

MYTHOLOGICAL ODYSSEY OF *WHERE SHALL WE GO THIS SUMMER* BY ANITA DESAI AND AMISH TRIPATHI'S *SITA: THE WARRIOR OF MITHILA*

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ABSTRACT

Mythology and literature have a common, mutual relationship of dependency and protectorate. Although, neither of them can be foreshorten or reduced as the other. They have their distinct concepts with a mutual connection of reliance as it not plausible for them to survive on their own. Myths are considered "as an integral element of literature". It overtures magazines of heterogeneous stories for the fictitious universe- making of literary works, which proliferates, reorientates or rescripts mythological components in the proceeding of creative recognition. It also bestows the narrative techniques which literature transmogrifies from as it is displayed and perceived in Aristotle's Poetics, where mythos moots to plot, to a coalesced contrive of de rigueur and plausible acts. Myth epitomizes the very genesis and fons et origo of literature which is embedded in vocal, oral culture and the staging of literary works. In this research paper emphasis is given on the imploration of modern conceptualization of myths and mythological characters such as Gods and Goddesses by the creative writers. Mythological tales or Epics offers literature inspiration and by combination of them an author creates a composition which can console, conjure, commence and coordinate the society on an ideal path. Sita is one of the most praised, poised, pristine personas of holy demeanour from the Epic Ramayana, one of the greatest mythological epic of the world composed in Sanskrit by great scholar, poet Valmiki and in Awadhi language by famous great Hindi writer Tuldsidas by the name Ramcharit Manas.

There are number of adaptations, translations and composition of the epic in various languages now in contemporary status of literature. In this research paper, the character of Sita is being observed, analyzed and studied with different perception of the authors in their works. The modern contemporary concept of Goddesses Sita frames the main concern of the paper and with the discussion how it is significant and inspirational for the contemporary youth.

Keywords: odyssey, protectorate, foreshorten, heterogeneous, proliferates, reorientates, transmogrifies, embedded, fons et origo, de rigueur

INTRODUCTION

The term 'Myth' has a very specific and prominent place and reputation in Indian culture. It is extracted from Greek term *mythos* which means 'word' or 'story'. Myth is emblematic narrative of ancient times or faraway past and mythology is scientific or religious system and study of myths. In

Indian society and culture, mythology is probably one of the most convincingly, appreciated, inspiring genre for the coming generations of contemporary societies. India is and always have been fons et origo of stupendous civilizational cultivation with picturesque patrimony of melodious folklores. Indian ethnicity is proliferous with abundance of myths. It is enriched with great epics of the universe, i.e. Ramayana, Gita and Mahabharata which consistently discourse and preach the values, ideals and principles of life to the people from ancient till contemporary society. Their significance and influence is of varying nature as it covers the entire sphere and segments of human's life and teach them the rewards and regards of values along with the consequences and cruelties of vices and evils. Indian artists especially writers are highly impressed, influenced and inspired with the myths of ancient times thus preserving and protecting the traditional legacy and spiritual faith.

Looking out for your light,
I went out:
it was like the sudden dawn
of a million-million suns,
a ganglion of lightening for my wonder,
o lord of caves,
if you are light,
there can be no metaphor.

(Trans. Ramanujan, 1973, p. 168)

"Where shall We Go This Summer?" of Anita Desai appears as a 'emblematic inquiry' which distinctly exhibits the uncertainty or iffy and plans and indecisions of the protagonist has about her future and feelings. It also imparts the paucity of accuracy and rigour of life. Desai named her protagonist, Sita in her novel "Where shall We Go this Summer?" perceives and senses the vexation and depression of vague, smothering confinement of urban lifestyle. The protagonist Sita seems struggling in the sea of metropolitan city life and seeks shelter and refugee from her conjugal life at utopia of her childhood, an island where she spend her whole childhood. Sita believes in the magical powers of the island where her father was respected and was prayed for his knowledge and sensibility. The song Moses and island inhabitants were singing about Sita's father is enough evidence about great knowledge, willpower, humbleness and strength he must have possessed.

