

# Retelling of the Ramayana in The Voice of Sita - A Epic Revisiting in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *The Forest of Enchantment*

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## Abstract

*Epic and Myth has its significance and impact in Indian culture and writing all as the years progressed. The characters and the happenings in the novel have invigorated numerous readers and writers. Reinterpretation /Reevaluation and retelling have arisen in Literature, Re-telling Myth in unique perspective view has become a pattern lately. Drawing out the unseen perspectives of the characters in prewritten text, have impacted numerous in all dialects. The large portion of retelling folklore in current scenario isn't on men rather on women's Perspective. Most of the stories that rotates around the female characters and their perspective on the happenings. Among numerous Indian writers, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is one who gives voice in the predominant man patriarchal culture/society.*

*The Forest OF Enchantments by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is about the retelling of our old lofty epic of The Ramayana according to Sita's perspective. This novel brims the Sita who is a celebrated female character from an ancient India to Modern India. In this way, Divakaruni has changed her perspective from conventional depiction of basic and selfless women into Modern day female characters that is looking for their Self Identity in the male patriarchal world.*

**Keywords:** Retelling, Myth Celebration, Cultural Embodiment, Feminine Identity, Interspersion, etc.

## Introduction

India is a place that is known for culture and solid convictions in notion, protecting and applauding the culture is esteem in all countries. Indian Literature is a brimming with depiction of the myths and legends, myths are one of the fragments which serves to decide the Indianness in Indian Literature. In English literature, the utilization of myth is an old tradition. Retelling of mythical stories and revisionist concentrates on mythical stories and mythical characters have now become another field of investigation. Writers started to break down mythical stories with feministic, cultural, and psycho analytic methodologies. New interpretations are made on the great incomparable Indian epic *The Mahabharatam* stories and characters. The women characters of the epic introduced as an ideal epitome of persistence and resilience. Yet, women are kept at the peripheral level of the social ladder. Their existence of women in the society is disregarded and stifled. However, the contemporary writers recreated or reproduced, reconsidered, reclassified the female characters and give them another voice, by making them rigid, stubborn and independent/free.

Indian myths are not merely simple tales and stories but rather they hold moral instructions and helps in disclosure of real approach to get solace. The study of mythology is presently not looked as a departure from reality to the world brimming with fantasy however an excursion in look for more prominent comprehension about the universe.

A myth goes about as an educator and preaches man how to carry on with an honorable/noble life and go about as a guide. It clarifies problem and issues of life through epics legends, adventures and folktales. The reality of Hindu culture lies in the Vedic writings, puranas, kaavyas, epics like *The Ramayana* and *The Mahabharatam*. These antiquated stories dazzle both the writers and readers. It welcomes into a fascinated universe of imaginary fantasy. Especially in India, myths followed as a bunch of standards which conditions life. It holds traditional accepts cultural qualities, customs and tales. They generally fill in as incredible model for man and rouse man for a significant and meaningful life. They impact the social, cultural and psychological aspect of man. The utilization of myth in literature lies in the solid accepts that myth is encapsulation of unadulterated fact of the matter.

### Literature Review

Amrita Satapathy in her book review she states, We have all been aware of Ramayana's various versions- the Tulsidas version, the Valmiki version, the Amar Chitra Katha version, the Ramlila versions, or the popular 80's serialised version. And here comes Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's version of Ramayana in the form of '*The Forest of Enchantments* in 2019. The book- this Sitayan, comes at a very crucial juncture when the idea of femininity and womanhood is at the crossroads because it informs us all what it is to be a woman —I bless my daughters who are yet unborn. I pray that, if life tests them- as sooner or later life is bound to do- they'll be able to stand steadfast and think carefully, using their hearts as well as their heads, understanding when they need to compromise, and knowing when they must not. This book is for all to read and understand the unsung heroes of Ramayana- Sita and her ilk. It is a window into the layered world of femininity.

