

Sita the Guiding Light for Personality Development: A Textual-Hermeneutic Reading of the Ramcharitmanas

B. Sai Soujanya Kumari^{1*}

ABSTRACT

The interpretation of Sita in the Ramcharitmanas has predominantly been on the aspect of her virtue, with little attention being accorded to the situational reasoning and self-regulation involved in her actions. I present a textual-hermeneutic reading of her saga in six episodes, which are her choice to be accompanied by Rama, her actions in Ashoka Vatika, the golden deer episode, her responses to captivity, Agni- Pariksha, and motherhood in Uttarakanda. They reflect a character trait of the cycle of agency, emotional control, sensibility, self-worth, honesty, and resilient mentality. This is supported by the application of Eriksonian identity theory and the character traits model to Sita's character as evidence of a case-study/formulaic style, which transforms her character from being a subject of hagiography to that of characterology with real significance for character and life-skills education of the upper-primary and secondary school students.

Keywords: *Ramcharitmanas, Sita, personality development, value education, character strengths, constructivist pedagogy*

In the Indian value education, epics and devotional literature has been regarded as a source of character models throughout the ages, with the Ramcharitmanas by Tulsidas holding a prominent position. Among those characters, Sita is quoted most frequently for her devotion or bhakti, as well as for her virtue or pativrata, qualities that are well attested in the text but do not cover the full scope of her personality. A deeper analysis of her behaviour under significantly different circumstances suggests that Sita's character is replete with multiple layers of personality traits that help her act according to the requirements of a particular situation.

This document poses an important inquiry: what is illustrated through the evaluation of Sita's behaviour, episode by episode, in terms of the development of character and personality of a learner in contemporary education? By treating Sita not as a figure of devotion who is static in nature, but as having undergone different episodes representing various traits, it advocates the notion that the approach to Sita as a subject of each case in education is a valuable pedagogical strategy for constructivist classrooms, in which learners construct their values through discussion and analysis rather than receiving them as decrees.

¹Department of Education, Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning, Anantapuramu

*Corresponding Author

Received: March 15, 2026; Revision Received: March 22, 2026; Accepted: March 28, 2026

© 2026, Kumari, B.S.S.; licensee IJSI. This is an Open Access Research distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (www.creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any Medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

Sita the Guiding Light for Personality Development: A Textual-Hermeneutic Reading of the Ramcharitmanas

Theoretical Framework

This analysis is based on the use of two theoretical perspectives. First, Erikson's theory of identity development is taken as a reference for viewing personal life as an ability to cope with situational dilemmas which is an appropriate approach in episodic storytelling when the main character undergoes intense experiences changes throughout the story. The understanding of the strengths and virtues classification developed by Peterson and Seligman allows applying a secular terminology to the understanding of Sita's character including the terms 'bravery,' 'temperance,' 'justice' and 'wisdom' which allows moving beyond the limits of religious terminology employed for the interpretation of Sita's character into terms that may be utilized in their value education.

Finally, the implications of this analysis are dealt with within constructivist educational theory and Indian value-oriented initiatives including the National Curriculum Framework and National Education Policy emphasizing on the need of people-oriented approach which stands for learning through discussion rather than teaching.

METHODOLOGY

This research uses a textual-hermeneutic methodology since it is a qualitative technique for literary and scriptural analysis, whereby meaning is gotten through detailed interpretation instead of quantification. For illustration purposes, six situations involving Sita's storyline in the Ramcharitmanas have been selected as being significant with respect to personality-related behaviour: (1) the choice to follow Rama into exile; (2) behaviour in Ashoka Vatika while being forced by Ravana; (3) the event that involved the golden deer; (4) behaviour in long captivity; (5) Agni Pariksha; and (6) the function as mother to Luv and Kush. Each situation was examined with the help of theoretical constructs presented above, coded according to the main character trait displayed in it.

Analysis

Voluntary Choice Over Passive Endurance

Sita's choice to go into exile with Rama is often seen as an expression of submission. But according to Tulsidas, it can also be interpreted as an act of volition: she puts forth her arguments to Rama, who finally gives in to her plea. From the perspective of Erikson (1968), this is an example of exercising agency, which is confronted through a series of informed choices rather than passive acceptance. The takeaway for learners is that resilience is much more meaningful if one chooses to experience hardship rather than just submitting to it.

Maintaining poise in difficult situations

In Ashoka Vatika, Sita is repeatedly threatened and enticed by Ravana. She stands firm and not desperate or aggressive; she presents rational arguments to him and remains in her position without waiting for his approval. Such continuous resistance is characteristic of what Peterson and Seligman (2004) term temperance.

