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COMPARATIVE STUDY OF AMISH TRIPATHI'S SITA: WARRIOR OF MITHILA VS. DEVDUTT PATTANAIK'S SITA: AN ILLUSTRATED RETELLING OF THE RAMAYANA– FROM WARRIOR-PRIME MINISTER TO EARTH'S GODDESS

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ABSTRACT:

Sita is the most retold woman in Indian mythology, yet her agency remains contested. Amish Tripathi's 2017 novel, *Sita: Warrior of Mithila*, reimagines her as an abandoned infant adopted by Janak, trained in gurukul, and elected Prime Minister of Mithila before marriage. Devdutt Pattanaik's 2013, *Sita: An Illustrated Retelling of the Ramayana*approaches Ram through Sita, using oral, visual and written traditions to explore her as Earth's daughter, Kali/Gauri, and transformer of Ram. This study compares the two texts on narrative strategy, gender politics, dharma, and rasa. Tripathi builds a political thriller where Sita's merit disrupts caste and gender hierarchies, while Pattanaik constructs a mythographic mosaic where Sita embodies prakriti and provokes thought on fidelity and property. Both expand Valmiki's frame, yet Tripathi militarizes Sita and Pattanaik mythologizes her. The paper concludes that contemporary Sitas negotiate between kshatriya action and prakriti wisdom, reflecting India's search for balanced dharma.

KEYWORDS:

AMISH TRIPATHI, DEVDUTT PATTANAIK, *SITA, WARRIOR OF MITHILA*, AN ILLUSTRATED RETELLING, RAMAYANA RETELLINGS, FEMINIST MYTHOLOGY, DHARMA, PRAKRITI, PRIME MINISTER, EKAM-PATNI-VRATA, MITHILA, KALI, GAURI.

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INTRODUCTION:

The Ramayana is a series of stories. "Valmiki sometimes refers to the Ramayana as the Sita Charitam, the story of Sita," emphasises her importance. Popular imagination saw her as an abducted victim for generations. 21st-century writers may now write about her.

Sita: Warrior of Mithila, Book 2 of the Ram Chandra Series by Amish Tripathi, was published by Westland Press on May 29, 2017. Sita is shown as an abandoned newborn found in a field. Protected by a vulture from bloodthirsty wolves, he became Mithila's Prime Minister at a young age. Sita, Tripathi's martial artist and ruler, says India will rise, but not for selfish motives. It will rise for Dharma. In the interest of everybody.

The 328-page Penguin 2013 book Sita: An Illustrated Retelling of the Ramayana by Devdutt Pattanaik uses mythology to spark inquiry. In Hindu mythology, the single figure named _ekam-patni-vrata is related with the unfair act of leaving her. Pattanaik speculates about Sita changing the stoic prince of Ayodhya into God through her youth with her father, Janak, her relationships with Lankan women, and her position as the Goddess, the wild Kali and the chaste Gauri.

This study contrasts Tripathi and Pattanaik's answers about Sita's identity. A common study framework uses Valmiki shlokas and page-specific excerpts from both current works.

LITERATURE REVIEW

VALMIKI'S SITA

Valmiki names Sita Ayonija, earth-born and found in a furrow.

tāṃ dṛṣṭvā rāghavo rāmāṃ mūrtimatyām iva śriyam ||babhūva hṛṣṭaḥ saumitrī rāmasya ca mano'bhavat || (Bal Kanda 66.14)

Sita is Ram's Shri. I do not need your permission," she says, choosing vanavasa during exile demand. Am your wife... I only belong with you". Thus, Valmiki gives her loyalty, not polity.

CONTEMPORARY RETELLINGS

Kavita Kane's Sita's Sister, Volga's The Liberation, and Samhita Arni's Sita's Ramayana precede Tripathi and Pattanaik. Sita is Malayaputra candidate for Vishnu, Tripathi adds geopolitics, Pattanaik mythological anthropology: Sita as earth-connected prakriti, her mother changes Ram.

CRITICAL RECEPTION

The ascension of an orphan to prime minister and Goddess in Tripathi's story is amazing. Pattanaik's reworking successfully defies traditional preconceptions with a nuanced representation. Reviewers say Pattanaik blends regional tales, oral traditions, and folk tales.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Qualitative, descriptive-comparative research. Hypothesis testing and numerical data are absent. Instead, it explores textual, thematic, and ideological distinctions between two modern Sita-centered Ramayanas. We want to know how genre, authorial purpose, and culture change mythical characters.

