

## ***THE FORCED EMBODIMENT OF PERFECT WOMEN: SITA***

**(A STUDY OF SITA'S CHARACTER WITH REFERENCE TO VALMIKI'S  
RAMAYANA, TULSIDAS'S RAMCHARITMANAS AND AMISH TRIPATHI'S  
SITA: THE WARRIOR)**

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### **Abstract**

*Myths hold a very important place in Indian Culture; especially "Ramayana" and "Mahabharata". Ramayana has been sung from ages. This Epic is considered as an ethic and value which is passed on from generation to generations. The characters of this epic embodies the good virtues. We find 'The Ramayana' in various variations, interpretations and translations. It is been said that there are more than 300 Ramayana's. In this Contemporary time, we find numerous movies, Animation series, TV series etc. in light of this myth. In Popular Literature, the 'retellings' of the myth is in trend. There are many authors who are retelling the original stories with different perspective. Sita's character is seen as an epitome by Indians from childhood. When we talk about popular literature, we find that she is seen from a different angle. This paper focuses Sita's Character portrayed by Amish Tripathi in his novel "Sita:The War" with reference to Valmiki Ramayana, Tulsidas's Ramcharitmanas and different Ramayanas.*

**Key Words:-** *Ramayana, Popular Literature, Epic, Myth, Sita*

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**-Ms.Vaidehi Hariyani**

### **Introduction**

From childhood most of us in India are familiar with characters of "Ramayana" and "Mahabharata". Thanks to the Television Series by B.R.Chopra and RamanandSagar, we all know something about these epics. Both the myths and epics holds a very special place in our culture. It is seen like a virtue that has been and is still passing on from generation to generation. These stories have been retold and the retelling of it is still going on.

According to Peter Barry, "Myth is one of those deep and highly valued ideas that cultures use in order to try to figure out and describe the world, and like things like love or truth or beauty, the idea of myth is hot property. People care about it a great deal. They offer many different definitions of it. Some of those definitions are actually in direct conflict with each other." (Struck)

A question here might arise in our mind that how far we can find any myth authentic? Are they true or not? Well we won't get into that. Our prime concern is to see a treatment given to the prime character 'Sita' in Ramayana Epic. As Peter Struck said that definitions are in conflict with each other, same can be said in the case of retelling.

Ramayana and Mahabharata have shaped the society. They are not only mere stories of past but very relevant in current times also. Ramayana is an exceptional text by itself. It is not confined to India, but it has cross many boundaries. As per A.K.Ramanujan there are more than 300 Ramayanas. Every state and country has its own versions. In this paper our main focus will be on Valmiki Ramayana, Goswami Tulsidas's Ramcharitmanas and Amish Tripathi's "Sita: Warrior of Mithila". All the versions are quite conflicting.

When we talk about Ramayana or think about the epic. The two characters Rama and Sita are the center of this epic. They are said to be a perfect example of how a man

should be and how women should be. Yes, it is true that there is no one like them. People many times bind them in this image of a Perfect being. And if anyone tries to break this image or bring out something rational people do not accept easily.

“Sita” is seen as a perfect women. From childhood women and girls are taught certain things with reference to this character. Sita is often indicated as the ideal woman, the ideal wife, and the ideal mother. The image of an ideal women is an eye-catching image for society, but what happens when women take ownership of Sita as a role model? Are we as society ready to accept a different image of Sita or not?

## “Ramcharitmanas” – Goswami Tulsidas

Goswami Tulsidas’s “Ramacharitmanas” is also one of the famous version of Ramayana. Here we find Sita and Rama as ‘God’ and most of the story is focused on Rama. When someone is referred as God, there is a mentality that they cannot commit any error. Similarly we set some kind of criteria of judgment for everyone. Sita’s character is portrayed here as a submissive women who accepts things and doesn’t questions.

For example:- The famous episode of ‘Agnipariksha’. This is the most controversial part of this text.

*Sita prathamamaanamahurakhi, pragatakinhicahaamtarasakhi..*

*Tehikaranakarunanidhikahekachukadurbada,*

*Sonata jatudhanisabalagikaraibisada. (Tulsidas, 2005)*

In this chopai, Saint Tulsidas conveys that Sita had been previously lodged in fire; Shri Rama now sought to bring her back to light. It was for this reason that Lord Shri Rama addressed some reproachable words to her.

This fire trial also set an archetype exam for all the women and also for Sita.

It is hardly seen that as the characters here are embodied as God, Shri Rama and Sita did this as part of *Narleela*. The justification for this given in Aranyakand.

*Sunahupriyabratarucirasusila, maikachukarabilalitanaralila.*

*Tumhapavakamahukarahunivasa, jaulagikarauniscaranasa. (Tulsidas, 2005)*

As per this Chopai, Shri Rama share a secret with Sita and tells in a polite way: "Listen, my darling, who have been staunch in the holy vow of fidelity to me and so virtuous in conduct: I am going to act a lovely human part. Abide in fire until I have completed the destruction of the demons."

The above lines clearly states the motive of the fire trial. Normally by looking at the fire trial episode many times it is concluded that Sita doesn't had that questioning power or she was a subaltern. The portrayal of Sita here is as 'Goddess'. Due to this particular episode and many such incidents Sita's image is constructed as *abalanari*(a helpless women).