Discernment in the Face of Deception

The episode of the golden deer is seen as showing an error on Sita's part if the situation is approached from the point of personality development where it is the error that makes it meaningful. The experience makes Sita fall under the spell of the outer beauty of the golden deer and then the voice of Maricha, sounding like that of Rama, adds to her emotional troubles, which makes her ignore the rationale. Contrary to making Sita guilty, the episode is

Sita the Guiding Light for Personality Development: A Textual-Hermeneutic Reading of the Ramcharitmanas

more useful for delivering to learners the lesson that the ability to discern (viveka) needs to be cultivated since beauty and emotional distress can lead even a rational person astray.

Dignity in Adversity

Despite being in captivity and having lost her comfort and status, Sita maintains a dignified demeanour that is independent of her external circumstances. She follows all her rituals and keeps her head high while communicating with both Ravana and Hanuman.

The Agni Pariksha as Self-Advocacy

Whatever the meaning of the fire test a character-focused look shows that the story gives Sita a voice before the test: she tells Rama directly that she is innocent. Seen in this way the story is not about being passive but about a person holding on to their own truth even when someone they trust does not believe them. A moment of honesty in a difficult relationship.

Nurturing Strength in the Uttarakanda

In the Uttarakanda Sita raises Luv and Kush by herself in the forest hermitage. Both of them later stand up to Ramas army. This final part of the story finishes the character picture: the same person who endured being captured is also shown creating. Raising well-educated children in tough conditions showing strength as something that builds rather than just survives.

Synthesis

Table 1: The six episodes along, with the quality each shows and the lesson that can be learned by someone today.

Episode	Trait Demonstrated	Transferable Value
Choosing Exile	Agency; informed, voluntary choice	Ownership of one's decisions
Ashoka Vatika Captivity	Composure; boundary-holding under provocation	Emotional self-regulation
The Golden Deer	Discernment (viveka), cautionary	Verification before reaction, especially under urgency
Life Under Captivity	Stable, internally anchored self-worth	Self-respect independent of circumstance
Agni Pariksha	Self-advocacy; voice under doubt	Integrity and standing by one's truth
Uttarakanda (as mother)	Self-sufficiency; nurturing capacity	Constructive, generative resilience

DISCUSSION

Implications for Value Education

The main teaching point from this reading is a change in how we show Sita. Of showing Sita as a fixed devotional ideal we show Sita as a set of specific answers that students can talk about. This method matches constructivist value-integrated pedagogy. In this way students build value understanding by looking at cases not by hearing values spoken as facts (Vygotsky, 1978; NCERT, 2005). When we look at the deer episode, we find it more useful for teaching because it is not a simple perfect example. The golden deer episode lets students discuss when careful thinking should win over action instead of only giving perfect models. This new way also fixes a problem with hagiographic character teaching. That problem is that

Sita the Guiding Light for Personality Development: A Textual-Hermeneutic Reading of the Ramcharitmanas

ideal figures can feel out of reach for students because their actions seem easy or set in stone. A case-based reading does the opposite. It treats each episode as a choice point asking students what other answer could have been chosen and why the answer in the text is a lesson. This matches Banduras (1977) idea that modelling is best when the observer sees a possible route from the models situation, to the observers own.

CONCLUSION

This paper has argued that Sita's characterization in the Ramcharitmanas supports a personality-development reading organised around six identifiable traits i.e. agency, emotional regulation, discernment, stable self-worth, integrity, and constructive resilience each grounded in a specific narrative episode. Situated within Eriksonian identity theory and the character-strengths framework, and read through a constructivist pedagogical lens, this reframing offers a workable case-study resource for value-integrated character and life-skills instruction, particularly at the upper-primary and secondary level, without requiring the learner to treat the text purely as devotional instruction.

REFERENCES

- Bandura, A. (1977). Social learning theory. Prentice-Hall.
- Erikson, E. H. (1968). Identity: Youth and crisis. W. W. Norton & Company.
- Ministry of Education, Government of India. (2020). National Education Policy 2020. MHRD.
- National Council of Educational Research and Training. (2005). National curriculum framework 2005. NCERT.
- Peterson, C., & Seligman, M. E. P. (2004). Character strengths and virtues: A handbook and classification. Oxford University Press.
- Tulsidas, G. (n.d.). Shri Ramcharitmanas (Gita Press, Trans.). Gita Press, Gorakhpur.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes. Harvard University Press.

Acknowledgment

The author(s) appreciates all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process.

Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

How to cite this article: Kumari, B.S.S. (2026). Sita the Guiding Light for Personality Development: A Textual-Hermeneutic Reading of the Ramcharitmanas. *International Journal of Social Impact*, 11(1), 384-387. DIP: 18.02.041/20261101, DOI: 10.25215/2455/1101041