



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Vol. 5. Issue.4. 2018 (Oct-Dec)



INTERNATIONAL
STANDARD
SERIAL
NUMBER
INDIA

2395-2628(Print):2349-9451(online)

CULTURAL REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN INDIAN MYTHOLOGY

K.R.VIDHYA

Assistant Professor, Department of English,
VISTAS



ABSTRACT

Indian Mythology is Indian Mythology is one of the richest elements of Indian Culture, which enriches it further and makes it a unique one in the world. The interesting aspect of the stories in Indian Mythology is that they are usually meant to convey subtle facts, rules and maxims to guide our daily lives. Subsequently it also talks about the female representations, one with highly praised goddess and on the other hand suppressions of women. On the perspective of feminism let analyses the character sita from legendary myth Ramayana. Examining from the novel liberation of sita by Volga, translated from Telegu T. Vijaykumar and C.Vijayasree. This paper claims the fallacies of the portrayal of female characters in Indian myth. And prominently talks about the gender discrimination, socio cultural, political and objectifications. Even though placing female in high place it itself indirectly showcases the oppressions of women. People failed to see the gender as just biological sexes of a human being, they imposed their own discrimination through the ideology of culture and tradition. And this following work emphasizes on how the unspoken epic characters free themselves as the cultural representations and transforms as an independent human.

INTRODUCTION

Myths are reliable stories of our ancestors and of origin of human kind in this universe. Narrates the supreme beings and spiritual elements, aims in navigating human kind in a path of virtuousness. Myths are collection of tales, which intend to tell stories of nature, history and customs. A myth involves cultural, traditional customs of a particular religion. These are collection of tales of past to educate the present. Etymology of myth goes to Fifteenth century, persuaded by concerned religious and underwent lot of alternations yet the foremost examples of ancient mythology are Greek mythology, roman mythology and Hittite mythology. These were re-narrating the myths with cultural forms, all these myths focus on one point; describing their history with cultural aspects. How nature stands as personification in narrating this culture, how culture played personification on gender equality, culture's suppression over woman characters.

This paper deals with how culture represents women and how a woman breaks the barriers to stand unique. It analyses the great epic The Ramayana and the versions of it in a feminist way. Though ages had seen number of versions of Ramayana it all talks about the glory of Rama, it failed to recognize the female characters they were all unspoken due to the subversion of gender.

Though myths aim in narrating history it is indeed a work of culture. Culture plays the major role in describing each character in it. As of Ramayana we can see the portrayal of Rama, and compare it with Sita's portrayal it is a vivid example of gender discrimination and their portrayal lacks in gender equality. Valmiki in his scripture portrays Sita as an epitome of purity, beauty and innocence. She's been constructed as perfect bride for Purushothama, cultural representation of Sita in Ramayana is been widely spoken since ages. Her characterization in the epic has paved way to many critics to criticize on gender inequality which existed and existing in our country, in the name of culture.

ANALYSIS

According to Cambridge dictionary, definition for feminism goes like: the belief that women should be allowed the same rights, power and opportunities as men and can be treated in the same way, or the set of activities intended to achieve this. Feminist writing begins in 18th century talks about the struggle of woman, fallacies in portraying woman characters by male writers, right to vote, right to educate and fighting for equality. Through this writing's woman begin their journey breaking stereotypes exploring all the genres.

No need to HURRY

No need to SPARKLE

No need to be ANYBODY

But ONESELF

VIRGINIA WOOLF.

She who has all the immense things in herself, she certainly finds her own glory by exploring her talents. No need for dependency, no need for comparisons each has their unique way of survival, perspectives strengths all are different. Just male and female are different sexes, it's just a difference in biological aspect; despite that both of them equally talented with their uniqueness.

Valmiki's Ramayana is the story of Rama's exile and return to Ayodha, a triumphant king who will always do right by his subjects. In Volga's retelling text, *The Liberation of Sita* narrates the life of Sita who after being abandoned by Purushothama Rama, embarks on arduous journey to self-realization. Along her journey she meets exemplifying women who have broken all the barriers in their life to stand up, to stand unique. We have the minor characters of the epic playing major role in this text. Surpanakha, Renuka, Urmila and Ahalya, are the characters faced huge transformation after being victim of male dominance. These characters are very much culture bounded plays the victim of cultural oppression.

