

**Delineating Indian Ethos through the Revisitation of Mythology
in Amish Tripathi's *Sita- Warrior of Mithila***

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Abstract

Indian feminism started with the abolition of Sati and has come a long way past several hurdles. Indian Feminism is unique in India and began from the time of Savitribai Phule and Pandita Ramabai fighting for the abolishing the custom of child marriage and 'disfiguring' of widows; introducing the marriage of upper caste Hindu widows, promoting women's education, obtaining legal rights for women to own property, and requiring the law to acknowledge women's status by granting them basic rights in matters such as adoption. There has been a lot of change in the status of women, but patriarchy still exists in open and hidden ways and the ramification of these age old traditions need to change in the society. The feminist views of many Indian women writers have changed and their works reveal the impact of the diasporic, post colonial, artistic and economic dimensions. This paper examines *Sita-Warrior of Mithila* as an iconic landmark in establishing the dominant role played by women since ages, etched in mythological works of India.

The origin of the word Myth is from the Greek word mythos which means 'Story' or 'Word'. Myth is symbolic tales of the far-flung past; and Mythology is the study of myths. In Indian context, Mythology is perhaps the most prominent and admired by every generation and genre. Indian civilization scaffolds mythology with great tradition and heritage. The ethnicity of this country is profusely spruced up with a lot of myths. It has produced great epics of the world, i.e. Ramayana and Mahabharata which invariably preach the principles of life to the people. Indian English writers are influenced by the myths carried on from ancient time thus trying to preserve the cultural heritage and religious beliefs.

Since ages, women and girls always had to fight to affirm their identity and acquire their fundamental and inalienable rights in male-dominated societies. If we look back, in the

United States and in most Western countries confrontation movements against the patriarchal system, popular as feminism movement, began to spread in the mid twentieth century, and had immense impact on societies. Feminist movements could fetch right to vote and reproductive rights, and opened the door for women to enter the job market and to own properties. However, the then black and Latino women, including some white women, viewed feminism as a movement of privileged middle-class white women who were completely ignorant of the plight of black people.

According to Thomas Mann, “the myth is the foundation of life; it is the timeless schema, the pious formula into which life flows when it reproduces its traits out of the unconscious”.

Thomas Mann emphasizes the transcendental and eternal characteristic of myth. Mann refers to myth as an inevitable reference to which a man turns to, when in need of a system to universalize his personal predicament.

Mythology blended work Sita- Warrior of Mithila is an epitome in transforming the outlook of scores of readers towards women. It holds equally good for rewiring the psychology of women of all ages.

Indian mothers train, protect and guide their daughters in all their endeavors. With their mother’s guidance and emotional support, they internalize their femininity. Thus the new version of Sita is a juxtaposition that will provide women a scope relook at mythology in fresh perspective.

Every one gains knowledge as Sigmund Freud says: “Widely different sources, from fairy tales and myths, jokes and witticisms, from folklore . . . sayings and songs of different people and from poetic and colloquial usage of language”.

Amish Tripathi became a household name in Indian literature after his “The Shiva Trilogy”, when the first of the three-book series released in February 2010. The series went

on to be a huge commercial success, earning the author accolades from mythology lovers all over the world. The “Ram Chandra Series”, is Amish’s second (and on going) project. As the name declares, this series is an account of the Ramayana, with a dedicated book each for the life stories of Ram, Sita and the Raavan. While the books focus on one character at a time, they are also a progressive rendition of the Ramayana. *The Scion of Ikshvaku* (June, 2015) and *Sita - Warrior of Mithila* (May, 2017) are the two books from this series, presently. The third book, *Raavan - Orphan of Aryavarta*, is expected to release in mid-2019.

The mythological attribute to the name ‘Sita’ is known to all in the society as the Goddess, wife of Lord Rama, who faces trials and tribulations. Sita has acquired emblematic stance, for patiently bearing and partaking all her suffering in life. Her long wait, symbolizes several things. First, she is waiting for something magical to happen in her life.

