



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

“Deconstructing Womanhood In The Ram Chandra Series: A Study Of Sita Through Multiple Narratives”

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Abstract:

The Ram Chandra Series, written by Amish Tripathi, is a modern, multi-perspective version of the Ramayana. It is a four-novel series consisting of Ram: Scion of Ikshvaku, Sita: Warrior of Mithila, Raavan: Enemy of Aryavarta and War of Lanka. The series portrays mythological characters as complex, normal people. This paper is titled “**Deconstructing Womanhood in the Ram Chandra Series: A Study of Sita through Multiple Narratives**”, which discusses the character of Sita in the four Ram Chandra novels and how she is portrayed according to different narrative perspectives. The paper treats Sita more fluidly as a character who embodies strength, intelligence, leadership, agency and moral independence, as an active character, rather than the static, idealised cultural portrait of the ideal woman. It also examines the transformation of Sita through the lens of deconstruction theory. It questions the binary oppositions through which womanhood has traditionally been defined in a fixed framework. According to the study, it is not possible to define Sita in any simple or singular identity because her different representations can be understood as showing that identity and meaning can be created through perspective, context and interpretation; that is the central premise of Deconstruction Theory. Sita in Tripathi's work has become an important persona for challenging conventional portrayals of womanhood.

Keywords: Amish Tripathi, Ram Chandra Series, Sita, deconstruction, feminism, ecofeminism, womanhood, mythological retelling, multiple narratives, postmodernism.

Women in Literature and history are often portrayed within narrow frameworks of obedience, sacrifice, and silence. They are often portrayed as embodiments of virtue rather than as individuals in both Western and Indian mythological traditions. Traditional narratives have often placed much importance on male experience while confining women's roles and experiences. Virginia Woolf states that “literature is impoverished beyond our counting by the doors that have been shut upon women” (126). According to Woolf, the exclusion of women's experiences not only silenced them but also constrained the richness of Literature itself. Sita in traditional Ramayana is one such character, often symbolised as the epitome of devotion and patience. Such presentations create binary oppositions where women are marginalised as others.

Amish Tripathi is a well-known Indian modern writer. He is famous for recreating Indian myths in the contemporary context. Instead of portraying mythological figures as God and perfect beings, he represents them as complex individuals shaped by circumstances, choices and moral dilemmas. The Ram Chandra Series is a contemporary mythological fiction. It depicts the epic characters from different perspectives. The series comprises four novels: *Ram: Scion of Ikshvaku* (2015), *Sita: Warrior of Mithila* (2017), *Raavan: Enemy of Aryavarta* (2019) and *War of Lanka* (2022). The series is very unique and noted for its non-linear narration and character-centric approach. Each book in the series has a different protagonist – Ram, Sita, and Raavan – and the same events are narrated from different perspectives. The series presents these characters as human beings with their own dilemmas and complexities rather than being portrayed as deities. This study examines the portrayal of Sita in the series and how her identity transforms in different perspectives. Her transformation is examined primarily through deconstruction theory.

According to deconstruction theory, the meaning produced through language is not fixed; it is unstable. Deconstruction does not seek to destroy a text; instead, it reveals the contradictions and hidden assumptions within it, allowing marginalised voices and alternative meanings to emerge. In the Ram Chandra Series, Sita's identity is not singular, but multiple and fluid. Her act is an attack on the dominant patriarchy that narrows women's agency, and shows that the definition of 'ideal womanhood' is not fixed but dynamic and can be redefined. Applying Derrida's theory to Amish Tripathi's Ram Chandra Series reveals how Sita's character transcends from a single imposed identity to multiple spatiotemporal identities. Sita is a character who is not static, but consistently transforms and evolves across the novels.

Though *Ram: Scion of Ikshvaku* focuses on Ram's journey, Amish Tripathi introduces Sita as a woman whose presence challenges the traditional role of femininity. Her character in the novel is not just the "perfect bride," but rather a smart, brave and politically savvy woman. Ram's admiration for Sita is apparent when he says that he wants "a woman... worthy of admiration" (Tripathi, Ram 146). This is a departure from the conventional notion that the husband is to be superior to his wife. Instead, Tripathi builds up a relationship on mutual respect and equality, which would enable Sita to build her role as the main character in the latter novels of the Ram Chandra Series.

One of Sita's most prominent traits is her bravery. She is presented as a strong and courageous woman who can face danger both physically and emotionally. Conventional portrayals make Sita a woman who is silent and passive, but here she is portrayed as acting decisively in difficult times. Her confidence and determination question the patriarchal notion that bravery is an exclusively masculine quality. This representation of Sita aligns with feminist criticism that aims to reclaim women's agency in literature. Elaine Showalter states that "the purpose of feminist criticism is to study literature through the eyes of women's experiences and identities" (Showalter 13). This change is reflected in Tripathi's Sita, who, instead of being a mere spectator, becomes a character actively involved in the narrative.

