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Fusing the Mythological with the Contemporary: A Study of the Revisionist Version of Sita in Amish Tripathis *Sita: Warrior of Mithila*

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Abstract: ***Sita: Warrior of Mithila (2017), the second book in the Ramachandra series by Amish Tripathi, is a true representative of the genre of revisionist writings. Using the technique of hyperlink, the author portrays Valmiki's leading lady as a fierce woman unlike other versions of the classical text wherein the character of Sita is docile and much more suppressed without a voice of her own. She is practical and intelligent and has the habit of taking decisions on her own during her adolescence. She is completely opposed to the caste system practised in India that acts as a hindrance in the progress of the country where people blindly follow the rigid caste system, giving utmost importance to their caste and not to their skills or karmas. Tripathi projects the carefree and adventurous character of Sita skilled in various arts. Relationship between nature and Sita is depicted in most of the chapters wherein nature is shown as the protector as well as the destroyer.***
This paper is an attempt to study the revisionist portrayal of Sita as projected by Amish Tripathi and the various ways this portrayal is different from the various other portrayals of Sita in other contemporary revisionist texts.
Keywords:
- ***Dharma***
- ***Nation***
- ***Complexion***
- ***Nature***
- ***Caste system***
- ***Patriarchy***

I. INTRODUCTION

In this paper we see how Amish Tripathy has constructed an entirely new image of Sita that is potent enough in every aspect of becoming a great warrior. Born to be an exceptional warrior, destined to be a goddess here begins the rise of a child amidst the mystic land of Mithila. Amish Tripathy's novel Sita the warrior of Mithila brings forth the unseen and unheard voice behind the brutal fate of Lanka. Valmiki's Ramayana was written around 300 B.C.E with Ram as the hero and Sita as the hero's wife. Tripathy make its readers aware of the hidden secrets behind the birth of the great Vishnu who fought for its empire alongside the Malayaputras. The undeviating nucleus of the story Ramayana by Tripathy rests on Sita's journey from her infancy to her youth. Bestowed with the ardour of a warrior she was no less than any man of her kingdom in fact she exhibited the militant qualities of a soldier which she inherited from her mother Sunaina along with the masterly account of philosophy from her father Janaka. Unlike in other exegesis of the Ramayana Amish moulds the character of Sita in such a way that it is nearly impossible to view the text without her presence. The entire plot of the story revolves around Sita who is pronounced the seventh Vishnu by sage Vishwamitra due to her enthusiasm for the outdoors that was truly extraordinary. At the age of ten her intelligence and sharpness made her stand magnificent among the rest of the students at sage Shvetaketu's gurukul but in order to give the story a more natural form Tripathy also writes about one such weakness of Sita that demands to be controlled. He tells about the spirited temperament of her character that created problems in various phases of her life. Since her adolescence she went under strict training for impulsive control and non violence as Shvetaketu along with many others believed that Sita was One among the rest as she inherited all the qualities which must be present in a warrior who fights for the nation but somehow these qualities were restricted by the very force of anger which corrupted all the good that she possessed. The imagery of nature through the depiction of vulture as the saviour of Sita in second chapter portrays how cosmic forces too were reluctant to save her from the malicious forces.

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Here the emergence of vulture plays a significant role as vulture being a part of nature protected Sita from the pack of wolves therefore vulture was the first motherly figure to Sita who saved her life and also later this motherly figure was replaced by Jatayu whom Sita considered as a brother and who also helped Sita in every step she took as a Vishnu. Vulture acting as the saviour is no different in Sita's context as the same act of kindness was shown by another kettle of vulture that saved Shakuntala the daughter of Meneka as the latter threw away her newly born girl child which was then saved and raised by them. Another instance where nature is shown as the protector for Sita is when Sunaina takes her last ride on elephants with Sita and gives an example of the death of a matriarch in the elephant herds who was dead and was mourned over by her children especially the youngest baby elephant who denied to leave the presence of his mother's body but was carried away by the elder one in order to move ahead in life. Her mother's lesson on elephant herds gave her solace by making her believe and accept the reality which required her to be strong not for herself but with people with whom she associated her entire life. Nature acts as a preserver for Sita and various other characters in the text as most of them harmonize with their personal agonies only when they come in the direct contact with it. The very solution to the muddled mind set of most of the characters come to rest only in the presence of nature.

