

Transforming Sita into a Warrior of Mithila: An Analysis of Active Listening

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Abstract

Listening is a skill which develops first when an infant is growing in the womb of its mother. It acquires information in the womb. Listening involves recognizing what is said and comprehending the matter, it means understanding the main and subsidiary points as well as the links between the different parts of speech. Sita is adept at going through this process of listening and acting upon acquisition of knowledge. It is said Abhimanyu, Son of Arjuna imbibed the skill of warrior ship in the womb. He received other learnings and skills too being inside the womb. However, when a child grows up into adolescence, it pays little attention to this art and gets deprived of its advantages. Sita unlike others does not skip it for a second. She always keeps in mind its importance. Hence, she inculcates all the attributes of a Vishnu. She always bags appreciations from her gurus at Gurukul. She comes first in every class. She acquires martial art promptly rather than the other students.

Sita learns people skills. Like she easily connects with the people from every stratum of the society, the rich, the poor, the

high class or the low class everyone. All praise her for her generosity and giving time to them and listen their grievances patiently. Sita makes friends even with the children of the slum outside the fort of Mithila, and spend time with them. She also appoints a slum girl as the police and protocol chief of the state. This is a humanitarian outlook of the CM of Mithila that she regards all the people with equality and equanimity. All these features are nurtured in her from the teachings at Gurukul. In this book, " Sita_ Warrior of Mithila, Sita proves herself to be an undaunted warrior, just decision maker, agile leader, Sympathizer and above all a focused listener and balanced speaker. Sita in " Sita_A Warrior of Mithila" has been characterized as a strong woman who listens with an open mind; who judges content analytically, who listens for the big ideas unlike the Sita who has been carved out in "Ramcharitmanas" by Tulsidas. The poet sketches character of a woman as "Dhol gawar shudra pashu nari sakal taadna ke adhikari" (61: Ramcharitmanas, Sundarkand). The poet devalues Sita and represents her as a weak, irresolute and dependent.

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Sita with the husband Rama and brother-in-law Lakshman goes on the exile of 14 years and presently is living in the forest of Dandak. One day she goes with a soldier, mallyaputra Makrant to collect banana leaves from the forest. On her way back home, she hears creaking sound. It is Sita who listens to the sound first; that's why she protects herself from the danger. Makrant was not so lucky he loses his life for he could not anticipate the danger; he was not alert and sensitive to the dangerous sounds of the forest. These incidents verify that if a person is an attentive listener he can defer or foil the danger and protect him as well as others too. Sita does not listen to the creaking sound of the crossbows i.e. the wooden crossbows. She also differentiates between the sounds coming from the crossbows of the frontline soldiers as well as the backup soldiers. Having examined the sounds, she takes an immediate decision and hides herself behind some tree. She also gives a signal to her bodyguard to shield himself from the sudden attack but he did not pay attention to the signal and resultantly succumbed to death.

This is an attribute of an attentive listener that she remains consistent in analysing the sound waves and responding accordingly. Sita in the scene remains

stable, does not move until she assures herself that danger has gone away. It is the form of attentive listening with which Sita emerged as a skilled warrior. Thus, Sita serves positive and instant decision from attentive listening. Meenakshi also supports this attitude and says, "Listening provides the fertile soil from which positive decisions and changes develop" (BC, 88). She got expert in shooting arrows relying on the sound coming from enemy. She is skilled in throwing the knife and spear relying on the sounds precisely and without an error. She did this, she heard allowed yet surprisingly gentle voice "come out princess Sita we don't want to hurt you it's better if..." (4). the voice stopped mid-sentence it would not be heard ever again. This was infallible aim; Sita acquired having buried knife through the neck of the enemy. This proves if a person is focused, he will definitely acquire his aim resulting from attentive listening. Attentive listening leads to acquisition of knowledge. Sita does not deviate from her target. She keeps her ears alert and sensitive towards the sounds coming from the enemies. She herself says when the Lankan soldiers were dragging away the captain of her unit, this was not the time for distractions. She knows if he comes out to the exposure he will be killed and even she cannot save the life of her captain. That's why she can save the lives by her sound pursuing skill. With this art as of sound piercing shooting skill, she shot down many enemies and finally killed Khara, the captain of the Lankan Army. It makes clear that this is an art of attentive listening which helps a person remain focused to take right decisions on time. Sita

fighters with bravery and judiciously for long, she kills many enemy soldiers. She finally exhausts and one enemy swings his lathi upon her back and she collapses to the ground and loudly calls out to her husband, Rama ! O Rama! She believes if her voice reaches him, he will rush towards her and will save her life. Finally, she is kidnapped by the demon king, the Lankan Ravan.

