



# Indian Feminism: An Analysis of Amish Tripathi's *Sita: Warrior of Mithila*

Anjali Tripathy

Department of English, Gangadhar Meher University, Sambalpur, Odisha, India  
Email: [anjali1tripathy@yahoo.co.in](mailto:anjali1tripathy@yahoo.co.in)

Received: 29 Jun 2022; Received in revised form: 18 Jul 2022; Accepted: 26 Jul 2022; Available online: 03 Aug 2022  
©2022 The Author(s). Published by Infogain Publication. This is an open access article under the CC BY license  
(<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

**Abstract**—The essay proposes to study Amish Tripathi's *Sita: Warrior of Mithila* (2017) as a representative voice of Indian Feminism. More specifically, it will dwell on the author's holistic and non-dualistic approach to feminism. My contention is that the concept of *purush-prakriti* harmony rooted in ancient Indian philosophy is one of the key concepts/ theories that distinguishes Indian feminism from Western theories of feminism.

**Keywords**— Amish Tripathi, Indian Feminism, *purush-prakriti*, Revisiting Mythology, *Sita*.

## I. INTRODUCTION

As stated in the abstract, this essay focusses on the portrayal of Sita in Amish Tripathi's *Sita: Warrior of Mithila* (2017) to study Indian feminist approach rooted in Indian mythology as different from Western theories of feminism. It seeks to explore how the image of Sita in the book implicates the author's holistic and non-dualistic approach to feminism. I shall theoretically frame my argument by drawing from ancient Indian philosophy and the concept of *purush-prakriti* to dwell on Indian Feminism and its distinctive features, though I shall also refer to contemporary theorists of Indian feminism.

Specifically, in what follows, this essay will present three interrelated arguments. First, while discussing Sita, it will analyse the inaccuracy of viewing Indian Feminism under Western eyes and its reasons. Second, it will persuasively argue for a strong Sita as a model of behaviour for Indian women as portrayed in Amish Tripathi's *Sita: Warrior of Mithila*. Third, it intends to integrate the previous arguments to posit Indian Feminism as a unity in duality and beyond male female dichotomy.

## II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Many theorists and critics have drawn attention to the distinctive nature of Indian feminism. Chandra Talpade

Mohanty's seminal essay "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses" (1986) is often cited in this context which exposes hegemonic "Western" feminisms and objects to the homogenisation of "Third World Women." Mohanty also challenges the Western "model of power," the idea that males are oppressors and women are the downtrodden and views that, because it ignores the varied socio-political and broadly cultural conditions, the universal notion of patriarchy and its emphasis on the binary "men versus women" rob women of their historical and political agency.

In the context of Indian feminism, in particular, researchers like Jasbir Jain, Radha Kumar, Maitrayee Chaudhuri, and others have produced substantial scholarship. In *Feminism in India* (2005), Maitrayee Chaudhuri, investigates the variety of Indian feminisms and their theoretical trajectories, by tracing the history of the concept of feminism from colonial times to modern India. The categories of liberal, Marxist, socialist, and black feminisms are defined by the taxonomy of feminist theory that is typically used in the West. She views that the assumptions and the idea that feminist literature in India follow the same developmental trajectories are false. Chaudhuri refutes the idea that feminism originated in the West and spread to India. She argues that India has instead always contested gender formation in various ways.

*The History of Doing* (1993) by Radha Kumar, which spans the years from 1800-1990, is a thematic history of the women's movement in India before and after independence. It examines the ways in which women's issues were first brought up by men and as a part of social reform movements, and later by women themselves after women joined the nationalist movement. The author examines the foregrounding of the "women's issue" during the reform and nationalist movements and how it later faded from the public debate until the post-independence period of the 1960s and 1970s, when it reappears. She does this by using photographs, old and new documents, excerpts from letters, books, and informal writings to show how women became more involved and how the first women's organisations were formed.

Rekha Pande in "The History of Feminism and Doing Gender in India" (2018) examines the historical context of the women's movement, feminism, and gender issues in India. Feminism and the women's movement have been closely linked in India (and throughout the world), motivating and enhancing one another. She categorised the different phases of feminism and women's movement in India. The women's movement got its start in the 19th century as a social reform movement in the pre-independence era. The primary concern in the early decades following Independence was for global economic expansion. An additional decade immediately after that saw a rise in concern for equity and the reduction of poverty. There were no such targeted programmes for women and gender issues were included in concerns about poverty. The women's movement has focused on many issues in the post-independence era, including dowry, women's employment, price increases, land rights, political participation of women, Dalit women and other marginalised women's rights, rising fundamentalism, women's representation in the media, etc.

