

## **I AM 'SITA' SPEAKING- FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE FROM (DEV DUTT PATNAIK'S SITA)**

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"May you find happiness wherever you go" uttered by Janaka during her marriage, who had brought up his daughter to be autonomous, Sita was picked up by her father Janaka when he ploughed and he proudly said fatherhood springs in heart not from a seed and named bhoomija, Maithili, vaidehi and Janaki. War makes heroes out of men, but it is women who have to suffer and defeat in every way. After marriage, they entered the gates of Ayodhya, the city was decorated with leaves and flowers and lamps. Bright with patterns had been painted in front of every house to welcome the brides. They were expected to attain happiness through thought not by material things. Vashista mentioned that they are married and if their wife leaves their life they will become hermit, with no claim over property, without us they cannot perform yagna and must do tapasya. In a society man is valued on what he has. But Ram does not value himself and the same with the Ayodhya, hence he could leave Ayodhya with the smiling face. He is called as Maryada purushottam, one who follows the rules so his decision is based on emotions, but on the model social behaviour expected of a prince. Thus he gives more values to the rules than the feeling is revealed the way he treated his wife.

Surpanaka came in to disturb the harmony she fell in love with the princess hermit and the smell of their sweat intoxicated Surpanaka and approached them to marry her, where both rejected and grudge turned on me, like a beast in heart she rushed towards me to strike me though Sita warned Lakshman not to kill her but I cannot stop him from punishing her. He disfigured her by chopping her nose and taught the deceptive monster a lesson he thought whereas it turned on me and made me to admire the golden deer as she born with the love and attraction towards nature got fascinated by the golden

deer, as Ram want to see me in lofty spirit ran to fetch the Deer by cautioning Lakshman to be my side. She heard Ram's voice and sent Lakshman to rescue him by using words that should not be uttered. Her wifely fear suddenly descends to the vulgar to make him obey her words. Crossed Lakshman Rekha abducted by Ravana. From here starts the test of chastity, Sita is identified as visible image of Self-Sacrifice, Self-denial, service, purity, love and affection and is in disputedly the honoured woman captivated and carried her to the garden of Ashoka trees, invokes Kama to test her chastity. In Ramayana, there is 'Ram Rajya' but there are people like Sita and Sam Bhoo Kha who are excluded from this 'Ram Rajya',"says Samhita Arni in her Missing queen. Sita even in the captivated state enriched the people in Lanka by her skills of board games, herbs to heal and cure skin rashes and soon everyone in Lanka started playing board games, Mandodari said to Ravana 'let this wonderful girl go'.

Hanuman then come to Lanka and meets Sita as he start explaining the state of Rama bereaved by her absence. Ram with the help of Vanara attains Lanka, slains him and rescues Sita. With this Story of Ramayana should conclude but it extends as another tale to prove the chastity of the woman by testing her purity. As Ram the Maryada purushottam again proves that he is the King of Ayodhya than the husband for his wife Sita. The purity Litmus test is conducted and her chastity was questioned as Ram declares as a husband he rescued her from the Ravana but as a king of Ayodhya he cannot take her to the Kingdom, here Sita entered the fire and Agni said 'I will destroy impure things' Value of the family more than the wife is a cause of deep resentment to women across India. Ritual purity and the resulting hierarchy, has played a critical role in shaping Indian

society. Ram believes in Brahma and Agni to believe her, than Sita. Is she not seen as the woman, who suffered in Ashokavana expects her Ram to Rescue her. The Sita was liberated from her chastity test and Lanka. Is the story ends here so that we can happily conclude reading Ram and Sita lived happily hereafter.

“From the heart of the flame rose the god of fire, bearing Sita and presented her to Rama with words of blessing. Rama, now satisfied that he had established his wife’s integrity in the presence of the world, welcomed Sita back to his arms.” (In Search of Sita: 32)

It continues to the next level of tolerance, as she was doubted on her chastity and questioned about her pregnancy as she lived with her husband as a celibate and abducted by Ravana and now she is the mother. Here they got a clue to think. Woman can be questioned by anyone and Ram the scion of Ayodhya immediately reacts to the situation. She was proved her chastity by drowning herself into the fire. The stain can never be removed and the good king must listen to the people, ordered his brother lakshman to leave her in the forest.

The woman who followed her husband leaving the princely status and lived the celibate life, accompanied him in all his hurdles, abducted by Ravana lived in the Ashokavana thinking about her Ram by preserving her chastity and at ultimate drowned in fire to prove her purity now questioned by the common washerman about her chastity. Ram did not stand by her but ordered lakshman to leave her in the forest. Lakshman said sita that Ram asked him to leave her in the forest here she replies

He is dependable to his country as he follow rules and safeguard reputation. I loved him when he brought me home, followed with the same love when he went to forest, loved him when i was separated, loved him when i was rescued, loved him when he clings to me and the same loved him when he lets me go. The best place was the forest then the intolerant society. Woman finds safe in the midst of animals and herbs than the society. Ram has to be Ram for his Ayodhya. Sita was satisfied and can live happily in the forest as most of the time she

remembered that she has spent her life in the hands of Flora and Fauna. Happily she surrendered herself to the karma. She felt happy for her life being in the hands of forest the free life to live on. Absence of boundaries, in nature nothing is polluted there is no discrimination culture excludes what it does not value. Here she worried about her Ram who is bounded in the Knots of system saying relieve Ram. The trees cried for me weep for my Ram. Culture can come and go, As Ravana and Rama can come and go but woman remain as the victimhood and remain the victim for the society and culture.

