



THE PORTRAYAL OF SITA BY KAMBAR AND AMISH TRIPATHI: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Ramayana is one of the two greatest ancient epics of India. Sita , the female character portrayed in this epic is not just a character who represents female gender in an epic, but, she is considered as an emblem of female and spousal virtues which is still believed in India. This paper focuses on the aspect that the two different way of portrayal by two different writers of India. One is Kambar, an ancient Tamil poet who lived in 12th century and the other one is Amish Tripathi , a famous living writer in Maharashtra ,India. According to Kambar's Ramayana(in Tamil) which is also known as Ramavataram, Sita is known for her extraordinary beauty and desirable feminine nature whereas the same Sita is portrayed in a different light as fearless warrior of Mithila in Amish Tripathi's Sita: Warrior of Mithila .

Key Words: Sita, Feminine Virtues , Masculine, Warrior

INTRODUCTION

Sita, according to Indian minds, was a traditional woman who lived for her husband Rama who is believed to be the incarnation of Vishnu and Krishna according to Hindu mythology and an exemplary women role for every Indian women. Sita is also believed as an avatar of Sri Lakshmi, the Hindu goddess who symbolizes prosperity, good character, good fortune, success, and happiness. The portrayal of Sita in Kamba *Ramayana* represents her as an esteemed woman and the paragon of spousal and feminine virtues for all women.

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Sita's sacrifices and actions were most often portrayed in her personal capacity rather than an ideal queen or a powerful governance figure. Her character reaches the peak and receives the height of admiration when she renounces her Queenwood and gets herself ready for the exile from Ayodhya with her husband Rama. She wants to perform her spousal duties when her husband is in unpleasant condition while the exile was only meant for Rama. Sita was abducted while she stepped out of the Lakshmana Rekha which is a line drawn by Lakshmana around the abode in which he lives with his brother Rama and Rama's wife Sita at Panchavati in the forest of Dandakaranya to give alms to Ravana disguised as a Brahmin.

Alms giving to Brahmin was a desirable and necessitated one in those times and also considered as more of a duty to be performed, rather than an optional charitable act. Sita overstep the limit marked by Lakshmana for her safety in their (Lakshmana and Rama) absence not to disregard Lakshmana but to perform her duty as a woman even she is not having any queenly powers and luxuries.

Kambar takes Sita's role forward with this behavior. Sita's virtues meant to not hurt anyone in anyway but when she crosses the safety line she literally disobeys the instructions given by Lakshmana. Ravana the king of Lanka who is a kshatriya but came disguised as a Brahmin with an evil intention of kidnapping her to his place. Through analyzing the nature of Sita's character one can say that she might have done (must have given the alms) the same if she already knew that the person asking for alms is not a real Brahmin. This shows her stubbornness in fulfilling her duties in any condition.

It is mentioned in *Ramayana* that the reason for Ravana's intention to abduct Sita in an undesirable and cunning way was not just to take revenge over Rama but Sita's exceptional beauty is the main cause which attracted Ravana to commit such a shoddy crime. So, her physical appearance apart from her virtues also highlighted in this context. Also, the act of Sita's refusal to come back with Hanuman to her husband explains her mind that she did not want to escape like an ordinary kidnapped women longing to run away when she get a chance. This shows how much a strong mind she possesses and her self dignity too.

After Sita's redeem from Ravana's custody, she had to endure a chastity test in which she had to walk through the fire in order to prove her purity to the world. She withstood this stage and she was brought back to Ayodhya kingdom. Throughout Kamba Ramayana Sita is portrayed as an extraordinarily beautiful woman and a woman with all the possible virtues on Earth prescribed for a female from childhood and a woman as a wife. All her key aspects are shown in a favourable light, not as a head of state, but as an ideal woman in Tamil Poet Kambar's *Ramayana*.



In Contrast, if not entirely, to a certain extent, Sita is portrayed as a strapping warrior of Mithila by Amish Tripathi in his famous work *Sita: Warrior of Mithila*. The story is entirely centered on the character Sit a, whereas ,the Kamba Ramayana is centered on many aspects and virtues of Rama and other characters which also include Sita as one among the others. The story completely revolves around different phases of Sita's life from infancy to her endeavour as the seventh Vishnu.

The plot opens with a trip of Janak, the king of Mithila and his wife Sunaina find a child on their way in the forest, being protected by a vulture (form the attack of a group of fox).They understood by seeing her condition that she was abandoned here for some days in the forest and wonder that she was resisting the dangers around her and the starvation which proves that she is more than an extraordinary human soul. They rescue her and adopt the child and name her Sita, for she was found in a furrow.

Growing up Sita was sent to the ashram of Rishi Shvetaketu for her studies. There she learnt about martial arts and gained knowledge on different subjects. Impressed by Sita's skills and knowledge, Rishi Shvetaketu elects her as the seventh Vishnu but asked her to keep it a secret. Sunaina , Sita's mother, the Queen of Mithila is another strong women in this work. She was an important source of Sita's inspiration, strength and courage. Mother Sunaina encourages her Whenever Sita felt weak at heart as it can be seen in the below quote,

“Running away is never the solution. Confront your problems. Manage them. That is the way of the warrior.’ Sunaina lifted Sita’s chin and looked into her eyes. ‘And, you are a warrior. Don’t ever forget that.’ (Tripathi 64)”.

After Sita's return to Mithila, she bereaved with her mother Sunaina's death. She also had to take care of her younger sister Urmila. With Janakwas being more engrossed in spiritual work, Sita was made the prime minister of Mithila. She proved herself as an able administrator and made many reforms in the kingdom with the help of her childhood friend Samichi, who served as the chief of the police force. After Mithila's financial conditions stabilized, Sita visited the Malayaputra capital city of Agastyakootam to continue training for becoming the next Vishnu. Then, Sita happened to meet Rama, the prince of Ayodhya and gets the intension of marrying him for some reasons which include strengthening and protecting her kingdom and she believes that this marriage might help her in the endeavor of becoming seventh Vishnu. The lines in *Sita: Warrior of Mithila* explains all about the magnificence of Sita's nature as a whole as in the below quoted lines,

“Ram wanted to marry a woman in front of whom he would be compelled to bow his head in admiration” (Tripathi 210).



The above lines lucidly explains that how respectable and powerful woman Sita was. These all exhibits that Sita known for her valiant and strong hearted nature as female heir of the kingdom. Sita is shown in a different light in Tripathi's *Sita: Warrior of Mithila* as female with masculine power, whereas , she was portrayed an exemplary woman for the feminine qualities in Kambar's version of *Ramayana*.

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