In *Indigenous Roots of Feminism: Culture, Subjectivity and Agency* (2019), the author Jasbir Jain examines the historical sources from India's diverse cultural eras that have influenced the development of the feminine self. The book inspects feminist movement in India historically and without the influence of contemporary western issues. In order to trace the histories of feminist questionings, it starts with the Upanishads and uses a number of key texts, including the epics and their retellings, *Manusmriti*, *Natyasastra*, and the literature of the Bhakti Movement. Draupati deconstructed the conceptions of chastity and sati; Sita, of power and motherhood; Kali, of violence; Puru's young wife, of sexuality; the *bhakta* women, of marriage and prayer, the author claims. According to Jasbir Jain, being feminist is more than a voice of dissent or inquiry. It is moral self-reflection, overcoming one's

own worries, and realising one's own worth. It continues to forge new ties while maintaining old ones.

In "Clearing Sacred Ground: Women-Centered Interpretations of the Indian Epics," Rashmi Luthra looks at a few ways that everyday women, as well as feminist writers and artists, have appropriated the principal female characters from the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. In order to provide postcolonial Indian feminisms more room for development and positioning, the appropriations draw on pre-existing associations regarding the epic heroes, but rearticulate them. Even though there are risks associated with the appropriation of the epics, such as unintentional collaboration with right-wing conservative projects and the positioning of Indian feminism as exclusive of caste and class concerns, it is argued here that those risks are justified because the epics continue to be a significant and contentious component of the cultural field and because the feminist appropriations are able to take in and partially address the criticisms.

Most of the above cited texts try to chart the history of Indian feminism and simultaneously stress the ways Indian feminism differs from the Western theories of feminism. Scholars have discussed the indigenous roots of Indian feminism and defended the women-centered interpretations of the Indian epics. This essay intends to add to the scholarship by focussing on the distinctive nature of Goddess inspired concept of Indian feminism as already outlined in the introduction.

### III. NOT UNDER WESTERN EYES

Drawing on the scholars mentioned in the review of literature, this essay contends that Feminism in India is not a Western import; it is as old as Indian Civilization. While Devi Durga and Kali represent the female power as a part Indian tradition at a macro level, the Indian villages have the unique tradition of GramaDevi or Village Goddess who are incarnations of strength and power at local level and provide protection to the villagers.<sup>1</sup>

But these Goddesses are hardly cited in the socialisation of girls in India. Rather, young girls and brides are told to emulate Sita and Savitri.<sup>2</sup> It is well known that Sita is presented in the Hindu cultural imagination as an epitome of ideal womanhood. In a patriarchal social structure, her sacrifice and devotion are emphasized for the systematic subjugation of girls and the strengths of her characters like her independence and determination are undermined. Bose views that the transformation of an independent, articulate, and decisive Sita that Valmiki created into an exemplar of uncomplaining acceptance is a fascinating act of literary manipulation serving religious, social and, above all, patriarchal ideologies (Lal and Gokhale, eds. 143).

Particularly, in view of the plurality of the Ramayan tradition, what often goes unnoticed is the *Adbhut Ramayana* whose authorship is traditionally attributed to the sage Valmiki. In her article "The Sita Who Smiles: Wife as Goddess in the *Adbhut Ramayana*," Ruth Vanita calls attention to the representation of Sita in the *Adbhut Ramayana*. The main events for most Ramayans are Rama's exile, Sita's kidnapping, and his fight against Ravana, but the *Adbhut Ramayana* dedicates only one chapter (*sarga*) to these events. Ruth Vanita narrates an important episode from the *Adbhut Ramayana*. In chapter 17, the sages honour Rama for killing the ten-headed Ravana, the king of Lanka, after he returns victorious from the battle. Sita smiles in amusement at this admiration and, when questioned, remarks that the ten-headed Ravana is nothing in comparison to his twin brother, the thousand-headed Ravana, king of Pushkara Island, who is a much more formidable demon. The moment Rama hears of this new Ravana, whom he has never heard of before, he declares war and gets ready to fight. The army of Rama is routed at the end of this five-chapter fight. When Rama is struck by Ravana's arrow, he faints and appears to be dead. Then, after being awakened, Sita assumes the celestial appearance of Goddess Kali or Parameshwari. She kills dozens of demons and cuts off each of Ravana's thousand heads with a single strike before tossing the heads around like balls (33).