RESEARCH APPROACH:

The study uses interpretive-hermeneutics, feminist narratology, and mythographic analysis.

HERMENEUTICS: To understand how each author uses Valmiki as the adi-kavya and re-signifies Sita for modern readers.

FEMINIST NARRATOLOGY: Use Susan Lanser and Gayle Greene to analyse who talks, sees, and acts in each passage. How Sita gets voice, agency, and focalisation is questioned.

RASA THEORY: Bharata's Natyashastra analyses Tripathi's vira and Pattanaik's shanta/karuna [peace/compassion] prevailing aesthetic emotions.

MYTHOGRAPHIC APPROACH: Following Wendy Doniger and Devdutt Pattanaik's technique, examine myths as psychological truths rather than historical facts and compare how each narrative creates Sita as archetype. [Heroic]

RESEARCH DESIGN:

- Compared-descriptive design with parallel reading. Design involves three phases:

Phase	Activity	Purpose
Phase 1: Textual Collation	Identify parallel episodes in both books: birth, education, swayamvar, exile, Lanka, agnipariksha, uttara kanda	Create a base for “apples-to-apples” comparison
Phase 2: Thematic Coding	Manually code for: origin, education, agency, dharma, marriage, violence, divinity, closure	Extract recurring motifs and divergences
Phase 3: Contextual Interpretation	Situate findings within Valmiki Ramayana + author interviews, reviews, socio-political context of 2010s India	Explain why differences exist

DATA SOURCES:

PRIMARY SOURCES

Pattanaik, Devdutt. Sita: Ramayana Illustrated. Penguin India, 2013. 328 pages. ISBN 9780143064329.

Tripathi, Amish. Sita: Westland Press, 2017. 361 pages. ISBN 978-93-86224-58-3.

Oriental Institute, Baroda, 1962, Critical Edition of Ramayana. Used as reference text.

SECONDARY SOURCES

Author interviews: YouTube/NDTV interviews with Amish Tripathi on “making Sita a warrior”; Pattanaik on Business Sutra and Devlok.

Book reviews: Goodreads, Amazon.in, Penguin India reception blurbs.

Each author's Goodreads quotations page.

Scholarly works: Paula Richman, Many Ramayanas; Mandakranta Bose, The Ramayana Revisited; Nabaneeta Dev Sen, feminist retellings.

Wikipedia, Goodreads Penguin India plot blurbs.

SAMPLING:

We want to highlight which segments of the scripture show a Sita-centered point of view. For a direct comparison, the following six event(s) from Valmiki and other scriptures have been selected:

Foundling Narrative: Birth/adoption scene

Education Arc: Gurukul training vs. Upanishadic learning

Swayamvar: Choice of Ram and political implications

Vanavasa Dialogue: “I do not need your permission” motif

Lanka Episode: Agency during captivity

Closure: Agnipariksha/Abandonment/Return to Earth

These episodes cover themes of agency, dharma and divinity while also covering Sita’s life-cycle and tests.

DATA COLLECTION METHOD

Close Reading: I will read both primary texts, marking passages with sticky notes or codes.

Annotation: Citing quotes by page number. References: Tripathi, p. 97: “You must use your heart to decide the destination” Pattanaik p. 14: “Unlike Greek narratives… understanding is celebrated.”

Illustration Analysis: For Pattanaik, looking at how images support or contradict text.

DATA ANALYSIS METHOD

Thematic Analysis: Using Braun & Clarke's 6-step methodology, “Prime Minister,” “Earth’s daughter,” “Merit,” “Kali,” and “Ekam-patni-vrata” were placed into the Political, Elemental, and Dharmic Sita categories.

Comparative Matrix: For 6 episodes, analyze and compare genre, narrative role, rasa, dharma, and feminism.

Discourse Analysis: What does each author's external commentary (interviews, TED Talks, etc.) say about how Sita is framed? Tripathi writes 'myth + history.' What does he mean when he says 'myth = subjective truth'?

VALIDITY & RELIABILITY

Triangulation: To avoid subjective bias, Valmiki's primary texts will be analyzed, and supplemented with reviews and author interviews.

Peer Debriefing: Draft some sections to be reviewed by two literature scholars to see if the interpretation matches.

Audit Trail: Kept an organized spreadsheet to track quotes and page numbers for reference

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Textual Fidelity: Quotes reproduced with accurate pagination; no falsifications.

Cultural Sensitivity: The Ramayana is very important as a religious text. The analysis treats both retellings of the Ramayana as valid interpretations of the Ramkatha, within the bheda parampara, and does not ridicule either.