Tripathy has portrayed an unconventional way of reasoning through Sita which not just raise brows to then existing social norms of society based on caste system but also addresses a very crucial topic of our times where a person's caste is ascribed by birth and not by his karma giving rise to an utter depletion of man force in various fields where each of them are craving to achieve the highest position that helps them to rise in society and bring forth better prospects in their lives giving rise to individual interest rather than community based interest further leading to the downfall of the entire nation. This opposition towards the rigid caste system is not only seen through the eyes of Sita but also sage Vishwamitra who was initially born in the family of a Khatriya but gave up his title to become a brahmin in order to follow the path of spirituality. Vishwamitra stated that caste must be prescribed to a person based on his/her karma or the skills which they carry but when said that children must be given to the nation as they are born so as to provide them with good training to analyze the set of skills they are best at in order to provide them with the right caste and the nation with the best men at work that will help the country to progress. At this point Sita's disapproval to Vishwamitras idea shows her individuality and how she is empowered with the voice of her own in a patriarchal society where women were given not much importance on their views over the nation and their contribution.

Unlike in other texts where image of Sita and Ram is portrayed to be either milky white or is given least importance Amish colors both the characters in whitish brown shade which suggests their ethnicity and also how complexion or the color of a person plays a major role in their lives. Here we see that along with the behaviour of the characters it is also the complexion that is given utmost importance as we get to know that Sita is attracted to the whitish complexion of Ram when she first sees him as it is this what separates him from all the others similarly Ram too is highly enchanted by Sita's code of conduct along with her brown complexion and the scars she carries on her arm from her fights which earlier she saw as a huge drawback but then became an important aspect for Ram's admire for her. Moving ahead in the story Amish brings real life nuances in his story where we find Sita entrapped within the idea of being the right one for the stature of Vishnu or not which is also visible in common man's life. She is doubtful of her ability to become a Vishnu wherein each time she is convinced by either Communicate with parents, regulatory bodies and the public communicate with parents, regulatory bodies and the public Vishwamitra, Jatayu or by her mother of the enormous strength she carries to bring a new dawn in the history of Bharat. The interweaving of the plot with several other stories which is also called hyperlink helps the reader to understand the underlying reason behind Vishwamitras decision to make Sita the seventh Vishnu. We see both kindness and envy working on the same platform as Sita being the product of an act of kindness as well as the way to quench one's envy is vividly portrayed by the character of Vishwamitra.

According to the statistics all human beings suffer from some sort of fear and women are more likely to fall under such traps to which Sita was no different. She suffered from nyctophobia which is evident in the book though it is difficult to come to such a conclusion as the writer has portrayed the image of Sita in a way that defies all odds yet in a particular section of the book we realise that it is the past memory of Sita that haunts her even when she is a fully grown women and what is more interesting that it is not only Sita but Jatayu as well who suffers from post traumatic disorder. In both cases the memories of the past restricts the characters to fully evolve from the happenings for which they held themselves responsible causing hindrances in their present decisions. Also we see that abiding by the rules of dharma was seen fluctuating in various instances as Vishwamitra choose to use Daivi-Astra through Rama in order to fight against the forces of Ravana despite of having a fully fledged knowledge about the repercussions of using it. The diplomatic behaviour of some of the significant characters builds the plot in a more complex form where on one hand the characters desire to work on the betterment of the nation but on the other hand they also seek for their own selfish interests to which only one character seems to justify being a true patriotic and that is Sita.

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A recurrent theme of crime towards women, women empowerment, caste-issues, equality, feminism are being raised in the text which also are deeply concerned with the present scenario where people misinterpret the real meaning of feminism, equality, caste, class, gender etc. Such discourses are witnessed between various intervals within the text where we not just observe women characters discussing about the same but also male characters like Bharat, Ram talking in favor of women without any prejudices. Amish gave the character of Sita a powerful voice that cannot be unheard. The image of sweet submissive Sita is shown thrashing the rigid conventional norms by the patriarchal society where women were confined to the domestic space and men were in charge of the outside world**.** The rebellious nature of Sita is what makes her different from the rest of the characters her ability to take wise decisions even at the time of adversity is what contributes to her intelligence and her patriotism towards the growth of Bharat is what gives her a special stature in the society. Her inquisitiveness from an early age and a desire to discover her individuality is remarkable. Despite of the constant threat being imposed on her and her beloved Rama she was ready to take up the most dangerous journey of her life so as to honour her husband's ideology of following the path of dharma without fail which was an exile for fourteen years from Ayodhya which resulted in the abduction of Sita by Ravana. Also the conventional story of Sita's abduction is not followed by Tripathy as in this text we see that unlike in previous texts where Ravana transforms into a sage that arrives to the doorsteps of Sita's hut for bhiksha and then abducts her, here in the text by Amish we see that Ravana directly comes in contact with Sita along with his brother Kumbhakaran and also Jatayu along with his two other men are present to witness this atrocious act by the King of Lanka.