Tripathi also shows Sita as a woman of intellect who takes strong decisions on her moral responsibility. Prior to her becoming a major character in *Sita: Warrior of Mithila*, she is known for her wisdom and leadership qualities. Her courage is not the only thing that impresses Ram; she is also able to analyse and look at situations with clarity and compassion. Her character thus demolishes the dualism of emotion and reason, which is traditionally linked to women and men respectively. Through this portrayal, the novel aligns with Derrida's concept of deconstruction by revealing that such hierarchical oppositions are culturally constructed rather than naturally fixed (Derrida 158).

One of the incredible qualities of the novel is the bond between Ram and Sita. They share values and responsibility in their relationship, rather than dominance and submission. Tripathi believes the essence of a good relationship is equality, trust and admiration rather than patriarchy. This reconfiguration of the epic takes into account the current understanding of gender justice, yet it is firmly

based on moral principles. Sita is not merely a sacrifice; her individuality is maintained throughout the story.

In this manner, Ram: Scion of Ikshvaku creates a fresh image of Sita in the Ram Chandra Series. She isn't the main character in this novel, but she is smart, brave, and righteous, and her character anticipates the warrior, administrator and leader of Sita: Warrior of Mithila. Reflecting feminist and deconstructive views, Sita is revealed not as an idealised mythical woman, but as a complex human being whose identity does not neatly fit into the traditional categories and boundaries of gender.

Amish Tripathi's Sita: Warrior of Mithila is an absolute reimagining of one of the most revered women in Indian mythology. It has placed her at the centre of the narrative rather than at the margins. Unlike the Ramayana, Sita in Tripathi is more remembered as a warrior, administrator, economist and visionary ruler rather than a devoted wife and a sufferer. Her story starts not with marriage, but with adoption, education and the hard work of learning from Rishi Shvetaketu, where she is taught how to lead—and not because it is handed down by her gender. As Aishwarya Gupta pointed out, Tripathi's Sita is "a warrior princess" and is an "able administrator and strategist"(Gupta) rather than a passive sufferer.

One of the most remarkable qualities of Sita's character in this novel is her intellectual maturity. Throughout the novel, she consistently balances emotion with reason. Sunaina advises her, "You must use your heart to decide the destination, but use your head to plot the journey"(Tripathi, Sita 36). She doesn't rush into decisions, but considers all political and ethical options compassionately and rationally. This is a technique that aligns with current leadership theories, which emphasise strategic thinking and emotional intelligence. Hence, Sita is not just a courageous woman but a ruler with wisdom and justice who can change society.

Tripathi also deconstructs the traditional image of woman by presenting Sita as a trained warrior. She refuses to run away from danger. She confronts it with confidence and determination. Her determination is pretty much visible in the statement, "Running away is never the solution. Confront your problems. Manage them. That is the way of the warrior"(Tripathi, Sita 99). This statement clearly depicts moral resilience and responsibility. Tripathi's Sita dismantles the patriarchal dualism that associates warfare with masculinity while assigning passivity to women. Her identity becomes fluid, simultaneously establishing compassion, strength, and political authority.

The other striking quality of Sita is her philosophy of social balance. She does not adhere to extremes, but urges harmony in society. Sita understands governance in a non-hierarchical way, which is reflected in this novel's assertion that "A society must always aim for balance. It needs intellectuals, it needs warriors, it needs traders, it needs artists, and it needs skilled workers" (Tripathi, Sita 126). Her political ideas are based on collaboration instead of domination. Similarly, her belief that "Too much of anything creates an imbalance in life" (Tripathi, Sita 126) extends beyond personal morality to social and ecological ethics. The statement clearly aligns with ecofeminist ideas of Vandana Shiva, who states that sustainable societies are not societies of domination, but are societies of balance, diversity and mutual responsibility.

According to Tripathi, Sita's leadership is a service, not an authority. She understands that rights go hand in hand with responsibilities, and that "Life is not only about what we want, but also about what we must do. We don't just have rights. We also have duties" (Tripathi, Sita 295). Her commitment to public welfare distinguishes her from rulers. Ram's admiration for Sita also questions traditional gender hierarchies when he wishes to marry "a woman in front of whom he would be compelled to bow his head in admiration" (Tripathi, Ram 146). Instead of presenting the husband as naturally superior, Tripathi constructs a relationship grounded in equality, respect, and shared responsibility, thereby redefining both masculinity and femininity.

Sita in Sita: Warrior of Mithila defies every conventional binary that has historically shaped her image. She is neither merely obedient nor rebellious, neither exclusively domestic nor exclusively political. She is simultaneously compassionate and authoritative, emotional and rational, nurturing and fearless. Jacques Derrida argues that meaning emerges by questioning hierarchical oppositions rather than accepting them as fixed. Tripathi's Sita exemplifies this principle by dissolving boundaries between the feminine and the masculine, the private and the public, and the mythic and the human. Consequently, Sita: Warrior of Mithila becomes more than a retelling of Sita in the Ramayana; it becomes a reinterpretation of womanhood itself, presenting Sita as a dynamic individual whose identity is continually negotiated through courage, intellect, and ethical responsibility.

