

S?t?'s Suicide: How the Ideology of Pativrata Sati Destroys Indian Women

by Ankur Betageri (July 2015)

*To the memory of my great-great-grandmother, Hakmi B?i,
who was whipped to death by her husband for eating paan (betel leaf).*

O foolish race of mortals, that gave gods such jobs to do,
Then went and made them fierce with anger into the bargain
too!
What groans you purchased for yourselves, what grievous
injury
For us, what tears you fashioned for the children yet to
be!

–Lucretius,

The Nature of Things[\[i\]](#)

Trans.

by A.E. Stallings

The relationship of R?ma and S?t? in V?lmiki's *R?m?yana*, though not a happy and harmonious one by any stretch of imagination, has always been projected as the ideal husband-wife relationship in Hindu society. What was their relationship really like? Contrary to the evidence present in *R?m?yana*, R?ma is seen as a monogamist, and not just as a monogamist, but as a loving and devoted husband. Since he is a glorified *maryada purushottama*, the embodiment of decency and the best among men, he is an ideal to all Hindu men – just as Muhammad is to Muslim men – and following him they become not only patriarchal husbands eternally peeved by

their wives' independence but also possessive husbands paranoid about their wives' chastity—roles that Rama performed to perfection in the *Ramayana*. [more>>>](#)