

From Myth to Modernity: Sita's Evolution in Amish Tripathi's *Sita: Warrior of Mithila*

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Abstract - This study examines how Amish Tripathi's novel *Sita: Warrior of Mithila* turns the ancient mythical figure of Sita into a contemporary heroine. Through a thorough reading of Tripathi's story, the paper looks at how the writer revitalizes and reinterprets Sita, showing her as a fearless fighter and dynamic leader. Through placing Sita in the context of modern issues of women empowerment and leadership, Tripathi's work subverts stereotypes and provides a complex analysis of her place in the epic narrative. This research demonstrates how *Sita: Warrior of Mithila* bridges the gap between traditional mythology and contemporary ideals, thereby reflecting the changing ideas of what it means to be a woman and a hero in Indian literature.

Keywords: Amish Tripathi, Mythical, Modern, Stereotypes.

Introduction - It has long been acknowledged that Indian society is complex, with a rich cultural fabric and dynamic variety. But it is also distinguished by a hierarchical structure based on gender, caste, and class divisions. It is common to reach the depths of mythology while tracing the roots of this hierarchical, usually discriminating institution. Classical literature, including the *Vedas*, *Puranic* scriptures, *Upanishads*, *Manu-Smriti*, *Ramayana*, and *Mahabharata*, offers an extensive array of epic stories that influence cultural standards. India has always been a patriarchal culture, with even the goddesses Ahalya and Sita powerless to free themselves from servitude. Studying these customs, myths, and epics is necessary to comprehend the struggles that Indian women confront today. These forms of oppression have their roots in the traditions that have been fostered over time by mythical ideas. The roots of the complex oppression that is still present now are laid by these myths and epic traditions, which act as historical precedents. Myths and epics are revered in this very religious community as models of moral behavior and family responsibilities. As such, the plight of Indian women is primarily determined by the epic or legendary customs upheld in their households. With its many unwritten, self-proclaimed laws dictating marriage, sexuality, morality, economic freedom, and family relationships, patriarchy has long been an integral component of Indian culture. These regulations come from particular cultural metaphors rather than being developed by surveys, court cases, or observation. This system is frequently portrayed as a potent emblem within mythology in ancient books that transmit both world wisdom and Indian patriarchy. Often, these symbols appear as nymphs or

goddesses, with domestic women always positioned in the center, representing the Sativrat or Pativrat positions.

One of the myths that have been passed down to women is that their only role in the universe is to assist males in carrying out cosmic duties. In several myths and epics, selflessness is shown as the pinnacle of a woman's chastity. Women are usually shown as part of ritualistic behaviors that highlight their responsibilities as loving spouses and mothers. *Manusmriti* gives enough proof of these beliefs, laying forth regulations that blatantly represent the Brahmanical view of women's place in society. The shloka that instructs how to secure the birth of male children and avoid female offspring is found in the third chapter of *Manusmriti*, which is blatantly discriminatory towards women. Given that female feticide is still an odious practice in modern culture, this is incredibly unfair.

Classic myths are also reinterpreted in Amish Tripathi's novels, drawing inspiration from contemporary social events. Thus, the study in his novel aids critics in determining the causes of the shifts in the views of legendary characters in literature. Amish Tripathi has dismantled the socioeconomic stereotype of the successful males of today in favour of the fearless woman who uplifts society by using her innate leadership qualities. Three novels in his Ram Chandra Series explore the ancient narrative of the *Ramayana*. The second book in the series, *Sita: Warrior of Mithila*, chronicles the life of the abandoned child who grows up to become Mithila's prime minister. Through this book, Tripathi has dismantled patriarchal taboos and all stereotypes about women in society. In Tripathi's book, the sly princess of the *Ramayana*, Sita, is

transformed into Mithila's fierce warrior. He presents Sita as the complete opposite of Ram. She can handle all national matters on her own and resolves all conflicts. She is also revered as Lady Vishnu, protecting humanity from Raavan's grasp. She is incredibly obedient, crafty, fierce, kind, and brilliant. Rather than being Ram's subordinate, she is a co-partner in every way. In an interview, Tripathi claimed that Sita was a warrior in addition to being a submissive and modest wife. Many female-centered fictions have just recently started to flourish in the literary canon. These days, it's normal to see female soldiers in literature and movies. The majority of current articles dissect the taboos around feminine characteristics. This latest trend can be attributed to those who have long advocated for women's empowerment. Women are demonstrating that they are capable of anything if they have self-determination. Every lady in this series has had a difficult time in a different capacity.