### Sita's Perspective and Foresightedness

Human Beings in general to revisit the Past in look for the real world and truth. Since Past consistently vows to show the correct way. Myth and Feminism are the not the new one in modern phenomenon. They have revolutionary/progressive past and potential to direct the future. In Indian Epics, *The Ramayana* and *The Mahabharata* staunch

to life and deeds of different Vishnu's incarnation in particular Rama and Krishna respectively. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's novel mirrors the role rehearsal of Indian women from the traditional mythicised one to the upgraded one of modernity, emancipation, liberation, innovation and the resultant changes in the social set up. Divakaruni's significant theme fixated on her craving to examine the character of South Asian women so she has made another resilient woman in her books. As an Indian woman she has highly attracted and impacted by Indian mythology especially Indian epic *The Ramayanam* and *The Mahabharatam*. A study of fascinating universe of myth offers information to the base of society and it makes individuals aware of their religion, social traditions, and customs lifestyle. Divakaruni's *The Forest of Enchantment* is tied in with retelling of *The Ramayana* according to Sita's point of view. She plainly depicts the personality of Sita as a contemporary lady. Sita is a protagonist of Ramayana. The popular Indian culture has mainstream in society showed Sita as a submissive, quiet, delicate, delicate, tolerant, selflessness, who is bearing hardship however Divakaruni's *The Forest of Enchantment* set Sita into an different spectrum of light. In order to showcase Sita in a different ideology, the author deploys Sita's narratorial voice to near the modern times reader. In contemporary Indian fiction the self- identity or self-revelation is an inescapable one. The Modern writers have paved a new way from the portrayal of depicting traditional women yet still they are looking for their identity.

Banerjee has demonstrated Sita to be a strong individual who confronted her difficulties with solid keenness and presence of mind. She has transformed the picture of Sita from a meek to a rebel and warrior. However Sita is a goddess, a incarnations of the goddess Lakshmi, yet she has depicted the personality of Sita as a human, with the human failings and consequently it is relatable. The novel doesn't just re-recount the tale of Sita, yet it depicts the other women characters of the epic, which were either disregarded or neglected in the original epic. Sita has given an different spectacle of view to those women characters and have shown that their feelings and expectations were enormously misconstrued or enunciated in an wrong way. We discover the

personality of Sunaina, who was an witty, insightful and capable pioneer who guided lord Janaka with his question of court issues. We find the character of Urmila who draws our most extreme compassion. Her dreams about having a prosperous marriage life were broken to pieces when Lakshman deserted her for a very long time to be with Rama. The character of Kaikeyi and Surpanakha has likewise been depicted from an alternate perspective than the typical detestable opinions that individuals have about them.

In this Novel Divakaruni presents Sita, who lost everything aside from her infants. In Valmiki's Hermitage Sita has been living with her kids, there she enthusiastically sees a composition of The Ramayana which has given by Valmiki, she lauded Valmiki who clearly caught the portrayal of adventures, histories, weddings, treacheries, demise, and farewells/goodbyes. Valmiki got that load of things from his heavenly vision like John Milton who composed the First completed English Epic The Paradise Lost. Sita endeavors hard to make her voice so she got some information from Valmiki about her part, which nobody knows,

“I couldn't keep the anger from my voice, ‘What occurred When I was alone in the darkness, under a sorrow tree, you don't know. You don't know my despair, you don't even know my exhilaration, how it felt - first in the forest and then in Ayodhya – when I was the most beloved women in creation’ ”. (FOE.2)

The sage commented that it was Sita herself who knew all the sufferings she confronted and she was the one in particular who could do justice/equity to her own story. Not just Sita alone expounded on her own sufferings and hopelessness, she likewise re-recounted the accounts of other women characters who had been misjudged, misconstrued or regularly neglected or accused, or who had never been thought widely. These women characters in particular Sunaina, Urmila, Kaikeyi, Surpanakha, Ahalya, Mandodari and so on demands Sita to retell their accounts also:

“But as I dipped my quill into the inkpot, they rose inside me. Voices. Some clamouring, some tentative, some whispering, so that I had to still my breath to hear them. Kaikeyi, second queen of Ayodhya, who wrested our throne from us out

of blind devotion to her son, only to be hated by him for it; Ahalya, her beauty turned to stone by a husband's jealous fury; Surpanakha, wild enchantress of the forest, whose gravest crime was to desire the wrong man; Mandodari, wife to the legendary demon king, forced to watch her kingdom fall into ruin and her beloved son perish because of her husband's obsession with another woman; Urmila, my sweet sister, the forgotten one, the one I left behind as I set off with blithe ignorance on my forest adventure with my husband.

