Re-inventing of Sita's Character through the Analyses of Devdutt Pattanaik's *Sita: An Illustrated Retelling of the Ramyana*

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Abstract: Of late, experimenting with mythology has become a fabulous trend. The writers who retell the stories from mythology enjoy creative liberty as they do not retreat back in fear of crossing the *laxman rekha* set for writers, rather they perceive mythology from the perspective of modern readers and adapt it accordingly. These writers enjoy adding new hues, colours, flavour and undertones to the existing literature. There is no denying the fact that they have not only popularised the mythology but have also made it vox populi. They have added a new tinge to the research as well. Julie Sanders in *Adaptation and Appropriation* has rightly asserted that adaptation transposes a specific medium into another generic mode and such an adaptation makes a straightforward effort to make the text relevant to present day audiences. Adapting the epic Ramyana, Devdutt Pattaniak retells the Ramyana in *Sita: An Illustrated Retelling of Ramyana.* Though the writer renders fresh twists to the epic, he nowhere seems to play with the basic elements that remain unfailing till the end. In this paper, the endeavour of the researcher will be to analyse Devdutt Pattanaik's book to explore how his version of the epic is different from that of the real one. The focus of the study in this paper is to explore how Valmiki's sita and Devdutt Pattanaik's Sita differ significantly in their narrative and characterisation.

Keywords: *The Ramyana*, Mythology, Devdutt Pattanaik, Sita, Valmiki, Adaptation

The history of retelling and adapting literature is very old. Homer's great epics, *The Iliad* and The *Odyssey* have been adapted and retold repeatedly by various authors for the new readers from different perspectives. These retellings have rendered new interpretations and shades to the original epics. In ancient times, stories were told and retold by word of mouth as an integral part of oral traditions. Till date, Homers epics have been adapted into comics, movies, poems and novels. And by doing so, the audience and creators have consistently sought spaces for, what Catherine Coker

states, "exploration, reinterpretation, and reimagining of existing stories and their associated subjects." (Usmani and Fatma 433)

Indian mythology—as a rich and wide-ranging collection of stories, legends and epics— has offered authors and story tellers across the globe a decent material to read, appraise, and even recreate. In doing so, the authors change forms of conventional mythology to address the issues that the modern society of today come across. However, the authors do not change the basic plot or essence of the story by allowing it to remain original. Since these stories have been passed down from one generation to the other and people's faith and culture has remained unshakable for the centuries, the incessant upsurge in the mythological content is not a matter of disbelief. This is deep rooted faith in mythology and its teachings that each retelling or adaptation reinterprets texts from mythology to create narratives with the aim to address the concerns in mythical narratives and by doing so a modern twist is rendered to the narrative chosen from mythology. This fact is proved true in relation to Raja Rao who looks back to the Indian mythologies and connects them with the contemporary events and lends to them a peculiar native colour and resonance (Jhajhnodia 31). Rajeshwar Mittapalli and Pier Paolo Piciucco have aptly asserted that Raja Rao draws "inspiration from the Indian myths and legends, episodes and anecdotes, and creates an ethos all of its own" (Qtd. in Jhajhnodia). His novel, *Kanthapura* is a fine example in which anti-colonial awareness is raised through characters. The novel tells the story of Indian freedom movement from the perspective of an old rural woman. The critics have appraised the novel as a fabled tale of Ram's victory over Ravana, embodying the triumph of good over evil. Likewise, R.K. Narayna, Raja Rao's contemporary, also draws upon mythology— Puranas and other Indian scriptures— and intertwines his tales in the backdrop of myths. In his *The Man-eaters of Malgudi* the myth of Bhasmasura has been explored in order to establish a pattern of self-destructive development in the modern times. (32-33)

Besides Raja Rao and R K Narayana, the well-known Indian authors who have adapted and retold mythology are Amish Tripathi, Chitra Bannerjee Divakaruni, Devdutt Pattanaik, Anand Neelakantan, Ashwin Sanghi, Kavita Kane, and Anuja Chandramouli. They perceive mythology from

the perspective of present-day readers by reimagining and remoulding ancient stories and characters to suit their readers' taste. These authors have displayed interest in retelling and adapting the mythology as it deals with universal themes that have not lost their lustre and relevance even today. The all-encompassing themes, such as love, duty, morality, and human condition are dealt with so finely that they not only entertain the modern readers but also inspire them to face the challenges and concerns in life. Obviously, these authors have done yeoman's service by passing down traditions by retelling mythologies as this process helps preserve cultural heritage and traditional stories and in this way history is also kept alive as mythology does contain historical and cultural references. In addition, retelling mythologies plays an important role in exploring unexplored themes, motifs and characters.