'Who has forgotten the father?' Moses harangued in a sing-song tone, ritualistic almost dreamy.

'Not us, not us', neighed the goats, wagging about the table.

'He rid my house of snakes and scorpions and no one was bitten again', the words sang out, low but clear

'He made my wife bear who had been barren for years, and she bore sons', sang another jubilant,

He treated me for my fits and boils with powdered pearls and rubies and charged nothing', praised a third in voice of awe, as if laying offerings at an altar.

'I remember. Oh yes, yes remember', they all murmured, hummed, sang and sank into shadow lumped on wood bench.

(Anita Desai, 'Where shall We Go this Summer?', 2011, p, 129)

Sita runs back to her departed father's home when she get pregnant with her fifth baby as Sita finds herself in alienation and depression of suffocating trials and tribulation of life and complexities of urban culture. Sita decides to save her fifth child from the urban ruckus by going to stay in utopian land of the island. Sita feels dolorous from the lifeless, meaningless life of city and its boring chores of daily routine. Sita's fifth pregnancy causes severe stress, burdening her life and mental status. Her situation combining with hormonal changes leaves her with no option but to emotionally close down and eliminate her from daily rituals. All her surrounding in the city was busy in running forward every second and that's when she felt the necessity to evanesce and vanish to some far flung place to evolve in some utopian land. So she moves to island which is also the abode of her late father. Sita's father was highly respected, appreciated and loved among the people of Manori, the island as spiritual guru. He helped people of Manori in their grave problems so people believed he has magical powers. Sita plight of loneliness is the main reason of her continuous dejection and frustration of life.

Desai named her protagonist Sita in the novel which is a mythological name derived from great divine epic Ramayana by great Indian poet Valmiki or Ramcharitmanas by Goswami Tulsidas. The character of Goddesses Sita, wife of Lord Rama is most humble, sacrificial being in the epic. In the epic also Lady Sita has to go through so many struggles, straits, trials and tribulation giving the impression of a lamb raised to be slaughtered just like contemporary women. Desai's protagonist can also be considered as a symbolic mien for imperturbably, comportment in all the adversities of life. Her interminable await, emblemizes so many things, for instance, she believes in magic and has been desperately wishing and waiting for some occulting activities. The pair protagonist of the novel 'Sita' and her husband 'Raman' toting the quintessential titles are widely different and far away from the sansara or rebirth of mythological figures of Lord Rama and Goddess Sita. Although, their names are similar but their values, believes and persona is completely dissimilar as Raman is a strict, strong, common, emotionally stoic man. He couldn't relate to Sita's torments or distresses consequently, find her troubling and her emotional traumas dramatic. Sita's quest of lacuna from her frustrated, lost state of mind carries and remains the main significant perturbation. One of the greatest and strongest perspective and apparatus, Anita Desai applied in her novels is the conjuration of the awareness or sense of time.

The novel composed in three parts, Monsoon '67, Winter '47 and Monsoon '67 respectively. The first part Monsoon '67, of the novel, begins with Sita's advent to the island with her two kids' girl Menaka and boy Karan. The names of the children's are also mythological adaptations of Anita Desai. Sita visits Manori to stay at his father's home with intentional of keeping his fifth baby unborn forever in order to save her from the cruel, emotionless, bitter people are reality of life. The reason behind her bizarre decision and hopeless situation is her distress of alienation and pain of emotional orphaning. She is struggling with her motherhood alone always but her fifth conceiving gives her immense longing and dilemma that she doesn't want the baby to born and wishes to save the baby inside her womb by keeping her safe.