Sunaina, the queen of Mithila on her way back from Kanya kumari to her Kingdom, hears screaming and squawking coming from far distance. She orders the charioteer to stop the Chariot and takes it towards the origin of the wailing and desperate sounds. She listens to the sounds again and watches the body language of the animals and the big bird seems to be vulture. A vulture, she finds is surrounded by six to seven wolves and this wolf was pushing away the animals repeatedly. the queen thinks why this vulture alone is not flying away from the scene; why it is fighting with the deadly animals. There could be some reason, to know she orders her soldiers to draw closer to the scene. What she finds over there is shocking. The vulture was protecting a small baby wrapped in the cloth from the wolves. The queen listens to the pains of the vulture and feels an empathy towards it. She talks to the bird in some language and convinces it for the safety of the infant. The queen it seems knows the language of the birds. The bird pacifies and stops screaming frantically and drinks some water. This upholds that if you listen to the person, the pain reflecting in the voice you can understand even the animals and they will believe you are with

them to help and this happened in the scene. Even a bird which cannot speak in human tongue can believe in. Sunaina who treats the bird empathetically and understands its pains is because she remains aware of what is happening around and listens to the sounds emanating in the environment. In a scene, Sita herself admits, "I should have listened to Maa" (30). She does not pay attention to the words of her mother and steals away in the guise of a maid from the palace in order to visit the slums and know about the life conditions of the slum dwellers. Therefore, it causes a big menace to her and she is captured in the slum area adjacent to the palace. She repents that she would have listened to her mother. It is the sudden appearance of the noble black skinned slum girl, Samichi who protects her from the goons. This incidence teaches us one thing that everyone should attentively listen to the suggestions and advices of their elders, their near and dear ones in the family to defer away any kind of menace in the life.

Submissiveness is another attribute of attentive listening. Sita smeared with muck and mud is submissively standing before her mother. Sunaina, her mother, does not speak a single word to her. She just stares at her daughter. Sita reads the expressions on the face of her mother; she reads aggressiveness and stern gaze. She sees "stony silence" (33) and disapproval in her mother's eyes. She wants her mother would say something, scold her or slap her for her such casual and inattentive listening. When you are silent, you can listen. If you are not silent, you cannot listen to anyone. The

queen gently scolds Sita, " Shhh..... don't talk, just listen" (35). "There is an age to discover certain things in life; you need to be ready for it" (35). Sita falls silent and listens to her mother very attentively. She imbibes whatever her mother says to her. Sita doesn't react, just patiently listens to her mother. She learns the bad people are found among the rich and the poor as well. Every poor is not noble and can commit crime under anger or depression. So need to be careful and every slum dwellers that come for alms and charity are not noble hearted. She learns, one should be liberal but not be a blind and stupid liberal to establish "dharma" i.e. creates equality and balance in society. Thus, Sita learns all this through experience got through keen observation and attentive listening. Being happy with her patient listening, Sunaina happily says, "You will help me govern Mithila someday." (36).

Vishwamitra, the great chief Malayaputra asked all the students of the gurukul, "All right, then someone tell me, why did the empire of the descendants of the Great emperor Bharat decline?" Sita listened to the chief very attentively but did not speak a single word. Some other students answered the question. In the end, the chief pointed out to Sita calling as Bhoomi her gurukul name, "Why don't you speak?" Sita said it was because the spirit that ignites valour among the soldiers to kill the enemies subsided. They didn't even fight the battle. Even though they were equipped with the modern weapons and all the facilities provided by the kingdom. Sita further adds that gallantry medals should be

given to the soldiers to inspire them to fight. It can be possible when you keep your army prepared all the time to encounter enemy. It can be said an enemy helps the army of a nation to make a prompt strike. Hence it is because of active listening that Sita so promptly answers such farsighted questions so precisely. Sita had been thinking on one question why was the dynasty of Bharat doomed to destruction within two decades since the chief of Malayaputra, Vishwamitra had visited the Gurukul last time. She was attempting to find out the answer to the selfsame question. Finally, she does it, "Society needs balance. It needs intellectuals, warriors, traders and skilled workers. It gets unbalanced when people are not free to live a life that is not in alignment with their innate gunas, their attributes. Sita gets able to find out answer because she listens to her chief attentively and ponders on it analytically.