II. CONCLUSION

To conclude we may say that Amish Tripathy has brought us a brand new image of Sita that demands for equal rights to men and is considered to be the nucleus of the entire story of Ramayana. It is she who sacrificed everything for family, husband, friends and nation without seeking her own interest. This powerful image of Sita by the author defies the existing patriarchal norms that confines women within the domestic sphere. The very ideas discussed within the text are also evident in the present scenario where we still face differences based on gender, caste, class, color etc.

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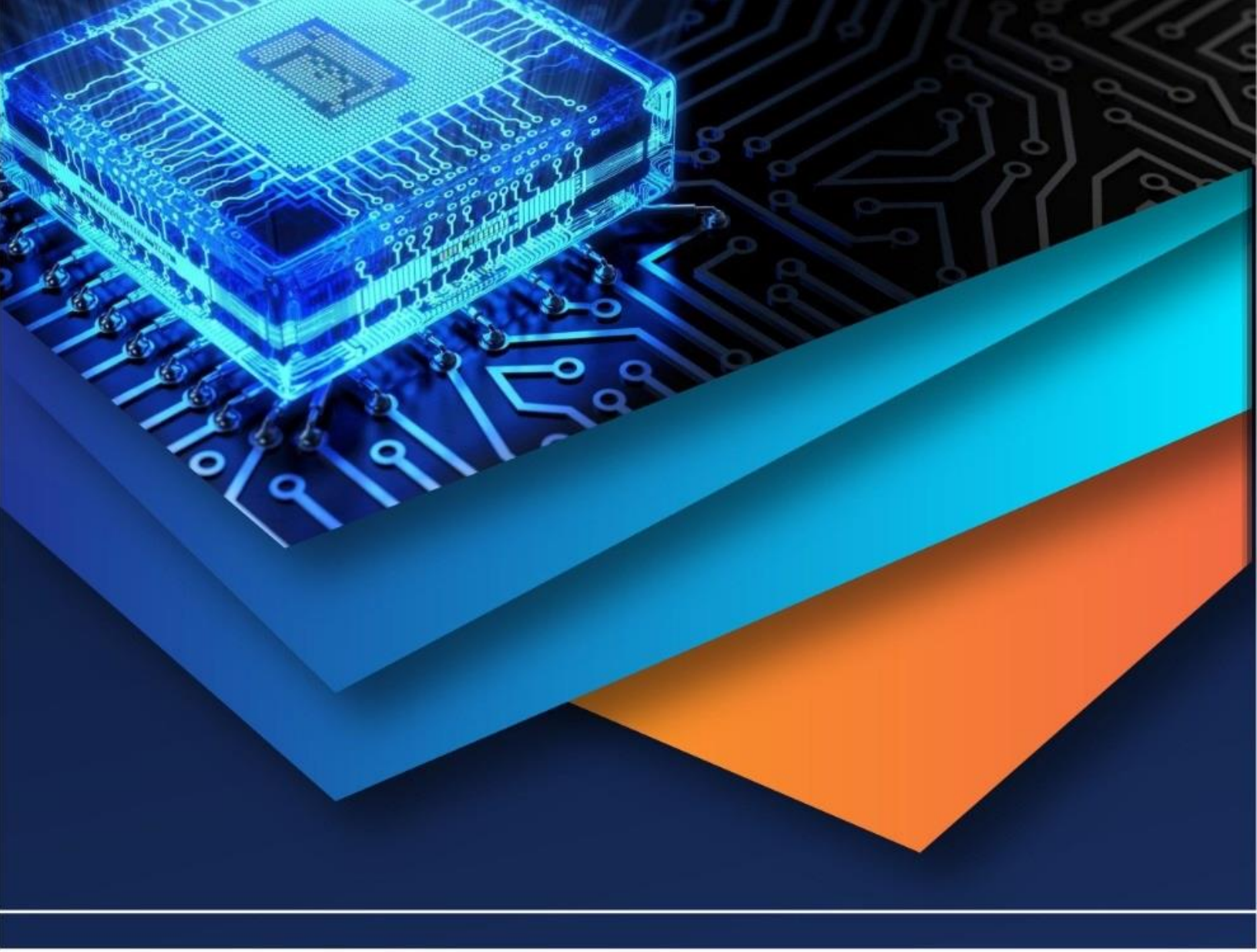

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