## Valmiki's 'Ramayana'

Due to many versions like Ramcharitmanas Sita is been misinterpreted as docile character. Any writer did not ever mention this, but it is generally understood. However Valmiki in his Adi Kavya "Ramayana" brings Sita as a human being with so many qualities.

Gauri Mahulkar writes, "She was the tower of firm will and Rama could not dissuade her from coming to the forest with her." (Mahulkar, 2017)

Explaining this further she provides us an example.

Hearing the news of Rama's exile Sita was advised by Rama to stay home and serve elders, but she sarcastically laughs at him and rebuked Rama as a coward, lady in the grab of a man and an actor entrusting his wife to others.

Valmiki's Sita can act like any normal human being would do. The problem is when we start seeing someone or forcefully looking someone in the light of perfection.

## Popular Culture and Retelling

Retelling has now become a trend. Indian fictional in the 21st century has been going through a generational change. We have left our hired colonial apparel far behind and want to read and write more about our own heritages and cultural. By attaching scientific explanations to the conservative cultural ethics, the contemporary writers have stated doing that with a refreshing perspective. We find many Indian writers like Ashok Banker, Kavita Kane, Chitra Banerjee, Amish Tripathi and many more.

Among all these writers, Amish Tripathi has become very popular in short time, due to his "Shiva Trilogy". After the success of this first series of books. He came up with his Ramchandra Series. The second book of this series "Sita:Warrior of Mithila" highlights the character of Sita. The story remains the same, but the backdrop changes. Here we find Sita and Rama competing for a highest leadership titled as 'Vishnu'. And both agrees to take the charge of Vishnu together for the welfare of countrymen.

Amish's Sita is totally different from the previous versions. Here we find totally different of what we expect women to be.

"Two years passed since Sita had arrived in Shvetaketu's Gurukul. While the ten year old student had impressed her guru with her intelligence and sharpness, it was her enthusiasm for the outdoors that was truly extraordinary. Especially noteworthy was her skill in stick-fighting. But her spirited temperament also created problem on occasion. Like the time when a fellow student had called her father an influential king, more suited to being a teacher than ruler. Sita's response had been to thrash the living daylights out of him. The boy had been confined to the Gurukul Ayuralay for almost a month. He had limped for two months after that. A worried Shvetaketu had arranged for extra classes on subject of non-violence and impulse control. The hot-headed girl had also been strictly reminded of the rules against physical violence on the gurukul premises." (Tripathi, 2017)

So we find Sita as a hot-headed girl and very rare hobby of stick fighting. Amish's Sita also does horse riding and her leadership qualities are excellent than ram also. This book breaks the archetypal image of Sita.

## **Conclusion**

So the point is that our religious society forces Sita to be a perfect women or forced epitome of perfection. All the versions compared here brings out this Sita's character as per their perspective. Why society does forces an image upon anyone?

As Frantz Fanon in his essay "Black Skin and White Masks" highlights that color is a mental construction which binds people in racism. Similarly society fixes Sita as the forced embodiment of perfect women and in this way women are also fixed. (Hariyani, 2017)

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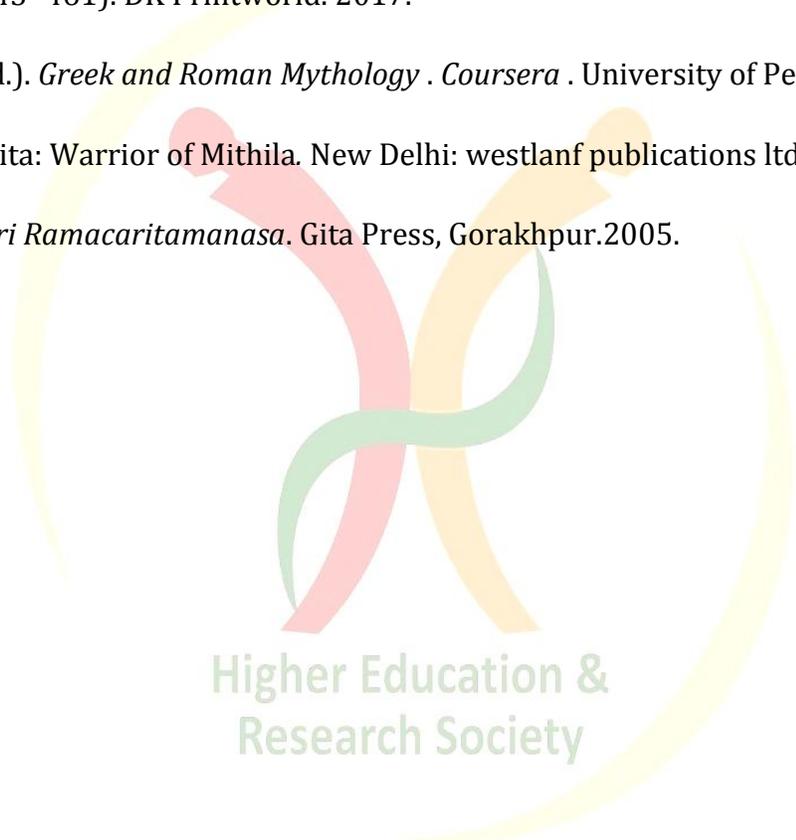
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