Sita asks Vishwamitra open ended questions. She asks him what it means by the yagya Kund Vishwamitra answers "Yagya signifies a sacrificial exchange you sacrifice something that you hold dear and receive benediction in return. Lord Agni, the purified Fire is witness to the exchange between humans and the divine"(83). Sita watches every ritual very minutely. She watches how does Vishwamitra break his finger and off blood droplets to the divine fire then the Guru asks Sita to join him and let blood droplets offer to the Fire. Without hesitation she places the sharp knife on her left palm and folds hand over the blade and then in a swift clean motion she pulls the

knife back cutting open the skin from edge to edge. A Blood dribble freely into the sacred fire and Sita does not flinch for a second. By this way, she along with her Guru Vishwamitra, takes an oath," with the pure Lord Agni as my witness I swear that I will honour my promise to Lord Parshuram always to my last breath and beyond. This is the power of active listening which reposes courage into Sita and enables her acquire the knowledge of scriptures. Sita listens more than she speaks. She lets Guru Vishwamitra finish his words before she responds. She always asks open minded questions. She remains very attentive to what is being said to her. She remains aware of the message conveyed through body movements. She remains attentive to ideas and problem solving opportunities.

Sita is an empathetic listener. She pays attention to the words of Guru Vishwamitra and sincerely studies the biographies of the previous Vishnus. She does not like anyone to disturb her that's why she occupies herself in her cottage. She does not frequently visit the pond with her classmates. She has been equipped with so many attributes of a good listener. One of these attributes is that Sita is very considerate towards others. When she gets information that her mother is on the visit to Gurukul. Initially she is unwilling or embarrassed with a sin that she is the cause to the poor condition of the Mithilians. Had she not broken the royal seal, they would not have suffered the days of poverty. Sita thinks she has caused her mother suffer a lot in the hands of her uncle Kushadhvaj. She does not let her mother

and the people of Mithila suffer anymore. That's why she wants to live away from the kingdom, even does not want to meet her mother. But apart from, she is a good empathizer. She is broken into tears when she sees her mother into a skeleton. She wants to live the remaining days of mother's life with her. So, she arranges a last ride into a deep jungle together.

A person of attentive listening easily establishes good connections with other people. This is the quality of Sita she makes friends with others. Even the Naga, Jatayu gets friends with Sita. Everybody at Gurukul does not like this man; everybody wants to be away from him but Sita identifies this man, Jatayu with the bird who saved her life from the wolves and sacrificed itself for her sake. There is a very strong bond between Sita and her mother. In the last days of life Sunaina recalls Sita and wishes to die in her presence with her hands upon her head. The queen says when " my daughter is with me, I do not need anyone else" (93). A good listener is also an attentive and emphatic listener. She does not only listen to the words but also experiences emotions carried in the words, in the thoughts. A good listener is also a good seer. Sita watches the corpse of a matriarch elephant surrounded by a herd of elephants during the last elephant ride of her mother. She empathetically watches the scene wherein a baby elephant attempts to wake up its mother but it doesn't know she is restored into an eternal sleep. This incident upholds Sita as an empathetic listener. It also transports her into a parody wherein she is about to lose her mother

soon and be left alone bewailing by the side of the dead body of her mother. This entails that an empathetic listener can also listen to the sounds of future incidents destined to occur certainly. Having anticipated all this, Sita says, " I am so sorr, Maa. I'm so sorr."(99). The mother browbeats Sita and asks her to "listen to me. you will live wisely and make me proud" (100).

Love and loyalty are two characteristic features of person who sincerely embodies the habit of attentive listening. She shares "love and loyalty" (100) with her younger sister. She, after the heavenly departure of her mother takes her younger sister as her own responsibility to fulfil all her desires and uprightly brings her up. When younger sister, Urmla cries for her mother she emotionally and wisely convinces the latter that mother lives in their hearts. When two hearts conjoin it becomes the mother. "The both of us together are now our mother. (102).

Like a good listener who listens to others in order to find out in them a loyal person to the great cause not to the personal cause, Sita recollects the words other mother; these were resonating in her mind. She said on the elephant ride to the woods of Swetketu Gurukul, "don't look back, look to the future". These words, she assimilates and today having offered fire to the pyre of her mother, she does not look back. She walks forward and looks towards the sky and finds her mother shining in some farthest star. Attentive listening helps someone in decision making. She quotes