Such subjects can never be complete, but this is a pretty comprehensive attempt to look at the Sita from many angles. I think most women would find many resonances with various life events of Sita. Sometimes these would guide today’s women into taking decisions and sometimes they would provide some insights. You would be amazed at the fact that a story that is as old as humans still echoes the same ethos and pathos. We continue to have face the similar dilemmas in our lives. Can you imagine how deep rooted our conditionings would be and probably this is what makes it very difficult for us to change them. Sita’s own luminous strength determines her identity and self-respect. She has an aura about her, which does not admit contrary intrusions.” How true!(In search of Sita)

“Why do you speak like a common man to an ordinary woman?” Praakrutah praakrutaamiva. The gentle, direct question addressed by Sita to Rama on the battlefield reveals her true self. She had immense reserves of inner strength. Perhaps her self-chosen fire-ordeal has led some critics to think of her as weak. A considerable section of feminists have assumed that the Indian woman suffers from the Sita-syndrome. (In search of Sita : 8).

Is it not women whirl around the society, culture and tradition bounded by the rules and norms. Ram has to prove himself as the scion of Raghu clan and everytime Sita was questioned and led to sufferings. Sita strongly face any situation that come across becomes common ordeal for any women to do the same. As every day the litmus test was conducted and she had to prove the test. She brought her twins and taught them to respect women and nature. When the situation came for

her that she has to leave her sons in the hands of their father. She retained with the idea that she never go to Ayodhya where she was questioned by the society and asked her mother earth to accept her by not willing to return to Scion of Ayodhya. Would the pain have been less had she chastised him before she left? Would the pain have been less had they at least spoken before she left? Would the pain have been less had she at least looked at him before she left? But then she was under no obligation. She was very much liberated of being Ram's wife. But he would always be Sita's Husband. The prominent place given to her husband Sita Ram than Ram's Sita. Sita Ram would be ideal to call and to preserve. Ram had to prove his Ram Rajya, had to kill demon Ravana, had to obey his father's promise. He had to be the king of Ayodhya. To satisfy all these roles, Sita's chastity and purity was always tested and questioned. Who was Sita? Is she an apt role model? What can we learn from her? Have we misunderstood her all these years? What can Sita teach us about our own womanhood, our femininity and feminism? More so do we have the tenacity and veracity to be the women that we are, to let our true selves shine? At a time when her chastity was in question, she submits obediently the first time but when questioned the second time, she chose to return from where she came-to mother Earth proving not only her chastity but the fact that maybe her consort was not fit enough to have someone as strong and divine like her for company. This attitude of refusing to be treated as a doormat and having an equal say with mind of her own catches the interest of the readers. It is not just Sita's pain that you hear about, but assessments of femininity as seen from other perspectives. For instance, Surpanakha and Mandodari also suffered for being related to Ravana, evil personified in the conventional version of the epic. In the story "Fragments from the Book of Beauty" by Priya Sarukkai Chabria, Mandodari tries to coax Sita to forego her pride and accept Ravana.

"What is your chastity worth, Sita?" she asks. "Heed my words and you can avert our shared tragedy... Need women be trophies of war, fought over for honour? Do you need to be rescued? Can't you rescue yourself?"(In search of Sita:53)

The prince fought a tough battle and won her back. Following taunts from the public about his wife's

chastity, however, the prince decided that the young bride had to go through an agni pariksha, or fire test. Though her chastity was proved, the prince would not accept her – again, in view of the larger picture – and she found herself headed for yet another exile, this time alone. Everyone praised the righteous prince and he lived in prosperity ever after.

That, very broadly, is the story of the Ramayana, as commonly narrated everywhere in India, where the concepts of "righteousness" and "greater good" have been purveyed through the generations, often overriding the many alternative voices. Sita was a superior character, silent suffering and enduring patience like that of Earth itself made her touchstone of morality. Sonal Mansingh in *Sita's luminous strength* says "Both the epics revolve around women's honour and dishonour. In the Ramayana, surpanaka, who is the governor of Dandak Van, seeks revenge when she is humiliated by Rama and Lakshmana and they, in turn, wage a war when Sita is abducted. In Mahabharata, Draupadi's dishonour results in the great war between the Pandavas and the kauravas." But both Sita and Draupadi are extremely powerful women, who not only have a firm grip over their own lives but also greatly influences events and personalities with their strong convictions and ideas. Buddha leaves his wife to find freedom from suffering whereas Ram rescues his wife and then abandons her in order to uphold rules of a society in his role as King. One speaks of Monasticism and later explicit the moral courage to take up social responsibilities. Ramayana is not the story of Ram. It is the story of Ram's relationship with Sita and through her his relationship with the humans of Ayodhya, the monkeys of Kishkinda and the demons of Lanka. Take away Sita and there is no Ramayana and finally Ram is incomplete.

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