

Sita – An Epitome of Womanhood

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Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni has attracted an interesting character of Sita, her most recent novel. She is not at all like the searing and mystifying Draupadi who is intense and oozes dynamism, furious reliability, versatility and honesty of character not at all like any of Divakaruni's heroines. The *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* are the great epics of India. In India there are so many epics are male centric but the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* are female centric and they are written the female point of views. The life style of mythological characters is presented in these epics reflects the modern socio-economic reality. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni paints a rainbow of women characters in her writing. Her characters have myriad personalities from gentle to ebullient. To frame the characters with their specific deliberation in the form of novel demands higher creative skills of writing and that is what she has displayed in her novels, which projects various characters of different talent and calibre. Divakaruni's *The Forest of Enchantment* gives wide canvas to paint the character of Sita in patriarchal society.

Her latest page- turner novel *The Forest of Enchantments* is at the top of this list of Best Books of 2019 by The Republic. Sita in *The forest of Enchantment* and Panchali in *Palace of Illusions* are adopted from the epic the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. Panchali and Sita are the names which every Indian would have known since childhood. Both are the imperative female characters in India's mythological magnum opus *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*.

In *The forest of Enchantment* Divakaruni opens up with lots of complexities and strengths of Sita's character. She is an active decision maker with a lot of inner strength in difficult situations. She has added to her character elements that she believes to make them timeless, interesting, and a complex woman. She has made these changes based on her understanding of the original epic. The description of Sita is an eternal portrait. The writer has attempted to reveal her inner being, her motives, feelings and heartbreaks. That is exactly she has done in this novel.

As martial art trainer she loves the idea of being a warrior. Sita has always been touted the sole cause of wars but her tribulations have never been sympathized with. She was won through a swayamvara where the game was linked with archery. For Sita, Rama broke a grand bow. The writer raises voice of the protagonist against social evils prevailing in the patriarchal society. Sita is a good vantage point from which to observe the depth and power of an oppressed woman. Searching for self-definition and search for individuality are the key features of the characters exposed by Divakaruni. Her characters are caught in the flux of belief and modernity.

Divakaruni belongings to see the authenticity that women meet with diverse problems which they cannot decide unless they have knowledge of their internal strengths.

In this novel the writer Divakaruni paints with the different shades of Sita's role. Sita also tells her story like Draupadi in *Palace of Illusion*. Daughter of the earth and has love for nature Sita is sensitive level-headed with a healing touch, as well as the flexible and strong soldier princess. She is able to comprehend things that come from the earth. Her peculiar gift with flora was a mystery to her. She feels an extreme empathy towards plant life and uses their curative properties to help ill persons. Sita is also profoundly fascinated to forests and early on, desires that she requests to visit one someday even however it is an exceptional possibility in the life of a princess. Later, in spite of the hardships she has to suffer throughout her forest exile, Sita marvels at the exotic trees and birds around her. Most important, she delights in the unique freedom the forest offers which are out of contact in the limits of the palace.

"When I touched a plant, I knew its healing properties. I could tell which grasses cure headaches and colds which seeds fended off infections, which herbs to give women when their monthly blood flowed too long." (5)

The characters of Divakaruni in the novels strive to substantiate their identity in the face of constant challenges and existential problems. The characters in novels under study have certain similarity in creation. In detail her characters are very complete and appear real at their appropriate stages of life so that Divakaruni exhibits better art of characterization. As the woman consciousness is central to her world, it is but natural that her key characters should be women.

Banerjee's sketch of Sita's mind is a brilliant amalgamation of bliss, overgenerous, adore, power, regret, misery, discontent, and a large group of feelings, which instil essentialness in this entire embroidered artwork. She brings Sita alive as a personification of strength and in particular, dignity. The experiences which Banerjee gives carve permanently. These penetrate peruser's ethical constitution immovably settled by unquestioning confidence in Ramayan's sacrosanct substance for quite a long time. Cynosure of the epic is not only concerned sister and loving wife but she is her own person also. The novel focuses on the protagonist Sita, her struggle of survival in male dominated society and it also portrays the different areas of her life. Divakaruni creates Sita's character with concern – her persona and her strengths match her origin. Sita is skilled to use her body like a weapon, to centre her whole being and pull out into herself when situations around her became intolerable. She is taught to use her body like a weapon, to centre her full being and pull out into herself when situations around her became unbearable. Such skill makes Divakaruni's Sita an ideal woman and she has the courage of patience. Banerjee's depiction of Sita's awareness is a wonderful blend of bliss, fancy, love, passion, repentance, dejection, frustration, and a host of emotions, which infuse vitality in this whole tapestry. She brings Sita lively as an embodiment of bravery and most importantly, self-respect. The insights which Banerjee provides carve permanently. These penetrate reader's