one saying of a mother, " it is good to listen to others' wise opinions before taking decision." (110). Sita discusses with Jatayu and Samichi on some project which could make Mithila self-reliant with regard to food and other essentials. Attentive listening results into working with others in a perfect coordination. Sita listens to her gurukul friend, Radhika saying that Guru Vashishtha also wants to raise Vishnu from his gurukul and in this venture, the vayuputras are with him, they will help the Guru in anointing the Vishnu. Sita smiles ruefully. She further says, "Guru Vashishtha has certainly aimed high. The family of the emperor himself!"(125). She feels sad learning about enmity between Guru Vashishtha and Guru Vishwamitra. She wishes they both should work in coordination in raising the next Vishnu. This shows one can find out solution to complex problems when one listens to others attentively. Sita appreciates Radhika for a real anecdote, " The worst enemy a man can ever have is the one who was once his best friends. "(125). Empathic listening arouses curiosity. Sita desires to know more about the four princes of Ayodhya. She craves to visit the ashram where they study. But she was constrained to agree with Radhika that it's not safe to disclose their location to others because Ravaan has already catastrophically devastated their kingdom and now is in search of the princes. One fact is added to the knowledge of Sita when she listens to Radhika explaining that the tribe of the vayuputras i.e. the valmikis is the race left behind by Lady Mohini. And Hanuman belongs to this tribe, say offspring to the lady.

Attentive listening is coordination among ears, mind and eyes. This reflects in when Sita and Samichi compete in a Chariot race. Sita holds her ear to the sounds of the royal paths and the breathing of the horses. Thus, she perfectly rides the Chariot avoiding all the hurdles on the way. She screams and whips the horses and keeps them on the track. An empathic listener is not only a strategist but also a very good investigator. When she recovers from the Chariot accident wherein she is severely wounded and skipped death, and very minutely inspects the broken carriage. Moreover, she finds out that someone very cleverly replaced the suspension beams which caused the deadly accident. As a strategist, she also plots retaliation and to paralyze her uncle Kushadhvaj, she has his prime minister of Sankashya killed. Arishtaneji, a malayputra soldier appraises Sita for such metal agility and profound strategy.

Sita pays regard to Vishwamitra and listens to him reverently. She upholds a person who enjoys freedom in true sense, always listens to others empathetically and imbibes extracts beneficial to life and society. In this context, she further adds that a person should have freedom to switch from one caste to another. "If a child was born to Shudra parents but with the skills of a Brahmin then he should be allowed to become a Brahmin"(165). She further suggests " children must compulsory be adopted by the state at the time of birth. The state would feed, educate and nurture these children" (165). When they are fifteen, they would be made to appear for an

examination to test their physical, psychological and mental abilities. Based on the result, appropriate caste would be allocated to them. Sita listened to Vishwamitra and agreed with him over the plan. She also knows the task is to be fulfilled by the next Vishnu. This is the power of emphatic listening which transformed Sita into a person of wisdom far beyond her years. She travelled across the country and received training at Agastyakootam. As a prime minister of Mithila, Sita listened to Samichi, her state security in charge and got to know about the new developments of the state.

A person who nurtures good listening skills, also grows very sincere towards every aspect of life. She also pays regard to the words of the speaker whosoever she or he is. She also minutely analyzes the speech and imbibes the useful from it. Sita acts upon the suggestions or advices if in the interest of the state. Such person does not differentiate among the people based on caste or creed. She follows the principles of equality, equanimity and fraternity. Sita befriends with a girl from the slums and appoints her the in charge of the state security based on her skills and bravery. A person with strong listening skills is never baffled in adverse situations. A strong conviction is the salient trait of this person. Sita firmly faces the issue of the dissatisfaction among both the poor and rich and discusses it with the ministers to found the way to resolve the issue.

A person with strong listening skills always gets aware of what is happening in

the surroundings. She keeps information about the neighborhoods'. Sita keeps an eye on the training of the princes of Ayodhya. She asks her friend Radhika about it. The latter tells her they are progressing very well. One surprising fact she tells her is that Bharat is smarter than Ram. Sita adept in the art of attentive listening collects information about the princes, analyzes it and then assimilates the refined. She comes to know about Ram: "he has a strong sense of commitment and honour. He is hard on others and on himself. He is fiercely patriotic and in love with every corner of India" (184). She listens to Radhika saying that all the brothers have a burning desire to serve Mother India for which they are ready to suffer all through life. Sita learns Radhika does not want to marry Bharat because she cannot live happy with the prince committed with a great cause for nation. Sita listens to Samichi who suggests her to build her image as a brave lady boasting of pseudo bravery. She asks Sita to take "the tiger skin" home. It would be a great trophy displaying the skill and bravery. However, Sita does not believe in such propaganda and myth making (189). A person with attentive listening skill is unbiased and open to the varied thoughts and ideologies. But she accepts what is good for the society and nation as well. Such person does not stick to the stereotypes. This is Sita who convinces her father to arrange "swayamvar"(185). So that she could request her teacher Vishwamitra to bring the princes and specially Ram to choose him, her life-partner and work in partnership with him on the project of Vishnu.