As we see in Valmiki's epic *Ramayana*, Sita appears to be a loving, devoted wife and daughter who blindly follows her husband. But unlike Sita in Valmiki's epic, it is hard for any woman to control her emotions in today's world. She seems to be academically and physically formidable. According to Amish, Sita was a Mithila warrior in addition to being 'The Ideal Indian Woman'. Sita, the primary character, muses about the internal struggles surrounding women's rights. In *Sita: Warrior of Mithila* and *Scion of Ikshvaku*, female characters such as Sita, Kaikeyi, Kaushalya, Manthra, Nilanjana, Rosini, Samichi, Shurpanakha, Sumitra, Urmila, and Radhika are presented as embodiments of strength and bravery rather than as helpless women. These characters are portrayed as strong, self-reliant, and skilled professionals. Since the women in this novel are the epitome of purity and excellence, they do not seek political equality, economic rights, or social identity. The Shiva Trilogy series features many powerful female characters, including Sati, Kali, Veerini, Ayurvati, Anandmayi, Kritika, Tara, Khankhala, Dhruvini, Kanini, Anandmayi, Uma, Maya, and Suparna. These women are all powerful, independent, intelligent, flawless in their work, and well-versed in their fields. The status of women in the Shiva Trilogy is in opposition to the conventional definition of women's place in society, which saw women as men's property rather than as independent beings.

Firstly, it's essential to acknowledge that Amish Tripathi's interpretation of Sita challenges traditional perceptions of her character. Rather than depicting her solely as a passive and obedient wife, Tripathi presents Sita as a strong, independent, and skilled warrior. This departure from the conventional narrative allows for a more nuanced exploration of gender roles and expectations. Sita is seen as the woman Vishnu in Amish Tripathi's novel *Sita: Warrior of Mithila*, who came to protect people's lives. She looks for a spouse who can assist her in completing her purpose. She wants to locate a helpmate who shares her

passion and life's philosophy when searching for her ideal spouse. She chooses between them using logic and reason. Ram also has similar thoughts regarding his companion, not just Sita. Ram suggests to Sita, "You should only get married if you find someone you admire, who will help you understand and fulfill your life's purpose. And you, in turn, can help her fulfill her life's purpose" (Tripathi, 2017: 207). A woman's bittersweet recollections become only a sliver of what once was when she found a suitable mate. The most devastating event in Sita's life was the death of her mother, but she is no longer devastated by this event now that she has found Ram to be her husband. They give up their enjoyment to ensure the well-being of others. Even though Ram knows that using Asuraastra will result in a fourteen-year exile into the woods, he nonetheless uses it to defend Mithila from Raavan's abuse. In order to live with him in the woods and protect Ram, Sita also gave her life. They have therefore supported one another. If one could meet a spouse who shares their goal and passion, life would become simpler. As a result, Sita's representation in *Sita: Warrior of Mithila* and the *Ramayana* diverge greatly. Changing and adapting to a new culture opens the door for positive interpersonal interactions and aids in the dismantling of social taboos. Writing fiction undergoes this transformation due to cultural shifts. Every age has a distinct set of political and cultural elements. In his book, *Scion of Ikshvaku*, "she is not just a princess who dresses up and behaves conventionally or craves for jewels or fineries and a good place to live in. She has her point of view and fights when needed; she is a mixture of beauty, brain, and bravery. She is a chivalric warrior, a qualified soldier on the battlefield, Her warrior's body carried the proud scars from battle wounds" (Tripathi, 2015: 192). She is a competent and seasoned diplomat who approaches diplomatic issues with pragmatism, focus, and familiarity. Being an insider in politics, she understood the importance and consequences of political alliances. Ayodhya, the Sapt-ruler, wished to build an alliance with a small kingdom like Mithila, but she did not understand why. Marriages were also a method to forge these alliances. A day before the Swayamwar, the tradition of choosing one's future bride voluntarily, she questioned: "You are Ayodhya, the overlord of Sapt Sindhu. I am only Mithila, a small kingdom with little power. What purpose can be served by this alliance" (Tripathi, 2015: 201).