ethical constitution powerfully recognized by unquestioning trust in *Ramayan's* sacred entity for centuries. Sita is an icon of dignity which for Banerjee is the fulcrum of a woman's existential dilemma. She endures persistent attacks over her integrity and ultimately refuses to surrender to them in a fashion which is characteristic to divine. While growing up in patriarchal society it analyses how Divakaruni has reconstructed the image of Sita and female life during ancient period. She shows us a breathtaking way of being strong and self respecting without being strident. She is really a role model but not in a way folklore has imperfectly depicted her.

Divakaruni portrays Sita as a powerful, path-breaker, strong and independent woman and she has equal power to the men around her. She wrote this story on female perspective and it is the story of millions of women who are fighting and unconsciously battling to find out their self and own identity. For instance, Sita argues with her mother about why tradition demanded that Mithila be governed by a man and not a woman, "Why can't custom changed? I asked angrily. Especially ones that don't make sense? Not this one. Because it's built upon an age-old belief the citizen of Mithila hold: no one is strong enough-or wise enough-to guide them." (16)

Lives of Sita and Draupadi are resembled with the contemporary Indian women because they have significant #MeToo moments. They come out from their shell and are strong in their sense that they are not wrong just because they have been victims of physically stronger men. Surely they triumph over their circumstances because of their confidence and inner strength. They refuse to compromise like contemporary Indian women. On the other hand, compared to Draupadi in Divakaruni's novel, Sita is far more quiet, mature and considered in her communication. However, she has foibles and failings, strong dilemmas and moments of fault that make her relevant. Yet Sita's story was very challenging to write.

There are so many patriarchal assumptions and misconceptions about her gentleness and long-suffering reception. Divakaruni wanted to show that she is deep and strong. As the role model for women all over the world there is Sita who repairs the broken relationship between Kaushalya and her husband Dasharath, as she is eternal she handles some timeless challenges very well.

While delineating a character of Sita from mythology in the current times Divakaruni feels that she teaches us to stand up for our rights without hating those who are causing us pain. She is very mature character. Her apprehension on animal rights and inclusive societies makes her so special. In spite of Ram and Laxman confidently tell Sita that they will be doing the sages a great service by killing rakshasas in the forest, she has her own misgivings. She speaks about the welfare of animal and against hunting for sports. She raised a question that what right we had to cause destruction to those who had been here long before we came, which is relevant today. Indeed Sita is the epitome of motherhood and possesses all the good qualities that a traditional Indian woman is expected to possess. She is the first single mother in literature, who gave birth to twin sons in the forest and raised them up all alone without any support of husband and father. The author continually strives for a symmetry between kindness and wickedness;

love and wicked longing; nobility and unrestrained pride; individual and worldly, while evolving each character. Sita's point judgment of a personality strengthens Banerjee's picture of her as a virtuous woman.

CONCLUSION

Sitayan commends womanhood. It talks about mindfulness, enlightens our dull mind by giving intelligent thinking, a sort of guide dependent on the compassionate ground, and empowers contemporary ladies. Sita attempted to add shading to the next lady's existence without resenting them. Sita learns the exercise of life, exercise about affection during her life: one should offer an incentive to others' choices instead of dispensing our decision towards them. All the marginalized voices, regardless of their social foundation, combine and structure a feeling of interconnectedness. The tale encourages the ladies network to shield their honor and nobility and solicitations them to be particular while yielding their lives for their friends and family. Divakaruni establishes the persona of Draupadi and Sita through telling the tale by both the characters, which exhibit as a kind of self-interpretation. Both struggle throughout the novels for their self-respect and identity in this patriarchal world and come across as exceptional, multifaceted and motivating in their quiet strength.

REFERENCES

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