This story deserves a close reading because the author demonstrates how the *Adbhut Ramayana* entirely breaks the customs of the husband defending the wife and the wife venerating the husband as God. Several feminist commentators have examined Sita's anguish, primarily at the hands of Rama, as a source of concern for women's suffering. Interestingly, the *Adbhut Ramayana* ignores Rama's ill-treatment of Sita and portrays her as entertained by the sages' needless concern for her travail (34). The reversal puts Rama and Sita on an equal footing, as the same epithets and descriptive terms appear in both eulogies. However, Sita retains an advantage due to the fact that, while Rama is shown as her devotee, she is not portrayed as his devotee in similar way. Ruth also points out that Goddesses like Durga and Kali lack Sita's human status and allure for intimacy among both women and men. In some ways, to associate Sita with Parameshwari or Kali is to associate all wives. This is reaffirmed in the story by Sita's assertion that she is present in every human being in her Goddess form.

This story has been reiterated by Amish Tripathi who admitted in several interviews that he based his portrayal of Sita on *Adbhut Ramayana*. He defends his choice of a powerful Sita. He exemplified the cases of female rishis such as Ma Rishika Maitriyi, Lopamudra, and Gargi who

contributed to the Rig Veda to establish that women played far more important roles and occupied higher status than even the kings in ancient India. He adds that it needs to be resurrected and celebrated because the discourse on women's empowerment is likely to have a greater impact, if it's a part of our ancient culture rather than saying it's a result of westernisation (*Hindustan Times*, 07 Apr. 2017). It is evident that Amish Tripathi does not intend reimagining Sita under Western eyes and portraying her in the mould of Simone de Beauvoir or Betty Friedan. Instead, he proposes to shift the emphasis from her suffering and patience to the strengths of her character and honour her inner strength, dignity, self-sufficiency, and self-determination vis-à-vis the distinctive feature of Indian culture that valued women.

Critics have written eloquently about the Feminism of Indian Goddesses. Relevantly, R. S. Rajan discusses the many ramifications of feminism of goddess in the intertwined contexts of religion, politics, and social movements in contemporary India in her well-known article "Is Hindu Goddess a Feminist?" (1998). She deliberates on the appropriation of the goddess image during the liberation struggle as well as in the current era for political purposes. Hindu Indian nationalists promoted the image of the militant goddess/heroic woman in the nineteenth century and subsequent decades of the Indian freedom movement for several reasons: as a propagandistic and reformist measure for elevating both Hindu women's and Hinduism's self-image and status, as in the Arya Samaj's programmes; to mobilise women to participate in the struggle; and, above all, to provide an inspirational symbolic focus – as in the evolution of the figure of Bharatmata. Present day Hindu "nationalist" parties have produced assertive women leaders and established strong organisational structures for women volunteers for similar purposes and based on similar arguments, albeit in a very different context of electoral politics and organised religious revivalism in the post-colonial nation-state (7). The figure of Bharatmata, as a beloved, suffering, deified mother, was widely used to mobilise women in the Indian Freedom Movement. To defeat the "demonic" British power, the goddesses Durga and Kali were invoked. Gandhi, most often, referred to Sita. He often drew explicit parallels, in his addresses to women, between Sita's legendary fight against the demon Ravana, and Indian women's fight against the British lending a political mission a religious overtone of the fight of good against evil.<sup>3</sup> The analogy has continued in the post-independence era, with Indira Gandhi being compared to Goddess Durga, and many other equivalence (as cited by Rajan). Thus, the goddess inspired feminism has been a part of the feminist consciousness in India.

#### IV. AMISH'S RE-VISION

Amish Tripathi builds upon the idea of fight of good against evil in his portrayal of Sita. In the beginning of the book *Sita: Warrior of Mithila*, he quotes from the *Abhuta Ramayana*:

Yada Yada hi dharmasya glanirbhabati suvrata,  
Abhyutthanamadharma tada prakrtisambhavah.  
The meaning of this Sanskrit verse goes like this:  
O Keeper of righteous vows, remember this,  
Whenever dharma is in decline,  
Or there is an upsurge of adharma;  
The sacred Feminine will incarnate.