An attentive listener does not lose patience while paying ears to the speakers. Samichi tells Sita her uncle Kushadhwaj is also coming to host her swayamvar, could pose a bad tidings to the family. Having listened to this, Sita could not panic and smiles instead giving a welcome gesture. Above all, her uncle is the member of Mithilian family and he should bless her niece at her Wedding. Art of diplomacy rises out of active listening. She herself takes the responsibility of all the arrangements of her swayamvar. She directs her police and protocol chief, Samichi to make special arrangements for the chief of Malayaputras and the princes of Ayodhya. When she comes to know the chief, Vishwamitra has not been escorted by the police chief, she gets annoyed. But when Vishwamitra clarifies she gets cool. She also previews the anger of the people of Ayodhya if they come to know their princes are not given due respect and they are not lodged in the palace. She does not want to spoil the diplomatic relations between Ayodhya and Mithila. Sita does not waver when she comes to know Prince Ram's life is in danger. That's why they are lodged in the barracks. Instead, she asks Samichi to give special category security to the princes. She discloses about the prince, " His life has been in danger since the day he was born" (197). She wants Ram to take part in the swayamvar. This unexpected danger will help Ram rise to vishnuhood also.

Sita gets skilled in listening to the expressions, the words could not express.

She offers a sacred thread charged with the blessings of the goddess Kanyakumari. Ram recites some hymns from old Sanskrit. He seeks blessings from the almighty to help him find the purpose of life. Especially, he wants to bless him with a life partner like the prime minister of Mithila, Janaki. She reads the lispings and gives a thanksgiving smile to Ram. This shows Sita is good at listening to the unsaid. Attentive listening also helps in removing confusion. When Samichi says that Ram's life is in danger. Sita should request him along with his brother to leave Mithila immediately. However, Sita does not get scared. She believes Ram is not an ordinary person. Her belief is strengthened by the Malayaputra security chief, Jatayu. He says it is a conspiracy to spoil the image of Ram. He adds further, "The idea wasn't to get rid of Ram. It was to destroy his reputation with his most powerful supporter"(217). Sita gets to unravel a big conspiracy against Ram only if she attentively listens to both Samichi and Jatayu and analyzes on her own. Sita listens more than speak. This is observed from the conversation between the Malayaputra protocol and security chief, Arishtnemi and Sita herself at her own swayamvar. She wants to know the plans of the Malayaputras regarding the arrival of Raavan to attend her swayamvar. She suspects some kind of deal between Vishwamitra and the demon because they two belong to the same place, Kannauj. Arishtanemi gets annoyed hearing this serious charge and promptly says, "We can destroy Raavan at any time. We keep him alive because we plan to use her death to help you be recognized by all Indians as the

Vishnu ". This is the art of conciseness Sita is very adept in. She digs out lot of information from the army chief and discloses herself very little.

Sita watches Ram seated from faraway, second floor, in the circle of the contestants at the swayamvar at the Hall of Dharma. She listens to the heart throbbing of Ram and says, "I'm here, Ram. I'm waiting for you. Waiting for you to win..." (223). Sita instantly springs into action when she hears that Raavan shoots an arrow breaking the nose of the founder of Mithila, her ancestor, King Mithi into parts. He does so for he is denied to wait for his turn to contest swayamvar after the prince of Ayodhya, Ram. This implies Sita is a woman of instant actions on hearing some unexpected danger. She finally hears the piercing sound of an arrow into the right eye of the Hilsa fish tied to the revolving wheel hundred feet above the basin filled with whirling water. Ram was sitting with the eyes gazed at the whirling water and the crossbow pointed towards the wheel aimed at the fish. Sita saw a calm smile on Ram's face and a gratitude relief in her heart. She listens to a voice in her heart assuring, " I'm not alone anymore" (230). The princess wants to know if Ram respects a person who is born in the royal family or one who is born in low family but grown to the most respected and devoted to the service of the people. She is happy to listen that like her, Ram also believes," Birth is completely unimportant. It is just a means of entry into this world of action into karambhoomi. Karma is all that matters." A person

becomes great because of karma not of birth.