Part two of the novel Winter '47, takes the reader and Sita back in her childhood days when she was happily living with her Father who was a freedom fighter and after independence settles in a big home at Manori Island. Sita's father was a great knowledgeable person and he spends his life caring, nurturing people and his three kids, Rekha, Sita and Jeevan alone. People of Manori loved, respected and worshipped him because he was a greatest helping hand in everyone's need. Sita's father had a divine personality and people of Manori find his persona magnificent and follows his

values, principles and advices as they were always for their welfare. He established an ashram in Manori where he used to teach, preach, cure and help people every way possible. People believed him to be magical as his treatments were magically perfect all the time.

The last part submerges the novel with the first taking the reader and Sita back from flashback of her magical childhood and mystically magnificent father. Sita hope and zeal of island's magical power and faith that it will help her kids with its magic is gradually dwindling. Sita's kids are not able to adept with the life of island as they are habitual of city comforts and blame her as they are not happy in the rural island. Kids does not find the island magical in fact they believe it's insane to live their instead of big comfortable, facilitative cities. They want to go back to their sweet, lovely home in city so Sita's daughter Menaka writes a letter to her father Raman informing and demanding him to take them back to their real home in Mumbai without telling or asking Sita. On the other hand, Sita does not want to go back but after a lot of struggle and discussion she has to go back to city with her husband who came to take them home. Her hope of magical peace and meaningful prosperity of island fails and she reluctantly goes back to city. The couple is completely different like two different sides of a coin joined together with the thread of marriage, obligation and affection of kids. But the sufferer in the novel is only Sita as she is sensitive, emotional and sensible whereas Raman is modern, practical objective focused type of person, they don't share infatuation or affection instead they have repulsion and loathing for each other because of their different natured personalities. Every good or bad incident and activity effects Sita deeply but for Raman they are just passing incidents.

Sita is strongly emotional, hypersensitive and volatile whereas Raman is modern, compos mentis and circumspect. He neglects Sita's sorrows considering them tantrums only. Desai's protagonists are suffering souls who in their decaying living or surviving pursue living or surviving in decay. Sita is a model representative of the alienation of a wife, mother and woman. Sita, in the novel is also hegemonized, repressed and down in the dumps with the meaningless distant without affection marriage with Raman. So in order to sanctify and gain spiritual sanity and surrection, Sita takes a voyage to divine lands of Manori in hopes of searching and finding her orientation and identity. Sita is a deracinated woman who struggles to recoup her original primitive identity. Ironically enough her peregrinate with its promising hope and destination of restoration and rehabilitation is the outcome of her social solidarity or alienation. In the end, she gains physical and emotional strength and courage in the island. The island shapes her existent spirit of consciousness. Sita adopts a transformation in her identity and persona. She is already a mother of four kids and expecting the fifth one but unwilling to abort or give birth to this one. This is why she visits the island believing that the magic of Manori will perpetuate the baby inside her womb.

Sita is an emblem of nature, purity and preciousness so she is unable to cope up with the mundane artificial life of metropolitan cities and their polluted activities. She feels suffocated in the complicated life of disturbing disastrous urban society. She is not capable of associating herself with urban domain and feels estrange and cut off whenever she encounters any violence in her surroundings. The swedge between her maid servants and sons on minor and major issues her daughter Menaka's hastily squidding a bushel of small newly budded plant. All these incidents affect her mental and emotional state of mind as she is fragile and venerable in that urban milieu. She wishes for some magical action that can dissolve her mental dilemma. Sita's holy voyage to island Manori is her skeddaddle or escape and reincarnation: a fly the coop from the wrecked powers of metropolitan domain and return to land of magical Manori island. Her solitude is because of her emotional instability. Sita in this novel is nothing short of Sati Savitri or Rati, Mohini. She never

idolized her Ram spiritually or traditionally as she doesn't have that high level of faithfulness even. Desai recomposed the mythical Sita by remodelling and designing in different direction. The mythological Sita is traditional mother figure but in this novel the kids are the main reason of anxiety and depression of Sita. Desai demolished the myth of a sacrificing, sombre, sophisticated, dutiful woman, wife and mother by portraying a complete different picture of mother hood and different structures of emotional emancipation of woman.