The writer complements, "She will defend dharma. She will protect us." The feminist stand of the author is evident here. Also obvious is the author's belief in the administrative acumen of women.

The book is different from other contemporary re-visions of the story of Sita in a number of ways.<sup>4</sup> Starting with the action of Sita, the opening sentence, "Sita cut quickly and efficiently, slicing through the thick leaf stems with her sharp knife," prepares the readers for an unconventional story. The description of the heroine also deviates from the stereotypical portrayal of woman. The author does not speak of her beautiful eyes, or fine figure; rather he draws attention to her height and muscles with the comment that she was too tall for a thirteen year old and she was already beginning to build muscles (51). Sita has been portrayed as a strong woman and described as a fiery young lady who uses her stick fighting skills on a boy who calls her father an ineffective king. When she is forbidden to hit, she can stay strong and intimidate an opponent by yelling loudly (44). She does not give in to the circumstances and devises her own strategies to deal with opposition. Unlike a "traditional" girl, she has enthusiasm for the outdoor. When Makrant is injured in the Dandak forest, Sita curses angrily – a departure from her usual image (3). When her uncle Kushadhvaj attempts to usurp Mithila's royal seal, Sita smashes it to smithereens with no remorse on her face (42). Furthermore, Sita's war and struggle before being captured by Ravana's army contradicts the idea that she is a silent victim (10-13). The novel contains numerous instances of Sita's bravery and strength of will. In fact, the author's intent is clear from the title of the book *Sita: Warrior of Mithila* which implies that she is a warrior at par with Ram from the beginning, and it is not a transformation that occurs after her marriage to Ram. The princess of Mithila is a warrior—both literally and figuratively.

Not only Sita, but other women characters in the novel like

Queen Sunaina and Samichi have also been assigned far stronger roles. While most of the versions of Ramayan present Queen Sunaina, the mother of Sita, as a minor character, in Tripathi's *Sita: Warrior of Mithila*, she is seen governing the kingdom of Mithila, while Janak is engrossed in the pursuit of knowledge. While representing Queen Sunaina, the author also stresses the role and responsibility of the mother in preparing the daughter for life so that she does not "become woman." Sita is shaped by Queen Sunaina to become the fiercely independent woman and courageous fighter that she develops into. Sita is sent to Rishi Svetaketu's gurukul to receive education in basic courses like Philosophy, Mathematics, Science and Sanskrit and specialised disciplines like History, Economics, Geography and Royal administration. Queen Sunaina insists on teaching Sita warfare and martial arts, overriding Janak's objections (43). She instructs her to be mature and realistic, to choose her destination by using her heart and plan the route to it with her head. (36). It is comparable to Sita's advice to her unborn daughters before entering the Mother Earth in Divakaruni's *Forest of Enchantments*. Before entering Mother Earth and accepting death, she prays for her countless unborn daughters, advising them to use their hearts as well as their head to know when they need to compromise and when they need not. Sunaina and Sita both leave a powerful message for modern women to take action while balancing their "heart" and "head" (traditionally linked with woman and man respectively). I find the warrior Sita very relevant in present times when mere economic independence and education do not guarantee empowerment for a woman. It can neither lessen the chances of the abuse of her body nor ensure protection for her. Sunaina's insistence on teaching her daughter warfare and martial arts creates a precedent for mothers to train their daughters in self-defence and sets an agenda for the need to unlearn the conventional mode of education for daughters.

A well-trained Sita proves a competent administrator as the prime minister of Mithila. Quickly she embarks on two developmental projects: the construction of a road connecting Mithila and Shankashya, and a housing plan for slum dwellers. The city's chaotic central market is organised by her. The merchants are assigned uniform, long-term stalls to ensure cleanliness and order (109). She strengthens the protective walls of Mithila. Along with administrative acumen, she exhibits considerable knowledge of statecraft and diplomacy. An assassination attempt is made on Sita and her chariot is meddled with, but she succeeds to escape. She learns of the treachery of her uncle's Prime Minister Sulochan and directs Arishtanemi to eliminate him. Sita, thus, legitimizes the participation of women in a traditionally male field and her

competence calls the sexual division of labour into question. Women's successful role in "public" has been discussed by Amrita Basu in "The Gendered Imagery and Women's Leadership of Hindu Nationalism." She talks about three of the most powerful women within Hindu nationalism: Vijayraje Scindia, Uma Bharati and Sadhvi Rithambara and views that unlike most nationalist movements, which invoke gendered images of women while repudiating their activism, Hindu nationalism has encouraged the emergence of several prominent women leaders. She argues that they convey the message that women can assume activist roles without violating the norms of Hindu womanhood or ceasing to be dutiful wives and mothers (much like Amish's Sita).