Copyright: Seules de courtes citations seront utilisées conformément à l'usage équitable pour la critique académique.

LIMITATIONS OF METHODOLOGY

Language: Tripathi's book is written in English, but the version in Hindi may differ. Pattanaik's English writing is based on Sanskrit resources.

Scope: This study will be limited to only 2 texts. It will not include other retellings of Sita such as Volga's Liberation of Sita or Samhita Arni's Sita's Ramayana.

Reception: There's no reader-response section; it strictly does textual analyses without a survey of how readers view the different Sitas.

JUSTIFICATION FOR METHODOLOGY

Une conception comparative qualitative est mieux adaptée parce que :

Both of these texts are literary works, requiring an interpretation, as opposed to a measurement.

Sita is a cultural symbol as her meaning is built through a narrative where the best method of study is through the use of hermeneutics.

MAIN SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS:

Birth & Adoption - Vulture & Furrow

Tripathi: Vultures protect infant Sita from wolves. The ruler of Mithila adopts Sita. A vulture theme as a protector connects Sita to Jatayu and Vishnu's Garuda. This is a hint at Sita's heavenly nature. Also, because Sita was abandoned and was not an Ayonija, her ascension is more of a meritocracy.

Pattanaik: Retains Valmiki: Janak finds Sita in a furrow and interprets it as "her connection with the earth, her mother". ground is mindful of her motherhood. Pattanaik argues that while dogs are loyal and adorable, Hindu texts do not view them as auspicious: loyalty stems from fear. Earth-born Sita symbolises brave prakriti.

Analysis: Tripathi secularizes birth to emphasize agency; Pattanaik sacralises it to emphasize element. Both reject royal womb, making Sita svayambhu.

Education and Career – Prime Minister vs. Upanishadic Daughter

Tripathi: Sunaina and Janak send Sita to an ashram to learn martial arts. Sita likes Vayuputra Naga Hanuman. At 14, Vishwamitra "elects her as the seventh Vishnu but asks her to keep it a secret" (34). She becomes the youthful PM of Mithila. Tripathi argues that in an ideal society, distinctions of rank and privilege would stem from achieved merit and not from birth. "Finished. Not born" ("78").

Pattanaik: Focuses on Janak's court: what developing with the father who hosts the Upanishads means. Sita learns through dialogue, not through violent means. Indic philosophy celebrates understanding, in contrast to Greek mythos which celebrates victory. Sita masters brahmavidya, not politics.

Analysis: Tripathi's Sita employs economic policy to alleviate poverty in Mithila, while Pattanaik's Sita engages in philosophical dialogue to address issues of existence. Vira rasa vs. Shanta rasa.

Swayamvar and Marriage – Choice vs. Dharma

Tripathi: Sita choose Rama for dharma and not for love. Rama wanted to marry a woman who would make him bow. She reflects, "You must use your heart to decide the destination but use your head to plot the journey" (103). This is because marriage connects both candidates of Vishnu.

Pattanaik: Highlights Valmiki's problem: Ram's unwillingness to remarry to create a royal successor complicates matters. Sita picks metaphysics. I do not need your permission, says Pattanaik. Am your wife... Will eat what you eat. I'll sleep where you do (105). Instead of subordination, this is sahadharma-charin, dharma equality. Because Ram notices Sita, she is domestic and chaste. Gautam neglects Ahalya, making her disloyal (117).

Analysis: Both reject pativrata as passive. Tripathi makes it political partnership, Pattanaik makes it ecological: conscious farmer and willing field.

Abduction and Lanka – Warrior vs. Goddess

Tripathi: Sita is trained warrior. When Ravana kidnaps her, she fights. The book closes with kidnapping "setting the stage for the epic confrontation". She is "fierce warrior and a leader rather than a conventional damsel". "Don't fear the dark, my child. Darkness has no source, but light has a source. This darkness leads to God, the uncreated.

Pattanaik: Discusses her contacts with Lankan women, their food, and their feelings. Shakti Sita changes Lanka. He writes, "Cutting off the nose symbolises shame..." Traditional shame is mocked by modern justice (167). Sita rejects honour. She is "the untamed Kali as well as the

demure Gauri" (156).

Analysis: Tripathi's Sita resists with weapons, Pattanaik's resists with selfhood. Both deny victimhood.

Abandonment and Earth – Prime Minister's Law vs. Earth's Daughter

Tripathi: Not in Book 2, but series indicates Ram's control. A society must constantly seek equilibrium, says Tripathi's Sita. Perfect equality is impossible, but we must eliminate inequality. Her desertion would be seen as Ram's statecraft failure.