In Raavan: Enemy of Aryavarta, Sita occupies a comparatively smaller narrative space than in Sita: Warrior of Mithila. Yet her role is still very important to the moral and ideological plot of the novel. Amish Tripathi depicts events from Raavan's point of view, enabling readers to understand the impact of Sita's character and how she impacts everyone, including opponents. Now she's not only Ram's wife and Mithila's princess, but a symbol of integrity, justice and inner strength. Raavan is a man of power and ambition, but Sita is an ethical force that is directly counter to his worldview. Tripathi makes this point clear by drawing a distinction between strength and domination, which are to be found in self-discipline and righteousness, respectively.

The novel also enhances Sita's personality in the form of an independent political thinker. Her presence in some scenes is not discussed, but many of the decisions she has made in the past continue to influence the story. The administrative abilities, strategic intelligence and bravery she developed in Sita: Warrior of Mithila will forever remain a part of her existence. Others know her wisdom and resolve; she is not a leader, but one of the best. Tripathi thus does not let Sita lose her value in being overshadowed by Raavana.

This depiction helps to reinforce the notion that women in mythology can be active rather than passive players in history. From a deconstructive point of view, the third novel breaks the established dichotomy of hero and villain by introducing Raavan as a multifaceted human being and also broadening Sita's character beyond the ideal woman. Jacques Derrida's theory of deconstruction states that binary oppositions are unstable and that there is a lack of fixed categories and an emergence of meaning through difference. Tripathi illustrates this point in his depiction of Sita and Raavan not being just the antithesis of good and evil. Both Raavan and Sita are good-hearted, intelligent and courageous, whereas Sita is also kind, wise and politically inclined. The identity of Sita cannot, therefore, be defined in terms of the conventional feminine stereotypes. She is a leader, a warrior, a daughter, an administrator, a moral guide and multiple other roles, symbolising the permeability of gender and power.

Ultimately, the novel features Sita as the moral backbone of the Ram Chandra Series. Raavan's life is guided by ambition, vengeance, and the quest for total dominion, while Sita is always a symbol of duty, balance, and justice. Even though she doesn't show up on screen, her influence can be felt throughout the story, as her attitudes and beliefs are embodied by many other characters. In portraying Sita as the moral opposite of Raavan, Tripathi challenges the conventional views of womanhood as weakness, fragility, and limitations, instead showing that women can be sources of wisdom, resilience, and transformative leadership. As a result, Raavan: Enemy of Aryavarta brings the titular character to life and adds to Sita's character as one of the most active and impactful characters in modern-day mythological fiction.

In War of Lanka, Amish Tripathi completes Sita's transformation from a capable administrator and warrior into the moral centre of the Ram Chandra Series. The novel is the epic fighting between Ram and Raavan, but the ethical aspect of the fighting is provided by Sita's presence. In traditional retellings, she is portrayed as being helpless during imprisonment, but Tripathi portrays her as being mentally tough, emotionally calm, and intellectually strong. Despite being a prisoner in Lanka, she does

not give up her dignity and beliefs. Her strength isn't just physical, but her steadfast belief in justice and righteousness, and her willingness to endure, instead of fighting.

Tripathi also portrays Sita as a woman who is free from all of the circumstances that surround her. Being in captivity doesn't diminish her ability to think, to evaluate and to maintain her values. Fear and despair are not a part of her. She is a firm believer in her own morality and moral autonomy and that freedom starts from the conscience. The novel implies that power may be wielded in other ways than by weapons or by political command; it may be wielded by integrity, self-control, and the courage to be true to one's values when in crisis.

In the feminist and deconstructive interpretation, the character of Sita is not only the one who is to be rescued, but also the War of Lanka challenges the conventional depiction of her. Rather, she is a central figure in the moral struggle that is the plot of the novel. Jacques Derrida's deconstructionist theory undermines oppositions like strong and weak, protect and protected, etc. Tripathi undermines these oppositions by depicting Sita's emotional strength as being greater than that of many of the warriors who are fighting for her. Her compassion coexists with courage, her resilience with vulnerability; these are not opposites, but complements. Thus, Sita breaks out of the stereotyped categories assigned to mythological women.

At the end of the War of Lanka, Sita becomes a symbol of ethical leadership and human strength. Her transformation through the four books – from being a clever young girl in *Ram: Scion of Ikshvaku*, to an intelligent visionary administrator in *Sita: Warrior of Mithila*, to an ethical force in *Raavan: Enemy of Aryavarta* and the moral conscience of the entire epic in *War of Lanka* – is truly remarkable. In this reimagining, Amish Tripathi is not merely depicting Sita as the lesser character in Ram's tale, but as a full-fledged human being, a woman who is as courageous as she is wise and has a sense of justice that resonates with the minds of contemporary readers. This fluidity of Sita deconstructs the rigid binarism of ideal womanhood and shows that her identity is never fixed but forever moves between texts, perspectives, and power structures, making her a powerful deconstruction of the idea of agency, gender, and myth in contemporary literature. From a deconstructive standpoint, this fluidity dismantles the rigid binaries of ideal womanhood and reveals that Sita's identity is not stable but continuously negotiated across texts, perspectives, and power structures, making her a powerful site for rethinking gender, agency, and myth in contemporary literature.

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