Amish's re-vision is different from other revisitings of Sita's story in a number of ways. For instance, Sita performs the last rituals of her mother, Sunaina (105). Additionally, Sita is five years older than Ram in the Amish version, which is unusual in a nation where men are allowed to wed women who are far younger (126). When Amish mentions at the initial of the novel that it is Sita's turn to cook during the exile along with Ram and Lakshman, he critiques the sexual division of labour once more. Moreover, he shatters the traditional notion of a coy bride-to-be and makes Sita choose Ram for a suitable mate. Sita is confident that Ram will prefer a warrior lady with scars than a delicate, weak lady (211). Sita wants to marry Ram and work with him in partnership as the Vishnu, the nurturer (186). By assigning the task of Vishnu to both Sita and Ram, the author visions a society based on man-woman equality. Even he makes Sita more assertive and decisive than Ram. In an important episode in the narrative, Sita and Bharata are indulged in a long conversation during which an assertive Sita repeatedly says "I am not finished" and puts forth her arguments powerfully (277). This article attempts to forge, recuperate, or revive that conception of Sita.

The novel also valorises status by merit as opposed to the traditionally endorsed status by birth. When asked by Sita, whether he will judge her by her birth as her real parentage is not known, Ram is very clear in his response. According to him, birth is inconsequential and Karma is significant (234). Thus, Samichi, a girl who saves Sita in Mithila's slum, can secure the post of chief of police of the state due to her merit. Sita is chosen by Vishwamitra as the next Vishnu. By reminding the readers of the glory of women and respect for merit, the author reinforces that binaries based on gender, class and caste should be discarded in favour of a society where man and woman would have equal opportunity and merit, not birth should be the determinant of the position of a person.

## V. PURUSH-PRAKRITI HARMONY

Significantly, the author emphasizes on a balance among competing groups in both *Ram: The Scion of Ikshvaku* (2015) and *Sita: Warrior of Mithila*. The stress on balance is most visible in his employment of the principle of *purush-prakriti* harmony. Vandana Shiva, a well-known advocate of eco-feminism, in her book *Staying Alive* interprets the *purush-prakriti* unity in Indian culture. According to her, while the dichotomy or dualism between man and woman, and person and nature, pervades contemporary Western ideas of nature, in Indian cosmology, person and nature (*purush-prakriti*) are a duality in unity. Every form of creation has the imprint of this dialectical unity, of diversity within a unifying principle, and this dialectical harmony between male and female principles, as well as between nature and man, becomes the foundation of Indian ecological thought and action. Nature has been considered as integral and inviolable because there is no ontological dualism between man and nature, and since nature as *prakriti* feeds life. *Prakriti* is an everyday concept, not an arcane abstraction (39).

According to Indian Sankhya philosophy, there must be two sorts of reality: the ultimate real, never-changing, enduring soul (*purush/ atman-brahman*) and the ever-changing, finite material world of *prakriti*. The relationship was established as that of subject and object. *Purush* is the subject and *prakriti* is the object. In *Myth=Mithya: A Handbook of Hindu Mythology*, Devdutt Pattanaik expands on the *purush-prakriti* notion. He reiterates that the *purush*, according to the Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, was scared of his loneliness and separates himself. *Prakriti* refers to the split section of the *purush*. They are complementary to one another. *Purush* is associated with man and culture, but *prakriti* is associated with woman and nature. But Pattanaik also draws attention to the fact that the Veda and the Upanishads were not concerned with gender politics and social issues, rather they dealt with metaphysics. So the split is not between man and woman, rather it is between the subject and the object. The *purush* is the subject and *prakriti* is the object. The soul is *purush*, while the mind and matter are *prakriti*. *Purush* is constant, immutable and represents the internal truth that gives the body life. *Prakriti*, on the other hand, is impatient and ever-changing, denoting everything in this world, including names, gender, and shapes. Significantly, both entered the earth at the same time, and neither can exist without the other. If Ram and Sita represent *purush* and *prakriti*, then the fact that they are constantly worshipped together indicates that *purush-prakriti* harmony is recognised.