When Sita listens to the chief of Malayaputras saying that they have no options only using the divine weapons, the daiviasstras to foil the attack of Raavan, she does not agree with the chief. She knows if Ram is made to apply these weapons, he would be banished for 14 years as per the law of Rudra, the Mahadev. And the vayuputras would enforce the law upon Ram. Even she cannot break the law as she is the staunch devotee of Lord Rudra. This divulges that Sita quickly decides what is good for her and her people concerned. Janaki reads the face of Vishwamitra, he smiles over the success of asurastra. The Lankan camp was entirely devastated. The innocent children of Mithila were saved from the invasion of the brutal Lankans. She embraces her husband Ram first time publicly in front of Vishwamitra and Arishtanemi with tears of guilt in her eyes and listens to the throbbing of Ram's heart and assures him, "I'm always with you" (252). She thanks him for saving the Mithilians, but laments he has put his life in danger. The vayuputras, the clan of Rudra will impose rigorous punishment on him. It could be an exile of many years. She curses Vishwamitra for instrumenting Ram in this devastation. Sita is evolved as a keen observer who carefully listens and analyzes the incident minutely and learns from it how to handle the situation. Sita listens to the police and protocol chief, who is petrified by Raavan is alive, he is survived from the deadly explosion, now he will come back and

destroy Mithila. But Sita soothes and assures Samichi that nothing will happen. The Lankans are benumbed; they will not collect courage to fight against the Mithila. Thus, she listens to find out solution even to a big and unexpected problem.

Sita learns from the decision taken by Ram that he is a man of law. He can die for law but cannot violate it. She listens to the military chief of the Malayaputras that Brahma, the great scientist had manufactured anti-aging syrup. She requests Arishtnemi to provide the syrup in a large quantity so that they both Ram and herself would "retain their vitality and youth in their vitality and youth in fourteen years exile" (261). Sita wants Ram to remain strong and vital so that he could represent his people as a young and dynamic leader and as a just king. Whatever she listens from his well-wishes she applies the learnings in her life. This is an attribute of a good listener. What she listened from Vishwamitra about the caste system was conversed with Ram in the same manner and intensity. She tells "the state compulsorily adopt young children to break the evils of the birth-based caste system" (262).

Manthara, the richest lady of the Sapt Sindhu is heard talking to her assistant, Druhyu that she has vowed to avenge on the cruelest rapist of her daughter, even though he was not punished on the grounds he is a juvenile. Her daughter was gang raped and then murdered brutally. Others were sentenced to death as per law, but the most heinous

was released. She bribed and got him released and got murdered him brutally. Thus, her vengeance to some extent was met. But not satisfied. Her next target was Ram himself. Now she designs to take revenge on Ram. Sita learns as well as we also know that even in Ramrajya crime was there, but the criminals were punished as per law. A conversation takes place between Bharat and Sita. Sita listens to Bharat saying that he tried his best to convince his elder brother Ram not to insist on being exiled. But Ram was very adamant. He wants to be exiled anyhow. This way is not pragmatic. Sita catches Bharat by this word, how does he (Bharat) think that Ram's going on exile is not pragmatic. She wisely explains if Ram goes on exile, he would be able to re-establish the rule of law and order." He will give direction to those youths who need the certainties of the masculine way of life" (279). She believes that Ram's teachings can guide such people to a life of order justice and fairness. He can harness them for a greater good. Sita herself wants her husband should go on exile. Ram's true message can provide an answer a solution to the radicalization that plagues so many young people, today (279). The conversation proves Sita is a very good debater. She listens patiently, frames her questions and moulds other participants into her own answers. Sita gets astonished hearing the richest businesswoman of the Sapt Sindhu, Manthara exposing the secrets of the royal family. She knows from the lady that this is the emperor, Dashrath who wants to go on banishment along with his wives making his eldest son ascend to the throne. Manthara holds, "I've been told that

the Emperor may choose to abdicate making Ram the king. And that he may choose to undertake the banishment of fourteen years himself. Along with his wives" (284). Sita admits she has also heard it. She is surprised to learn how this lady knows these secrets. She decides to find out the source wherefrom Manthara gets information. This breach is a threat to the kingdom. As a responsible citizen and a royal aide, she should resolve it at the earliest. Sita listens to Manthara attentively and with patience. Resultantly, Manthara unfolds the secrets of the royal family even to the future queen. This shows, "When we are listened to it creates us, makes us unfold and expand"(88: Meenakshi). It proves true information sources from attentive listening. Sita gets to know from Manthara that the jungle is more dangerous to Ram than the big city. The wicked lady has personal grudge against Ram. She wants to avenge gangrape and murder of her only daughter. She hates him for his utterly abiding law and not to punish the main accused, a juvenile. So she will not do anything in Ayodhya. She will try something in the jungle. She discusses it with her close aide in a tete -a-tete. She says, "but now I think the jungle may be where the true danger lies" (287).