Sita's escapade to island appears as gliding from the boundations or curtailments of stereotypical womanhood. She terribly realizes her relations of oedipal nature. She realizes and believes that infantilism of woman is a compulsory concept of traditionally religious families and they can never gain adult ego. The novel ends with protagonist Sita's modus Vivendi or compromise with her fate and destined home of urban city without killing herself or her fifth unborn baby. In the ending of the novel, Sita appears as the mythological figure of Sita as she decided to follow and stay behind her Ram by going to her city home with her husband Raman. It's like she submits herself to him by tracing his footmarks so that she can walk on them following his every step.

*Yada yada hi dharmasya
glanirbhawati suvrata
Abhyuttanamadharmasya tada
prakrtrsambhavah*

(credited to Maharishi Valmikiji)

Golden book award winner (2022), Ustad Bismillah Khan Award (2018) for outstanding contribution to Indian art and culture, Kalinga International Literary Award (2018) and many more other award honoured Amish Tripathi, born on 18 October, 1974 is an Indian mythological littérateur and scrivener of Indian mythological epics widely acknowledged and known for his book collection of *Shiva Trilogy* and *Rama Chandra Series*. Both of the collection of series recorded fastest first and second sold out book records respectively.

Sita: Warrior of Mithila is the fifth book of Amish written collection and second book of *Rama Chandra Series* published and released on 29th May 2017. *Rama Chandra Series* is a recounting and re-narration of the Indian Holy Scripture, epic *Ramayana*. *Sita: Warrior of Mithila* narrates the epic in a complete different dimension. The book focused on goddess Sita, the Indian legendary woman and empress considered as avatar of goddesses Laxmi. The novel begins with an abandoned girl child guarded by an eagle got discovered by the king Janak of Mithila who adopted her. The main story line is similar to the holy epic *Ramayana* as Ravan is the devil sinner king here also and Lord Rama is great worrier prince but the twist is really awe-inspiring as treats all the mythological characters as ordinary human who have great courage and vitality. Amish's Sita is not just a beautiful, sophisticated, magical and highly principled princess, who becomes queen after getting married with a great, extra-ordinary prince Lord Rama through a swayambar, and follows her husband's every steps as faithful, dutiful wife by not only walking on the same steps as him but also going for fourteen years of exile with him and believing him as her everything. Amish's Sita is a warrior and self-acclaimed woman. She is raising her younger sister Urmila while managing the position of Prime Minister, safeguarding and protecting the peace and prosperity of Mithila the magical city of knowledge and spiritualism. After the death of her adopted Mother her father Janak is dolorous and spends his most of the time in studying scriptures as he was of saintly behaviour. The novel portrays Sita as the complete package of power, strength, politics, values, vitality, and vigorous versatility.

Here Sita is equally strong as Ram and Amish gave emotional and mental beauty more importance than physical. Here both Ram and Sita are dark complexioned but intellectually attractive characters. Sita is strong enough mentally and physically that she was elected to become 7th Vishnu by guru Vishwamitra and she was the one who was able to decipher the political rivalry of both the great acknowledged gurus Vasistha and Vishwamitra.

In nut shell, Amish recreated the perfect warrior as Sita who has a heart of gold, courage of mountains. Her personality in the novel is a beautiful combination of intellectual, emotional and compassionate responsible personality who is strong enough to deal with all her situations while fulfilling her entire obligation and duties with firm determination. Both the novels are complete contrastive demonstration of iconic character of Lady Sita yet original dimension of a woman in contemporary society. Amish celebrated the legendary character of lady Sita whereas Desai mourned the ordinary common Sita of modern contemporary society. In both the novels, the places Manori island and Mithila from where the protagonist Sita belongs has a magical, mystic essence of inspiration, spiritualism, knowledge, philosophy, that has a clear impression imprinted:

Gods, gods, there are so many
There's no place left for a foot.
There is only one god.
He is our Lord of meeting Rivers.

(Trans. Ramanujan, 1973, p.84)

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