The verse from the *Adbhut Ramayana* that Amish quotes

at the beginning of the book makes it apparent that Sita plays the role of *prakriti*. In portraying Sita, the author reveals that two important entities in Sita's life are Mother Earth and her own mother (91). Even her mother Sunaina has been compared to Mother Earth with her lap always soft for Sita like Mother Earth immediately after the rains. Later, sick, solid and bony, it is like the same soil after a series of distressing droughts. Sita, like a little sparrow, can perceive the impending fall of the mighty banyan tree that has sheltered her body and soul together. Sita herself represents nature, being found from the earth and meeting her end inside it. Significantly, in the novel she has been called "Bhoomi" meaning earth. The association is intensified as she spends most of her married life in the forest. She treads the jungle path with Ram during his exile into the forest, stays in the Asokavatika (garden) as a captive of Ravana and stays in Valmiki's hermitage amidst forest when, after a brief interlude in the palace of Ayodhya, she is sent to the forest again. Procreation is nature's prime confederate and no wonder, Sita gives birth to her children in the forest.

Ram, the ideal man, represents *purush*. In *Ram: The Scion of Ikshvaku*, Ram raises several questions to his Guru and receives law as the answer to all his doubts. This concept of law is deeply ingrained in his mind and throughout his life he chooses to follow the laws. Ram simplifies and unifies the law by carefully selecting the laws fair, coherent, simple and relevant to the time from the many *smritis* which are often confusing and contradictory.<sup>5</sup> Those are inscribed and displayed in temples so that ignorance of law would not become an apology for the law breakers. Secondly, he empowers the police to enforce law without any fear or favour (116-17). The emphasis on Sita and Ram working in partnership as Vishnu points to the need for balance and unity between *prakriti* and *purush*.<sup>6</sup>

Amish Tripathi elucidates the concepts of the feminine and the masculine as ways of life. Guru Vashishta remarks that Emperor Bharat's empire was the pinnacle of the feminine way of life: freedom, passion, and beauty. It is empathetic, creative, and especially caring to the weak when it is at its best. Feminine civilisations tend to become corrupt, reckless, and decadent as they decline. Truth, accountability, and honour, on the other hand, characterise the manly way of life. At their best, masculine societies are effective, fair, and equal. However, as they age, they grow more obsessive, inflexible, and harsh towards the weak (*Ram* 84).

The contours of meaning assigned the terms "masculine" and "feminine," thus, move away from the common notion of associating them with man and woman respectively. It further brings in the question of superiority in masculine and feminine debate. In the context, the episode of Sita's

conversation with Bharat in *Sita: Warrior of Mithila* is significant for a number of reasons. It advances the author's opinion, reflects his ideologies and offers a kind of resolution to the problematics of masculine and feminine debate. Bharat finds Ram's ideas of rule of law rooted in the masculine way and preferred the way of the feminine which allows freedom to let people find balance on their own (279). But Sita reiterates Guru Vashishta's views expressed in *Ram* and articulates a post-feminist kind of idea when she says that at its best, the masculine approach is orderly, efficient, and fair; at its worst, it is fanatical and brutal; the feminine method is creative and passionate at its best, but it is decadent and chaotic at its worst. That's why she prefers the road of Balance – "Balance of Masculine and Feminine" (280). Ram's view is in tandem with that of Sita. In *Ram: The Scion of Ikshvaku*, Ram reflects on the Emperor Prithu's concept of *arya* who had spoken of the ideal human archetype of the *aryaputra*, a gentleman, and the *aryaputri*, a lady, a model partnership of two powerful individuals, who didn't contest for precise equality but were complementary, completing each other (284). The notion of feminist being man hater also encounters criticism in the novel. Samichi has been portrayed as a man hater and Jatayu tells Sita, "...hating all men because one man's actions...is a sign of an unstable personality. Reverse bias is also bias. Reverse-racism is also racism. Reverse-sexism is also sexism" (*Sita* 115). The quote above has suggestions for Gender Studies. Radical feminism is undesirable in this sense; society needs a harmonious relationship between the sexes based on equality and mutual cooperation, not confrontation.