It's a translational work; Volga had divided this text into five-chapter sublime to each character. First part talks about Sita's meeting with Surpanakha in the forest. The character which faced lot of humiliation for her disfigured face. Surpanakha once had infinite number of suitors for her beauty, now after the incident happened in forest with Rama and Lakshmana, she became much hated figure in the universe. Even her portrayal in historical books; she's been one with no character, tradition, culture and figuratively disfigured. She who hated everything after the mutilation was fuming with anger, was in search for beauty, love and peace. Finally found her destiny in the hands of Mother Nature, owned a garden and started reliving her life. she realizes beauty is not a physical attribute but the truth of nature. Having attained a state of non-dependent joy, she adorns her garden and found her soul mate in Sudhira who respects her wisdom and discernment. "As beautiful and joyous as this garden" [9] shows how loving oneself brings tremendous joyous. Through this character Sita recognizes her state and realizes how she's been victimized in the patriarch society. And prepares to spend her life with her mother, Mother earth.

The second chapter talks about the story of Ahalya, a character who's been victim of patriarchal norms of female chastity. In Volga's story she enlightens Sita with the cultural objectifications of woman. It was at couple of incidents that Sita recollected Ahalya's insightness. On their first meeting Ahalya conveys a message "that's what you think. I have spent all these years thinking about my identity in this universe. I have learned how the world runs on what morals and laws, and what their roots are. I have gained a lot of wisdom"

[28] she constantly repeats her knowledge of wisdom. How her life changes, how the society has the authority to judge her. Her female chastity been questioned even by her husband. No room for interrogations and Ahalya implies that even this act of interrogation isn't right to do so. No one has the right to judge others, "what does conduct an enquiry mean, sita? Distrust, isn't it? Wouldn't it be better, instead to believe in either your innocence or guilt?" [31] This was her statement which encompasses the new feminist concept. It was Ahalya who warned sita about her trail in future and the reasons behind it. Ahalya visibly stands as a new feminist in this re-narration of *the liberation of Sita*. This part briefly talks about Sita's final stage, decides to go back to her mother.

The third part narrates the story Renuka, the wife of sage Jamadagni, whom her own son Parasurama beheads in obedience to his father's injunction. Renuka tells Sita how *paativratyam* or fidelity of a married woman is as fragile as a sand pot. Volga uses sand pot as a personification to describing woman with virtuousness. It deals woman who are bounded with such blind belief and restricting their identity once their got into family. Although she wasn't the reason for any mistake, she plays the victim card. A fleeting feeling of desire for a *gandharva* makes her an adulterous in the eyes of her husband who then orders their son to behead her. No woman can escape such charges. It is indeed futile for a woman to anchor her identity in her marital status or in motherhood.

Her love been questioned is this what a woman deserves? Is this her identity? Isn't she has right to defend? Does she need to convince her family about her innocence? Is this what the society needed, is this is what the tradition teaches? All the questions been evoked by the characterization of Renuka. Eventually her encounter with Renuka, sita gets a clear future for her without her husband and children. During her second trail which Rama proposes to prove sita's innocence? She prefers the other way, she the daughter of Mother Earth never has any restrictions and her destiny ends in her mother's lap.

The last woman Volga discusses is sita's very own sister Urmila. She tells sita how abandoned and rejected he felt when her husband let her to accompany Rama into the forest. Out of annoyance and rage she withdrew herself into a self-composed exile within the four walls of her chambers but that wrath slowly turned into a quest for truth. She begins to self-study, self-evaluating her feelings, emotions and her relationship. She concludes that how love, hate, jealousy and respect are all are same condition" dependency on others" [76].

CONCLUSION

Through all these characters sita finds her true destiny to attain. Well it explains the cultural and political domination of women, and women being the victim of patriarchal norms for ever since the ages. Now is the time to break all the stereotypes imposed on women. Rather than fighting for equality we should recognize our identity and strive to succeed in it. This is a complete feminist view text, whereas it actually went beyond and attaining the concept of New Feminism. Literally it talks about the conventional ideas, among these four women and how they were culturally and politically bounded. In order to live a life of freedom they decide to break their silences and embark their talents.

Thus, with the contextual help of *the liberation of sita*, we apply the theory of new feminism to empower the women from Emancipating to Representation.

WORKS SITED

Kumari. Popuri Lalitha (Volga). *The Liberation of Sita*. Tran T. Vijaykumar & C. Vijayasree. 1st Ed. India: Harper Collins, 2016. Print.

Jain, Jasbir. "The Body and the Soul: Epics-The Living Tradition." *Indigenous Roots of Feminism Culture, Subjectivity and Agency*. 1st Ed. New Delhi. Sage Publication, 2011. Print.