Write our story too. For always we've been pushed into corners, trivialized, misunderstood, blamed, forgotten- or maligned and used as cautionary tales.

‘Yes,’ I said to them. ‘Yes, I'll write your stories as best as I can, for without them, mine can't be complete.’ (FOE.4)

The justification of the author clearly legitimizes about Sita's portrayal of her story herself, this portrayal of the protagonist recount the traditional *Ramayana* into present day or Modern Sita. Sita knows about the knowledge of various subjects, she is a specialist in conjugal expressions since her mother sovereign Sunaina feels that each young lady ought to learn. Sita is completely unique in relation to her sister Urmila. Urmila consistently needs to play with toys and partial in fond to gems yet. Sita is one of the keen spectators of her father's decision, her mother who is a guiding counsellor to her father. Sita figured out how to manage the irksome situation, from watching the choice of her father. Sita enjoyed the journey through excursion with nature, she needed to feel the plants by touching, and she can feel the mending properties of that plant even she can hear the sound, hints of plants. she could recuperate any plant with her phenomenal touch. She likewise inspected the wiped out individuals and assisted them with recuperating. Individuals experiencing hopeless sicknesses would drag themselves to Mithila to meet her. Sita additionally wanted to visit the woodland, which consistently captivated her. She didn't prefer to cull the blossom as she suspected it was a sort of homicide and culled cautiously just the sprouts in case she was asked by the minister as a contribution to God. At the point when Sita was heading out to

Ayodhya after her union with Ram in a cart, she was bothered by the manner in which the fighters were annihilating the trees which came their direction. Banerjee additionally gives us occasions where Sita would lift up the Bow of Shiva (Haradhanu), which none of her admirers had the option to lift. She lifted the bow when no one was near and she doesn't tell anybody about it. She is very strong in this manner and extremely impressive, yet in her own tranquil manner, without making any quarrel about it.

Sita's life after marriage is certifiably not a cheerful one. In Ayodhya Kaikeyi who is the dearest spouse of ruler Dhasaradha, she got boons from her significant husband that Ram ought to go to the forest where he needs to live as loner hermit for a fourteen long years and Bharata will be a King of Ayodhya. Being a new bride of the hour, this makes her life confounded, Rama consented to go to the Forest, as he demanded Sita to remain with her mother in law since he felt it is excessively perilous for women to live in woods however out of the blue Sita raised her voice,

“I'm sorry', I said, very sweetly. I'm not going to be able to do that. You see, I'm going to the forest with you.' His brows snapped together. 'What folly is this? You can't possibly come with me. You're a woman. It's too dangerous. I won't allow it. I wanted to say not all women are weak and helpless like you think, for all you know, I might be of help to you". (FOE.111).

This choice taken by Sita without decision with anybody in the castle, the words of a young lady paralyzed everybody in the royal residence, then she goes with her Love to the Forest. By projecting this reality Divakaruni breaks the generalization and shows the energetic one of Sita.

During the Journey in the forest, Sita was stole by Ravan, an ruler of Lanka. She was dropped under Ashoka tree, he sends a huge number to demonesses in the region and keep Sita from getting away. Sita won't require his advances and keeps up with her modesty. There are so many women some spoke kindly and merciful, some addressed her impolitely. Sita realized that her Ram will come to lanka and rescue her from the misery, she keeps up faith with her confidence and trust in the castle. Under the Ashoka tree Sita is practicing about face Ravan, she recognizes,

“Allow him to pursue you and at the last moment, step sideways and bring up a knee in a sudden movement to the opponent's groin; when he doubles over, press your thumbs into his eyes to blind him. Or step back as though retreating, and when the opponent lunges at you hit his wind pipe with your hand, held straight as a knife, At the right angle, the impact will break his neck” (FOE 188).