That's why Sita believed in "pragmatism." Vishwamitra asks her if she is committed to *Charvak* philosophy that believes in neither the soul nor the Gods, but only the body as the reality. She denies it and elucidates that she is pragmatic, and hence, open to every school of philosophy (64). Essentially, a pragmatic Sita prioritises experience above established principles and action over theology. Instead of relying on precedents, she defends decisions based on the results of an action and the extent of overall wellbeing.

## VI. CONCLUSION

Thus, Amish has portrayed Sita as a brave warrior, incisive administrator, merciless foreign policy maker, possessive daughter, and perfect wife. She is not the hapless princess who was abducted by Ravana because of her tenderness and a fleeting desire to obtain the golden deer, as we see in many of the Ramayan tales. She is compared to *prakriti*, the primordial creative energy, who, as a result of the interplay of the *gunas* (traits), takes on all traits – good and

bad – and is the foundation of both Creation and Destruction. She discovers her *purush* in Ram, and in keeping with her *prakriti* image, she is eager to accept Vishnuhood in partnership with him. Such depiction of the ideal archetypal woman of India provides new contours of meaning to Indian feminism.

### NOTES

1. Female terracotta figurines of the “Mother Goddess” have been discovered in South Asia in remnants from Mehrgarh, Harappa, eastern West Bengal, and other locations. These goddesses are first mentioned in the Mahabharata’s later layers, which date from the 1st century CE, and their absence from the Vedas suggests that they have a non-Vedic origin.

Village deities, particularly goddesses, have a strong presence in the lives of villagers in South India. They frequently offer lessons about humanity and kindness. The devotees of a goddess wanted to build a little temple for her, but the goddess refused since she didn’t want a dwelling until all the villagers had their own houses, mentions Siddalingaiah. Lower castes, villagers, and farmers had a more close and humanistic relationship with the gods, whereas priests normally act as intermediaries between the gods and upper caste worshippers. Siddalingaiah in his book *Grama Devategalu (Village Deities)*, 1997 elaborately treated the subject. For further insight read, Padma, Sree. *Vicissitudes of the Goddess*. Oxford UP, 2013; Whitehead, Henry. *The Village Gods of South India*. Oxford UP, 1916; Gowda, Chandan. “The World of Village Goddesses.” *Bangalore Mirror*, 16 Jan. 2016; Elgood, Heather. “Exploring the Roots of Village Hinduism in South Asia.” *World Archaeology*, Vol. 36, No. 3 (2004), pp.326-342.

2. The oldest known version of the story of Savitri and Satyavan is found in the Vana Parva (*The Book of the Forest*) of Mahabharat. When Yudhishtira asks Markandeya if there has ever been a woman whose devotion equalled Draupadi’s, Markandeya responds with this story. According to legend, princess Savitri marries an exiled prince named Satyavan, who is doomed to die young. The legend concludes with Savitri’s wit and love saving her husband from the death god Yama. In an article titled “When Death Doffed Its Hat” published in *The Hindu* on August 3, 2017, Arshia Sattar summarises the mythical story and remarks that Yama honours her iron will, intellect, and quick wit, when he gives Satyavan back.

In Bihar, Jharkhand, and Odisha, married women observe Savitri Brata on the Amavasya (new moon)

day in the month of Jyestha of Hindu calendar every year. This is performed for the well-being and long life of their husbands. In Odisha, a treatise entitled *Savitri Brata Katha* is read out by women while performing the puja to draw inspiration from Savitri to be faithful wife. It is believed that Savitri got her husband back on the first day of the Tamil month Panguni. This day is celebrated as Karadayan Nonbu in Tamil Nadu. On this day, married women and young girls wear yellow robes and pray to Hindu goddesses for long lives for their husbands.

3. Sita, Damyanti, and Draupadi were three ideals of Indian womanhood that Gandhi frequently invoked as inspirations for India’s oppressed women. Sita, for example, was used as a symbol of Swadeshi to convey an anti-imperialist message. Sita only wore Indian or homespun cloth, which allowed her heart and body to remain pure. Sita, as depicted by Gandhi, was no helpless creature. Even Ravana’s great physical strength paled in comparison to her superior moral courage. This is the model he set for Indian women to follow. Source, Kishwar, Madhu. “Gandhi on Women.” *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 20, No. 41 (1985), pp. 1753–1758, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4374920>. Accessed 15 Apr. 2022.