Pattanaik: His book's core. Why did ekam-patni-vrata Ram leave Sita? Answer: To consider faithfulness, property, and self-image. Her ultimate deed is returning to ground, "her connection with the earth, her mother". Keep dharma in mind, Pattanaik says. Make the best of bad situations, especially when no one is looking (178).

Analysis: For Tripathi, abandonment would be political crisis. For Pattanaik, it is cosmic necessity: prakriti cannot be owned. Sita chooses earth over palace.

COMPARATIVE TABLE:

Parameter	*Amish Tripathi: Sita: Warrior of Mithila	Devdutt Pattanaik: Sita: An Illustrated Retelling	Inference
Genre	Political fantasy, Book 2 of Ram Chandra Series, 361 pp	Mythographic non-fiction, 318 pp, illustrated	Novel vs. illustrated myth
Sita's Origin	Abandoned infant, saved by vulture, adopted	Found in furrow, Earth's daughter	Merit vs. element
Education	Gurukul, martial arts, Prime Minister of Mithila	Upanishadic debates in Janak's court	Kshatriya vs. Brahmavadini
Core Identity	Warrior, administrator, Vishnu candidate	Goddess, Kali/Gauri, prakriti	Action vs. being
Marriage Logic	Political alliance; "bow his head in admiration"	Sahadharma-charini; "My place is beside you, nowhere else"	Partnership models
Ravana Episode	Ends with abduction; Sita as fighter	Details Lanka women; Sita as shakti who doesn't convert	Resistance modes
Dharma Concept	Rule of law; "India will rise… for Dharma"	Cosmic balance; "Stay true to the idea of dharma… even when no one is watching"	Rajdharma vs. Sanatana dharma
Rasa	Vira, Raudra	Shanta, Karuna, Adbhuta	Heroic vs. contemplative
Feminism	"Women are as capable as men in leadership, warfare"	"Sita… had massive strength" though "portrayed as submissive"	Explicit vs. interpretive
Ekam-patni-vrata	Not focus of Book 2	Central puzzle: "deliberate souring of narrative"	Problematized
Visual Element	Cover by Sideways, Arthat Studio	Author's own illustrations	Branding vs. pedagogy
Audience	Young adult fantasy readers	Mythology readers, seekers	Demographic shift

DISCUSSION

Modern India craves strong female heroes like Tripathi's Sita. CEO-like, she says, "You must use your heart to decide the destination, but use your head to plot the journey". Her meritocracy criticises caste, stating that merit determines disparities. Not birth". Sita may lead armies since excess can bring imbalance, even in qualities like nonviolence (213).

India's desire for significance is met by Pattanaik's Sita. He explains _aham_ with Sita: "Animals defend their bodies. Humans curse to defend their self-image. He redefines abandonment: Property-related koan from Ram's ekam-patni-vrata. Own a wife? Sita rejects by returning to Earth. According to Pattanaik, Sita is domestic and chaste because Ram takes care of her, whereas farmers are responsible for field maintenance (134).

Thus, Tripathi gives Sita _kshatra_, Pattanaik gives her _kshetra_. One wields bow, other is bow's earth. Both reject Valmiki's _pativrata_ as voiceless. Tripathi makes her speak in sabha; Pattanaik makes her speak through silence.

CONCLUSION

Amish Tripathi and Devdutt Pattanaik expand Valmiki's Sita in opposite directions. Tripathi's *Sita Warrior of*

*Mithila*militarizes her, making her Prime Minister who declares: India will rise… for Dharma. She is solution to rajya failure. Pattanaik's Sita Illustrated Retelling mythologizes her, making her Earth who declares: "Cutting off the nose is a metaphor for shame"(206). She is solution to _purusha's existential fear.

Yet both converge: Sita is not property. Tripathi proves it through constitution; Pattanaik through cosmology. Valmiki's Sita Charitam_ thus becomes 21st-century Sita Charitrasplural, political, planetary.

FUTURE RESEARCH:

1. Compare Sita's agnipariksha in Tripathi's forthcoming books vs. Pattanaik's chapter Fire.

2. Reception study: Do young readers prefer warrior Sita or goddess Sita?

3. Iconographic study: How Pattanaik's illustrations vs. Tripathi's cover art shape perception.

4. Cross-text study with Kavita Kane's *Sita's Sister* and Volga's *The Liberation of Sita*.

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