Sita is an attentive listener. This is proven when she follows the teachings of Guru Vishwamitra and applies these learnings in her life. She waits for long outside the chamber of the Raj Guru, Vashishtha. Before going on exile, once again she tries to have a meeting with the royal advisor, Vashishtha. She requests him

for providing the substance which could retain their vitality and youth during the exile. This is to be noticed that Sita approaches for this substance called *Somras*. Sita understands what it means by attentive listening. In this regard, Rizvi says, "As attentive listening is interactive and productive, facilitating proper interaction and more effective listener speaker relationships, it requires conscious effort on the part of the listener and demands concentration involvement and responsibility" (62: Rizvi).

Guru Vashishtha praises Sita smilingly and says, "Hanuman was right. You are very smart " (298). She has acquired all knowledge through actively listening to their teachers and whosoever comes across her. She has the skill of acquiring knowledge not only through words but also through body movements, facial expressions etc. Kumkum attests this skill of Janaki in her words, "In active listening, not only words but also the tone, the facial expressions and the body movements contribute to communication" (190: Kumkum). Sita if decision taken once does not retreat. This is an attribute of a good leader and this develops through a long practice of empathetic listening. She decides to break the myth made by Lord Manu: Whosoever tries to cross the Narmada river from the north will not return home alive. She decides to explore new paths to the south, but without crossing the river. Here Ram shows active interest in what Sita holds up seeking new ways southward. This shows Ram is also an active listener like Sita. He also keeps his

statements and queries very short so that others could understand easily. This is supported by Meenakshi: "The listener must keep statements and questions short and easy to understand" (434: Sangeeta). Sita as an empathic listener attends to a small boy who approaches them from far and expresses his desire to participate in *Jallikattu* competition. The child feels sad when it drops down its head and says, "Children are not allowed. By the great Lord Rudra, if I could compete, I am sure I would defeat everyone" (304). Sita amuses the conversation with the small boy and finally comes to know the brave child is of Kishkindha king, Vali. She learns about the festival wherein a man unties a pouch filled in gold coins to the horn of the aggressive belligerent bull. This is the art of Sita; she digs out information from her empathic communication with the people.

Sita looks at Lakshman with a smile. She listens to the words and reads his gestures. Her smile disappears when she hears him saying, "It's almost like me!" (309). He refers to the bull, larger and with marvelous speed dominating the scene, gaur-zebu bull. She further adds what she listens from her brother in law saying, "It will be a worthy competitor" (310). Sita hears a thump and turns around finds Lakshman has jumped over the fence to save Vali from the beast. She along with her husband also jumps over the fence and sprints ahead of the beast meanwhile Lakshman distracts the beast. It gives time for Sita and Ram to collect the wounded Vali and takes him to the safe place over the fence. This displays mental agility of Sita

which has resulted from her focused listening.

Sita asks Shaktivel, the king of Indrapur a very small question, "Why?" This skill of hers is well quoted in "The listener must keep statements and questions short and easy to understand" (434: Sangeeta) The king requests them, "You may need to leave in haste" (316). He replies Vali is looking for them to kill. Sita is surprised to learn, why he wants to kill them they saved his life. That's why he wants, he would have been pleased if he had been killed in the arena rather than been saved by them. Sita learns from this incident -a help given voluntary is not always pleasing; it could be a threat to someone's life. Sita gets into a small conversation with Jatayu. He wants to go on an excursion to bring the "waters of Walkeshwar" and some herbs from the island of Mumbadevi on the west coast, especially the northern part of the Konkan coast" in order to cure the wounded Soldier, Makrant. Sita guides Jatayu not to stay on the island for long as it is major sea base for Raavan's forces. It divulges Sita has good knowledge of the island even that of the southern part of the country. Actually she has fair knowledge of every part of the country. This knowledge she has earned through the conversation with the learned people and the books digested during the training at Agastyakootam.

When you love someone, you listen to that person amusingly. Sita combs the entangled hair of Ram with her fingers. With sweet pain, Ram sounds ouch. Sita experiences the pain and smiles, " See, I

can do it gently as well" (329). Such kind of listening is called recreational. Malti says, "Recreational listening allows us to interact with people we like for the sole purpose of enjoying each other's company" (76: Malti). Ram praises his wife for her bravery, mental agility, commitment, fighting spirit and reverence towards her husband. He says you will make a great Vishnu. I will be proud to follow you. She responds saying he should not call her Vishnu but a partner. They together can defeat even a demon like Raavan. They can bring together the vayuputras and the Malayaputras into friendship and set India on a new path. Sita comes to find out the rift between Vashishtha and Vishwamitra. It is a lady Nandini. People say so Hanuman discloses this secret to both Sita and Ram. However, he is not sure he says there are other stories and it could be one of them. Sita asks small questions and listens a lot and thus gets a lot of information from others.