4. In recent years many creative writers have revisited The Ramayan from feminist view point. Some notable interpretations of Sita’s story are Ambai. “Forest.” *In a Forest, a Deer: Stories by Ambai*. Trans. Lakshmi Holmstrom. OUP, 2006; Arni, Samhita. *Sita’s Ramayana*. Illus. Moyna Chitrakar. Tara Books, 2012; Divakaruni, Chitra Banerjee. *The Forest of Enchantments*. HarperCollins, 2019; Naidu, Vayu. *Sita’s Ascent*. Penguin Random House, 2012; Volga. *The Liberation of Sita*. Trans. T. Vijay Kumar and C. Vijaysree. HarperCollins, 2016.

Paula Richman, Nabaneeta Dev Sen, Mandakranta Bose, Malashri Lal, Namita Gokhale and many other critics have extensively worked on the subject. See, Tripathy, Anjali. “Re-visioning Sita: Rewriting Mythology.” *New Academia*. Vol. VIII, No. III, 2019.

5. Smriti (Sanskrit: “Recollection”) is a class of Hindu sacred literature based on human memory, as distinct from the Vedas, which are considered to be Shruti (literally “What is Heard”) or the product of divine revelation. Smriti literature elaborates, interprets, and codifies Vedic thought but, being derivative, is considered less authoritative than the Vedic Shruti. The texts include the important religious manuals known as the *Kalpa-sutras*;

the compilations of ancient myth, legends, and history, the Puranas; and the two great epics of India, the *Ramayan* and the *Mahabharat*. In time the term Smriti came to refer particularly to the texts relating to law and social conduct, such as the celebrated law book, the *Manu-smriti (Laws of Manu)*. (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*)

6. Ardhanarishvara, is a combination of three Sanskrit words “Ardha,” “Nari,” and “Ishwara” denotes “half,” “woman,” and “lord,” respectively, and when combined signify “lord whose half is a woman.” It is believed that the God is Lord Shiva and the woman part is his consort Goddess Parvati or Shakti. Though there are various traditions and interpretations surrounding it, the idea of Ardhanarishvara is most commonly associated with the idea that male and female principles cannot be separated. It expresses the universe’s oneness of opposites. See, Goldberg, Ellen. *Lord Who Is Half Woman: Ardhanarisvara in Indian and Feminist Perspective*. State U of New York P, 2002.

#### REFERENCES

- [1] Basu, Amrita “The Gendered Imagery and Women’s Leadership of Hindu Nationalism,” *Reproductive Health Matters*, Vol. 4, No. 8 (1996), pp.70- 76.
- [2] Chaudhuri, Maitrayee, editor. *Feminism in India*. Zed Books, 2005.
- [3] Divakaruni, Chitra Banerjee. *The Forest of Enchantments*. HarperCollins, 2019.
- [4] Jain, Jasbir. *Indigenous Roots of Feminism: Culture, Subjectivity and Agency*. SAGE, 2019.
- [5] Kumar, Radha. *The History of Doing: An Illustrated Account of Movements for Women’s Rights and Feminism in India 1800-1990*. Kali for Women, 1993.
- [6] Lal, Malashri, and Namita Gokhale, editors. *In Search of Sita: Revisiting Mythology*. Penguin Books India, 2009.
- [7] Luthra, Rashmi. “Clearing Sacred Ground: Women-Centered Interpretations of the Indian Epics.” *Feminist Formations*, Vol. 26, No. 2 (Summer 2014), pp. 135-161.
- [8] Mohanty, Chandra. “Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses.” *Feminist Review*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (1988), pp. 61-88.
- [9] Pande, Rekha. “The History of Feminism and Doing Gender in India.” *Estudos Feministas*, Vol. 26, No. 3 (2018), pp. 1-17.
- [10] Pattanaik, Devdutt. *Myth=Mithya: A Handbook of Hindu Mythology*. Penguin India, 2014.
- [11] Sunder Rajan, Rajeswari. “Is the Hindu Goodness a Feminist?” *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 33, No. 44 (Oct. 31 - Nov. 6, 1998), pp. WS34-WS38.
- [12] Tripathi, Amish. *Ram: The Scion of Ikshvaku*. Westland, 2015.
- [13] ---. *Sita: Warrior of Mithila*. Westland, 2017.
- [14] ---. Interview. *Hindustan Times*, 07 Apr. 2017.
- [15] Vanita, Ruth. “The Sita Who Smiles: Wife as Goddess in the *Adbhut Ramayan*.” *Manushi*, No. 148 (2005), pp. 32-39.