

## The Unseen Hero of Ramayana: Lakshman

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*Abstract : Ramayan, till the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century has been the story of Lord Ram and then became reinterpretation or retelling of female versions worshipping Devi Sita. Projecting her from novel, individual perspective became the trend of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, where most authors and interpreters are trying to justify the unknown facts of this character. After the interpretations of the character of Sita, the modern authors have tried to throw light on the other female characters of Ramayana and Mahabharata as well. Mandodari, Urmila, Renuka, Surpankha from Ramayana and Kunti, Gandhari, Subhadra all have been given voices of their own in the modern interpretations of the mythological versions.*

**Keywords:** *Lakshman, Ramayana, Hero, Urmila, Sita, Ram, Mahayoddha, Kapil Sanghavi, Vayu Naidu, Bhanumathi Narsimhan, Sini Panicker, Ayodhya, Exile*

If you look closely at the Gatha of Ramayana then it is what it is because of not just Ram or Sita. There are other characters who fulfilled their role accordingly. The point here is to make a question: what if somebody out of many characters of Ramayana have not been there? What if Lakshman had not been there with Ram? His devotion and complete obedience raised many questions to readers as well. But what he chose to follow is important.

In the book called, '*Lakshman: An Untold Perspective of Mahayoddha*', authored by Kapil Sanghavi, we get the unseen qualities, stories and shades of the character of Lakshman. Very few or mostly rare creators tried to portrait this character from Ramayana. Ravana, though being a villain, has been given a separate version by modern writers. The author has not deliberately made any attempt to give any justification to this character but this new perspective of Lakshman is new to the readers.

Lakshman is indeed a character of many colours. He possesses almost all the qualities like Rama but yet he chose to be under the influence of his elder brother. The book talks about what Lakshman actually was apart from a warrior and a younger brother of Ram. It is about his point of views regarding life, self and what he felt during the major incidents of Ramayana.

Apart from this, if we put aside the commercial serial version of Lakshman, the Indian authors too have tried to showcase the various sides of Lakshman. In the book, '*Sita's Ascent*', Vayu Naidu has made Lakshman a rational thinker. He thinks why did Rama abandon Sita? Why did he not think of her wish?

“And when I brought her to the forest and was told to abandon her so Rama could prove to his people that...I don't know what he wanted to prove; I could not punish her like that...how could Rama ignore Sita's feelings? Or had he taken her for granted?” — *'Sita's Ascent'*, Page 133.

He questions the decisions of Rama or we can say that he is the only one who could question Rama. He has been shown as a shadow of Rama but at many junctures of life, we deliberately favour the character for not being polite or unquestionable. His boldness and powerful objections make him appealing to the audience and reader.

In the content of work, *'Sita: Now You Know Me'*, we feel the character of Lakshman as a mischievous, playful, honest yet light hearted. His relationship with Sita is friendly. Here the author Sini Panicker has not shown him as a typical, serious and full of anger. He considered Sita as the best companion to his brother and did not hesitate to confess to her about his appraisal of their newly bloomed romance. He too helped her to settle in her new home of Ayodhya.

“But Ayodhya too will be great for you. My brother loves you. He adores you...more than you know. I have already been teasing him with a new nickname! Sita's Ram. SitaRam!... No need to worry about anything...and even if everyone else fails for some reason, I will be there for you. Always. As your brother. This is my pledge to you as the match-maker of you and Ram.” — *'Sita: Now You Know Me'*, Page 55-56.

The feeling of love between Lakshman and Urmila is not romantically but devotedly been coloured in most of the tales. Lakshman has always been prioritized with his duty towards Rama therefore very little has been shown in the context of their love story. Both of them are similar yet different and still bounded by. When Lakshman is about to exile with Sita and Rama, he insists Nindradevi not to come to him for the next fourteen years instead she can go to Urmila. When he returned to Ayodhya, he found Urmila still sleeping and started weeping.

“She went to Urmil's chamber and found Lakshman sitting by her side, still in his forest attire, holding Urmila's hand in his own with tears flowing from his eye, as she lay sleeping.” — *'Sita: A Tale of Ancient Love'*, Page-248.

Bhanumathi Narasimhan has also sketched out the pious love of this couple in her own way, where Lakshman is not a romantic but devoted and caring husband.

“He placed his hands on Urmila's head and bent forward closer to her face and gently called out to her. ‘Urmila. Wake up. I have come.’... A tear from his eyes fell onto right hers, and rolled down the side of her face towards her right ear... She opened her eyes and looked at Lakshman like an infant waking up to its mother's eyes...He held on to her, too as if he would never let her go again.” — *'Sita: A Tale of Ancient Love'*, Page-249.

When we talk about the importance of the character of Ramayana, every character is placed right and it could not be omitted or replaced by anything else. Whether they did right or wrong, their existence in the katha cannot be challenged. If we talk about Lakshman then he is a hero in himself. It has its own qualities and admiration from the reader.

**Resource:**

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