The Ramyana was composed in 200 B.C, and even today it continues to be one of the distinguished Indian epics. It is one of the most valued Hindu epics that has been retold and reinterpreted in various forms of arts, literature, and media. It is not for nothing that the epic itself has 300 versions of itself (Kulkarni 712). The epic is adapted and retold not only in various Indian languages, but also by Southeast Asian countries, such as Indonesia, Thailand, Myanmar, Vietnam, Cambodia, Malaysia etc. The basic story line remains unchanged in these versions. However, there are minor alterations, such as in the Philippines' version of *the Ramyana* there is no fire ordeal to purify Sita after the rescue. The story ends with a safe arrival home (Francisco 109). In this way we see how the great Indian epic, *The Ramyana* serves, across many countries, the treasure house of Indian narratology. Priyanka P.S. Kumar expresses her views, "The two great epics, *the Ramyana* and *the Mahabharata* provide many stories and sub-stories which form the richest treasure house of Indian narratology. Apart from providing an infinite number of tales, they provide an umbrella concept of fictional resources that appeal to the Indian mind…. They cover all areas of human psychology and resolve many intellectual and moral questions. These features of the epics provide profuse scope for retelling." (793)

Continuing this series of retelling, Devdutt Pattanaik's *Sita*: *An Illustrated Retelling of the Ramyana* (2013) is a fine example of retelling of the *Ramyana* that offers a renewed insight into the

epic story, concentrating on Sita's character, choices, and significance in the narrative. Though the writer renders fresh twists to the epic, he nowhere seems to play with the basic elements that remain unfailing till the end. In this paper, the endeavour of the researcher is to analyse Devdutt Pattanaik's book to explore how his version of the epic is different from that of the real one. The focus of the study is to explore how Valmiki's Sita and Devdutt Pattanaik's Sita differ significantly in their narrative and characterisations. The book undoubtedly delves into Sita's thoughts, feelings, and experiences, making her a central figure in the narrative. The Valmiki's Ramyana, in its base and structure, is constructed on the notion of patriarchy where the main hero Ram is celebrated as the centre point of the narrative. He enjoys an adequate amount of textual space as compared to Sita, Ram's wife, who is seen as a typical ideal wife, and is exposed as "passive, subservient, docile, self-sacrificing and intensely loyal to her husband" (Halder and Mishra 2084). She voluntarily accompanies her husband into exile and unwaveringly supports him despite the trials and tribulation she comes across. Owing to these typical traditional traits that strengthen patriarchy and, at the same time, shape its perception of women's morality, Sita in Valmiki's Ramyana is often praised and portrayed as an exemplary role model attracting approbation. However, Devdutt Pattanaik's *Sita*: *An Illustrated Retelling of the Ramyana* justifies how the modern retellings of *the Ramyana* has kept the quintessence of the epic undamaged and provides counter-narrative to fit the mythological story into its modern-day rendering.

Pattanaik's *Sita* is not a simple retelling of Valmiki's Ramyana, rather a re-examination of "Sita's depiction and its influence on Indian narrative tradition, norms, and culture" (2091). Pattanaik juxtaposes culture with nature. Culture implies that society is bound by rules, whereas nature neither conforms nor imposes any boundaries. He makes a fine use of metaphors, motifs, patterns and symbols to solidify his standpoint. Pattanaik's suggestive prose style brings with the full intensity all emotions, such as affection, love, greed, lust, loyalty and malice. By doing so, the author does not give any reinterpretation in itself, rather it tells the same story as we know it but from the perspective of Sita. Besides, he also brings to the mind of his readers the lesser-known back stories of

Rishyashringa—the son-in-law of Dashratha— who arranges a *yagna* so that Dashratha may father sons. (Pattanaik 15). Valmiki's *Ramyana* does not refer to Rishyashringa as a son-in-law. Later versions turn Rishyaranga into son-in-law perhaps to dismiss allusions that Rishyashringa was brought to perform niyoga, an ancient practice of getting a hermit to make childless women pregnant (16). Pattanaik also mentions Sunaina, the mother of Sita (17). Though Valmiki's *Ramyana* does not mention the name of Sita's mother. The name Sunaina or Sunetra comes from later regional works (18). He also tells the story of Kaikeyi as the brave queen who served as the king's charioteer and saved his life. The story of saving Dashratha's life in battle also comes from later narratives (69). It is again Pattanaik who acquaints the readers to Sita as inquisitive and intelligent girl.

Valmiki scripted the larger-than-life *Ramyana* in Sanskrit in 2nd century (Tyagi 1). This epic has predominantly established gender norms and roles in India, especially in capturing the larger concept of womanhood. Sita has appeared as a well-intentioned role model of emulation for feminine principles, suitably allied with oft-quoted episodes from the classic text. Nevertheless, Devdutt Pattanaik challenges the traditional image of Sita in his book, *Sita*: *An Illustrated Retelling of the Ramyana* and offers a more diverse detail than the previous renditions presented centuries ago. His narrative is constituted around Sita. She is presented as a human being having humane qualities, in contrast to the Goddess image as rendered in numerous ancient texts. Pattanaik reveals, in the words of Arunidhati Venkatesh, "details that we seldom hear about, lesser-known back-stories…she is independent, not abandoned (1). Komal Tyagi has precisely affirmed, "The powerful writing of this book reveals the details that are seldom heard about in Valmiki or Tulsidas's versions of the *Ramyana*, which only appear as tales that venerate and equalize King Ram and Ikshvaku clan with no particular emphasis on smaller incidents related to the female characters." (2)