The best thing about the book *Sita-Warrior of Mithila* is the portrayal of Sita. This is something which draws one ‘thinking’ reader to the book again and again this is something which is similar to the portrayal of the valiant Sati from the Shiva Trilogy. Dauntless, sharp, patriotic and lionhearted, Sita is a “warrior” in the true sense of the word. She is Mithila’s Prime Minister, Mithila being her father’s (King Janak’s) kingdom. She then marries Prince Ram of Ayodhya and has to live in exile for 14 years with her husband and brother-in-law Lakshman. The plot gives a detailed account of their period of exile, ending with Sita being kidnapped by Raavan. The numerous incidents that take place during the 13 years of exile, before the kidnapping of Sita, are important and emotional, with each event connecting the reader more with the characters.

In *The Consciousness of Myth* Durkheim points out that “the function of myths is to bind a society, create a structure governed by rules and habits.” Similarly, Mark Schorer defines its comparative basis when he says, “Myth is fundamental, the dramatic representation of our deepest instinctual life of a primary awareness of man in the Universe, of many configurations upon which all particular opinions and attitudes depend.”

In the aforementioned context, though there are many versions of the Ramayana and scores of authors have attempted to retell this mighty Indian epic, Amish Tripathi's *the Ram Chandra series* undoubtedly stands out. The reason is author's perception of the Ramayana. The central theme of the book is categorized as the quest for identity, penance, bonding, marriage, chaos and dilemma. Sita is unlike other novels female protagonists who fail to establish their identity in the framework of a male dominated society as a wife, professional etc.

The author is passionate about history, mythology and philosophy and this resonates in all his writings. As myths were unconscious responses to external stimuli; they tend to remain as deposits in the collective unconscious, forming the very basis of life. They perch as a strong motivating force in the mainstream consciousness and shape one's reactions to the happenings around. Therefore, people respond to them even when their scientific knowledge and reason oppose them as irrational and supernatural. Thus, Sita in *Sita-Warrior of Mithila*, is the one who makes things happen – she marries the man she chooses; she strategizes. In short, she chooses what she wants. Another noteworthy aspect is Sita is not depicted in terms of physical appearance but portrayed as a brave statesmanship.

Myths remain as residues in the unconscious not only of the individual but a community or nation, thus shaping their characteristics. Myths are induced with a sense of dynamism, being the integral components of human civilization, helping in creation and maintenance of codes of belief, faith in rituals and tenets of morality exhibited in religious faith, cultural behaviour and social attitudes. It would not be an exaggeration to say that the essence of a society is myth.

The author retells Ramayana like no other. While he clearly mentions its fiction, one cannot help but wonder if this is what really happened. The simple and lucid way in which everything is explained, every minute detail covered, the smallest facts helping in weaving an intricate tale is the author's signature style. To many, the author comes across as a meticulous organizer of facts and stories. As we all know, in the end, it not that the story is told but when and how the story told. The timing of every event is always perfect and thrilling. There are no

parts in the book which seem extended or dragged. Rather, the diction is quite succinct and the description wholesome.

E.M.W Tillyard refers to Myths as narratives and says that they represent: Universal instinct of any group, large or small, to invest, almost always unconsciously, certain stories or events or places or persons, real or fictional with an uncommon significance to turn them into instinctive center of references.

Myth shapes reader's life, thought, and social, religious, and moral attitudes. The understanding of myth in literature is of utmost importance. A myth gets retold; it gets adapted or elaborated, taking different forms in literature. In the process of rumination, myth can be studied as a symbol, an allegory or a concept. The myth gives numerous connotations to suit the changing order of the society. The writer's consciousness does not merely follow the antique identity but becomes 'the identity'. The difference between the two is annihilated. Depiction of characters of mythology or even mythical consciousness, therefore gains not only deeper significance, but, transcendental characteristics.

A touch of the past will be guiding and forming man's responses. The recurrent motifs in man's dreams, which are dregs of the past, are called the archetypal motifs. They are the products of all patterns of human mind, governed by tradition, migration and heredity. These archetypes are not like the inanimate objects, they are very powerful and autonomous, rising up at their own will, with no logical explanation being affordable. Thus, the revisiting of mythology with thrust of Sita as a warrior is certain to leave an indelible imprint on the modern readers across borders. It is bound to establish Indian Women as strong and emancipated unlike the meek docile who crowd the canvas.

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