



Re-Imagining Sita in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *The Forest of Enchantments*: A Spiritual Ecofeminist Reading

Gheeta Chandran, Foong Soon Seng & Raphael Thoo Yi Xian

Abstract

The Forest of Enchantments (2019) by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni narrates the epic Ramayana from Sita's voice, one of the prominent female characters in Indian Literature. Through myriads of Sita, the text focuses not just on her spiritual being but her identity as a woman. This novel warrants a study as it explores Sita's immense strength and humanizes her journey amidst the unknown and mysterious forest. The study intends to examine the relationship between Sita and the nature, because the forest in this tale is an imperative source of empowerment. Sita draws her strength in her painful solidarity and exile in the forest. It provides her voice, wisdom and agency to concede that each individual has their own insights of dharma, Sita argues and challenges the stark dichotomy between good and bad, instating that perspective is something that differs. In the line the cultural ecofeminist current that initially dominated justified women's interest in the preservation or well-being of the environment in terms of their inherent caring or nurturing nature and their common subjection to patriarchal systems, the paper intends to investigate relationship between Sita and environment. The paper also aims to study the association of a woman with nature that is embraced as a source of power and the ways in which Sita's relationship to the environment empowers her to speak for all the other women of Ramayana, even those outcasts and undermined, creating a more modern and liberal version of women in Indian mythology. Thus, this is an important study in current time as it aims to explore Sita with agency in the different stages of the narrative.

Keywords: Ecofeminism, Spirituality, Women Empowerment, Oppression, Indian Literature, Mythology.