram... you do not deserve anymore your Sita.. You deserve your Kanchanasita only. Ram, you knew only the wife Sita, as your shade. You never knew the Sita the queen. Ram, a queen lives in the hearts people. Now queen Sita will live not for Ram but for the women in Ramraj, till the Ramraj and its institutions understand and respect the women. Ram, if you are the king, with a broad chest and strong spine, order the gurus and teachers in your country to teach these slokas, so that let our people think, understand and respect the women. [Sita recites the sloka line by line and background it is repeated]

“Mata rakshati Kaumare
Patni Rakshati Yauvane
Putri Rakshati Vartakye
Kim purush Swatantrya arhati”.

[Sita continues] If mother cares the male child in her womb and wife cares the husband in his youth, and daughter cares for him in his oldage, then dothe males deserve freedom? No Ram that will be revenge. No, Sita do not want revenge. To establish love and peace Iwon't and can't go along with therevenge. In revenge, there is no Love and no Peace. No Ram, You don't deserve me. I won't let you see me alive again.

[Background drums are beating and people hails like army marching...becomes clearer and fades] “Long live Ram Chandra, Long live Ram raj, Long live Surya Vansh,. Sita listens.]

Sita continues ...: No Ram you cannot see your Sita alive anymore. Your Sitacan lose her Ram but not her soul. Don't you declared that by making a soulless,lifeless, emotion less, dead Kanchana Sita. You need a wife as decoration? Don't you? Not only have you, many males in the Ramraj done the same. They will marry their wives just as a decoration. They will leave them, abandon them or keep them and treat them as abandoned at their will and fancy. If you see me alive you will never understand what I am going through. Before I leave this body, let me teach this. Ram thisis my last wish.Let me, the Sita, the Woman, the Wife, the Queen and my life sacrifice shall be remembered and honored for fighting against the patriarchal masculinity of Ramraj. Hey Ramraj, Hey Baratvarsh, this is the Sita's challenge. Are there any more broad chested and strong spined males in Ramraj? Let you all hear. Teach this for all generations. 'Pita rakshati Kaumare. Let the father takecare the girl child up to her teenage. 'Bartro Premati Yauvane' let her husband care and love the woman at her Youth. 'Putro snehati Vartakye' let her sons care and love thewoman at her old age. 'Har Stri unnatha Sthanam Arhati' everywoman deserves respect and care.

[Sita recites line by line; Background repeats twice]

“pita rakshati Kaumare
Bartro premati Yauvane
Putro Snehati Vartakye
Har Stri unnatha sthanam arhati”.

[Bankground the sloka is resonates and continues... Sita takes the 6firewoods and place it in the form of a cita, in a rectangle of 6 to 7 seven feet in length and 3 feet in width]

Sita: Now I have to leave my body, I do not worry about my kids, they will have their Papa. Sita will not be with Ram again. Ma, earths take my body back. I was born, as buried alive, lived as buried alive, take me be back , Oh Ma, accept this sacrifice, Ma[Sita falls into the floor as lies dead inside the rectangle Cita]

Ramenters. [Take the head of Sita to his lap and weeps] Sita.... why did you leave me like this. This is your Ram. Why did you do this? [Heads down continues to weep]

[Valmiki enters... and sit in the middle with folded palms to control his emotions]

Ram; Guruji ... you told me that my Sita is safe here. See here. Sitais no more. My Sita is no more

[Lakshman enters;]Babhi... (Calls loudly... and look at the dead body, downs his head sits at the feet of Sita).

[Lav and Kusa enter]

[Ask guruji first] Guruji , What happened to our mother? ...Why Ma is dead? Who killed our MaGuruji? [Turn to Ram] Papa who killed our Ma? [Goto Lakshman] Chacha who killed our Ma?[Come to front of the stage] Do you all know who killed our Ma? Do you killour Ma? [Going back and sit between the Ram and Valmiki and Lakshman] [the question ‘do you killed our Ma’ resonates two times from the background and changes to Don’t we kill our Sita ? resonates three times ... then the background recites the sloka three times :

“pita rakshati Kaumare
Bartro premati Yauvane
Putro Snehati Vartakye
Har Stri unnatha sthanam arhati”.

Ends with shanti..... shanti..... shanti.... Hi.. [Two times]

-Subham-