Divakaruni shows Sita as very valiant who can endure any troublesome situation, she can without much of a stretch push ahead regardless of deterrents who never surrender, the fortitude that talks in her excursion regardless the expense our Indian women are doing. After numerous undertakings, the story paves the way to the fight among Rama and Ravana. At long last, Sita is saved and rescued from ravana. Rama summons sita yet rather than being happy at seeing Sita, he feels remorseful and shame in light of the fact that his better half has lived in the royal residence of another man, her virtue has been in doubt and she was questioned about. Sita is very much shattered by his words, she attempts a ordeal of fire to demonstrate her purity to Ram and his people. Sita calls upon Agni Bhagavan (the lord of fire) to affirm her purity and loyalty towards him. She said, “Brother in Law, I must ask you to do one last thing for me,' I said to lakshman, 'Build me a fire. There's nothing left for me on this earth now that my husband, Whom I love more than my own self who has been in my heart and in my prayers every single day since I was taken by Ravana, has shamed and rejected me so cruelly – for no fault of my own- in front of this entire assembly. Therefore, I've decided to end my life today.” (FOE 245)

Agni god perceiving Sita's purity will not devour her. Sita languished various abhorrences over no other reason than that she is Rama's better half yet Divakaruni's Sita strikes hard to make her voice wherein time to stand up and say enough. She has introduced Sita's agnipariksha scene is a snapshot of feminist splendor. At the point when Sita had given the fire-test and came out as pure and unadulterated, it likewise took colossal fortitude on her part to excuse Ram and get back to Ayodhya as his sovereign. It was a result of her affection for Ram that she had the option to persevere through the agony of doubt and dismissal and had the solidarity to excuse him: “love is the spade with which we bury, deep inside our

being, the things that we cannot bear to remember, cannot bear anyone else to know.” (246)

As a part of crushing the stereotypes, Divakaruni added numerous new measurements in the novel which add new highlights and features in the character of Sita. At the point when the fight among Rama and Ravana is finished, at last fourteen years after Dashrath's declaration of exile, Ram sat on the throne with his better half Sita. The tattles beginning once again there in Ayodhya which ruins the reputation or fame of Rama, so he provided an order to his younger brother Lakshman to drop Sita in the Forest, close to sage Valmiki's hermit without the knowledge of Sita. Ayodhya again exiled Sita into the Forest, Sita knows the injustice thus, she raised her voice indeed. Sita ordered Lakshman,

“You go back and tell him this, Lakshman. He sentenced me to banishment because people were whispering that I might have betrayed him. But he's the real betrayer, who's going to sentence him.” (FOE 317)

Sita strolled into to the forest, she observed the shortfall of boundaries and felt for her infants babies who are the most innocent creatures on the world. Later Sita understands the reality she will be a solitary individual to bring up her kids. During the difficult journey she is emotionally strong and boost her psychological strength ought to be lauded. She reflects, “I'll teach you what you need to know be good human beings, so that you'll never do to a woman what your father has done to me”. (FOE 317)

Sita and her children Lav and Kush lives in the shadows of the Forest. Sita never refreshed consistently grinned with her child's life which was difficult for her however she took care of her tough spot with trust. This shows that Sita is a female partner of preminent or Supreme Being, she is an encapsulation of boldness, soul, shrewdness, sympathy, and perseverance. We would thus be able to see Sita will reverberation in the present contemporary time.

### Conclusion

Divakaruni's The Forest of Enchantment shows Sita as a strong, resilient, positive, symbol of love, courageous. This courage that has been reflected

for centuries in the lives of women. Divakaruni's protagonists not only searching for their identity but they create selfidentity. This novel chooses as its medium one of the most extra ordinary woman character of Indian Mythologies, Sita creates everlasting impression in the minds of the readers and showing the path for all women. Sitayan celebrates womanhood. All the marginalized voices, irrespective of their social background, merge together and form a sense of interconnectedness. The novel urges the women community to safeguard their honour and dignity and requests them to be selective while sacrificing their lives for their loved ones.

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