Sita meets an unexpected incident at *Panchvati*. She encounters step-siblings of Raavan, Vibhishan and Shurpanakha. She carefully listens to them conversing with her husband & Lakshman. They insist on providing them refuge for a few days. Sita reads the gestures and facial expressions of the Lankan Lady. The latter was staring at Ram constantly. Janaki understands there is some subterfuge in the pleading for refuge. She does not want Ram would help the deceitful Lankans. Here it is noticed Sita does not speak much. She only watches the activities of the people involved in communication. She minutely watches their body movements and concludes something

wrong is going to happen. And it happens for no doubts. She wants to snare Ram in her bewitching beauty. Her brother asks her to get ready to leave *Panchvati* for the next shelter, but she refuses to go and wants to stay back for some more days. Sita watches all these developments. She patiently listens to the lady and does not react even though the latter boasts of her own beauty and raises her covetous eyebrows on the character of both brothers. Sita remains silent. She asks her to come out of the waters for Shurpanakha has already taken lot of time in taking bath. But the lady wants to prolong it for the sun would set. Still Sita does not lose temper. She reads the latter's actions. The Lankan lady wants to drag Sita into the deep waters and drown her to death. Sita taller, tougher and more agile, quickly turns around and foil the charge, ties the lady and drags as far as the camp and hands her over to her brother, Vibhishan. This incident explores Sita as mentally agile and a good observer who notices things carefully, evaluates and takes prompt decisions.

The ascetics keep running for the safe place on the advice of Jatayu. Royal blood was shed. Raavan will avenge even if it is done by mistake of Shurpanakha herself. But royal blood was shed. Finally, far away from *Panchvati* along the Godavari River, a place is decided to camp. Ram and Lakshman go in search for food. Sita with Makrant prepares for cooking. As they were returning the camp with the banana leaves, Sita listens to the groaning sounds of the huge flying machine landed just some distance away from the camp.

That was *Pushpak Vimaan*. The Lankan soldiers attacked the camp, killed all the Malayaputra soldiers leaving one taking last breath. Makrant who was accompanying Sita was also killed. Sita being skilled in the martial art foiled the sudden attack and killed two Lankan soldiers. She fought bravely for long but succumbed to the capture finally. She was intoxicated with some blue herb and gets unconscious and is boarded to the *Vimaan*. In the state of sub-consciousness, she hears two demons Raavan and Kumbhakaran conversing with each other. Sita manages to elbow up and attack Raavan, but held up a woman soldier. This lady was none but her law and protocol chief of Mithila, her best friend. Sita was shocked to learn Samichi was the spy and main aide of the Lankan King. Sita learns from this disclosure, trust some close-ones but keep an eye on the movements if you are a ruler and love your people.

Finally, it is concluded that Sita acquires knowledge from every walk of life. She imbibes all skills and arts, like the skill of communicating with people in a modest way through attentive listening. She has learnt to give others more time to speak, and her more time to analyze the speech of others and conclude what to do next. Through this art of emphatic listening, she rises up to the status of the Vishnu, who is nurturer and protector of the world. Hence, Sita is the Vishnu, who shows the people of Aryavrat, the path of righteousness, and responsibility. She tells the people that responsibility comes when they listen to others with fair heart and nurtures the

feelings of goodwill for them. She proves girls are not burden on the family. They are not ill-omen. Sita herself was taken to be bad luck to Mithila. The Mithilians believed in omens started happening in Mithila since she had arrived in the kingdom. The relationship between Mithila and Sankashya broke up. She caused to break down the royal seal into pieces, and caused to make her uncle Kushadhvaj a bitter enemy to the state. As she grew up into girlhood, her stepmother died. She bore all these reproaches of the people, but rose stronger and braver. She receives proper *Diksha* at the Gurukul of Swetketu and gets skilled in archery and in other martial arts. All this she learns through emphatic and empathetic listening dedicated towards the subject and reverence towards her teachers. She wins over the hearts of the people everywhere even if in the forests or palaces through generosity and mental agility. She holds all the human qualities arise in us if we are attentive to what is being communicated to us by nature and the everything, people, birds, animals etc in the environment. Hence, Sita transforms herself into a true warrior and an ideal citizen not only of Mithila or Ayodhya, but of the world order through her devout listening.

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