As a result of societal shifts, Tripathi presents Sita as an entirely new character. Sita and her mother, Sunaina, are not only capable of establishing their country, but so are Samichi, the police, and Mithila's protocol. King Janak is portrayed as an uninterested philosophical bookworm with little interest in politics. Sunaina and later Sita primarily manage Mithila's politics, with the king relying entirely on his wife and having deep faith in her. When Sita becomes prime minister, she demonstrates the abilities required of a political leader. She shows interest in issues and possesses the skills to solve any problem. When Ravan attacks Mithila,

she immediately responds to protect the soldiers and plans a retaliatory strike on the army of Sri Lanka. A similar situation arises from her uncle Kushadhwaj's covert assault plot. Sita has various ideas to grow Mithila's economy and is capable of leading the nation. While military strength is vital for a nation, economic strength is essential for further growth. Sita succeeds in adopting the slum dwellers' way of life, constructing housing for them, and providing opportunities for agricultural livelihoods. She is fair to all of them. Sita tells, "We must help the poor. And we can generate so many jobs with this project, making many more people productive locally. That is a good thing" (Tripathi, 2017: 110).

In, *Scion of Ikshvaku*, As prime minister of Mithila, Sita is a law-abiding person with innate leadership qualities. To accomplish her objectives, though, she could choose a different route. She is also skilled at managing a wide range of interpersonal situations. She enjoys going on wild boar hunts in the forests. Following her rejection by Ram, Surpanakha tried to kill Sita with a sword, but she was driven back after a duel prevented her from succeeding. Samichi, the chief of Mithila's police and protocol division and a sturdy soldier whose body can withstand wounds from valiant battles, is a great counterpoint for Sita. The foster father, King Janaka, is the biological father of Urmila, Sita's sister. Rama's brother Lakshmana receives Urmila as a bride. Since Urmila shares her husband's sleep, it is implied that Lakshmana kills Meghnath, since the tale says that only a man who hasn't slept in fourteen years could murder Meghnath. Therefore, it is evident that Urmila is assigned a supporting position in the epic, with Sita playing a larger part than her sister Urmila. In this instance, Urmila is represented as a lively, exquisitely attractive young princess who isn't afraid to speak her thoughts. She does not wish to live in a fantasy or any other kind of delusion. She gives off the impression of being a person who elegantly acknowledges and accepts her circumstances, whether it be that she must play second fiddle to her adopted sister Sita or that her husband would always put his brotherly responsibilities before of hers. However, instead of letting this bring her down, she returns the favour by giving her loved one's courage.

Furthermore, Tripathi introduces other female characters in the story who play diverse roles, contributing to a more comprehensive exploration of women in the narrative. Each character possesses unique strengths, weaknesses, and perspectives, adding depth to the overall portrayal of gender dynamics. Given that Kaikeyi is physically stronger than Dasharatha, it is said that she serves as his shield. Her bravery in saving her husband

during the Battle of Karchapa had a significant impact on the future of the Sapt Sindhu Empire. She is the cause of Ram's "vanvas" and desires for her son to rule as king. This demonstrates the strength of character a woman may possess when it comes to standing up for her partner or child.

Thus, Amish's *Sita: The Warrior of Mithila* can be seen as a journey into the consciousness of Indian womanhood. In this narrative, Sita becomes a symbol and epitome of women's progress and spiritual awakening. Her character has evolved through many narrow alleys and lanes to reach this point, demonstrating gradual progress in each successive version of the *Ramayana* and critical works based on it. Valmiki's *Ramayana* and Amish's *Sita: The Warrior of Mithila* stand as two extremes, representing inception and destination. Valmiki's *Ramayana* poses the questions, while Amish's work seeks to provide the solutions. This research paper aims to describe Sita's journey between these two extremes by exploring the layers of history, customs, myths, and anecdotes related to her.

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