Pattanaik's book delivers the message of giving value to the girl child. In the one hand Dashratha discarded his daughter, Shanta, for want of a son, on the other it is Janaka who feelingly adopts Sita. It is when the farmers invited their king to be the first to plough the land with a golden hoe. "Suddenly the king stopped. The furrow revealed a golden hand: tiny fingers rising up like grass,

as if drawn by the sunshine. Janaka moved the dirt away, a baby, a girl, healthy and radiant, smiling joyfully, as if waiting to be found" (Pattanaik 9). Though the daughter is not his, he asserts that fatherhood is derived from the heart rather than biological reproduction. He hugs the child stating, "This is Bhumija, daughter of the earth. You may call her Maithli, princess of Mithila, or Vaidehi, lady from Videha, or Janaki, she who chose Janaka. I will call her Sita, she who was found in a furrow, she who chose me to be her father" (10). Today when girl child is not welcome and sex ratio is alarmingly decreasing, Janaka appears a motivating force to love girl child and give them a due space. Here, it is worth mentioning that Devdutt's portrayal of Sita interrogates conventional norms and challenges us to visualize historical truth. Janaka wishes to explore the human mind and body, the universe encompassing the body, and all the Veda signifying knowledge. This aspirations springs in his heart as he is inspired by Sulabha, a visionary and remarkable woman. He organises a meeting of all learned scholars from Aryavrata so that they may share their knowledge and wisdom on Vedas. Thus is arranged a global gathering of scholars in Sita's domain to help to widen the human perspective (Halder and Mishra 2092). How Sita is imparted knowledge and education right from her childhood is clear from the lines, "Sita attended the conference with her father, at first clinging on to his shoulders, then seated on his lap, and finally following him around, observing him engage with hundreds of sages, amongst them Ashtavakra, Gargi and Yagnavalkya." (Pattanaik 19)

Devdutt's Sita strongly champions the cause of women's education as it is central to Indian culture and their role in compilation of the *Upanishads* cannot be repudiated. Nevertheless, it is a matter of concern that the present generation that are well versed with mythological texts through folk performance, never observe the same happening in Videha. On the contrary, they are witness to how women are kept at bay from higher orders of knowledgeable and scholarly learning. It is observed that erudite female philosophers and writers were negligible in number as compared to male sages. Women philosophers who got the opportunity of receiving education were revered as Goddesses, and amidst all that, the notion of their being human is lost in oblivion. It is not for nothing that John Stuart Mill expresses his anger at this, "Nothing can exceed the habitual contempt which

Hindus entertain for their women…. They are held in extreme degradation, excluded from the sacred books, deprived of education" (Tyagi 5). There is no doubt that Sita becomes a torch holder to champion the cause of women for education and honour in society. If we can aspire for Ramrajya, why can't we envisage 'Sitarajya' where women are held in high esteem and not denied of their rights? Sita can become a role model of women to scale heights of success in the field of education.

Sita is portrayed as inquisitive with a thirst for gaining knowledge in every field and this provides an antithesis of gendered role-division in *Sita*. Sita wondered: "who fed hundreds of sages who had made Mithila their home, who gave them a place to sleep, who filled their pots with water to moisten their mouth parched by intense conversation?" (Pattanaik 22) This inquisitiveness and concern reveals her philanthropic bearing. This desire to satisfy her keenness leads Sita to her mother's kitchen, "Before long, Sita found her feet around the kitchen: peeling, cutting, churning, pickling, streaming, roasting, frying, pounding, mixing, kneading, experiencing various textures, aromas, flavours and chemistry. Her senses became familiar with the secrets of spices, and every kind of nourishment provided by the plant and animal kingdom" (22). Sita's desire for knowledge makes her well versed with the knowledge of both the worlds of culinary and the court. She is one step ahead of her parents as "Sita's father never knew of the world that was the kitchen. Sita's mother never knew the world that was the court. But Sita realized she knew both. This is how the mind expands, she thought to herself. This is how Brahma becomes the brahman. She has the privilege of both—seeker of wisdom as well as transmitter of wisdom. Valmiki's *Ramyana* portrays women as delicate. Sita is represented as docile and Urmila as sleeping for fourteen years awaiting her husband, Lakshmana. Mandavi and Shutkriti are not mentioned post-marriage. However, they are assigned significant roles in Pattanaik's *Sita* as bright ladies who relish engaging in talks. (Halder and Mishra 2093)

Consequently, Sita becomes a role model for the present generation. If a princess can learn to master various talents, why not all women around the world? It is only because Janaka offered opportunities to his daughter, whereas the women today are mostly devoid of that. Even today, girls

are forced to opt for the profession that teach them how to serve in a better way whereas boys are given the choice to choose from a variety of professions. Ann Oakley, a British sociologist and supporter of the Women's Liberation Movement comes down strongly on the side of culture as the determinant of gender roles. She says, “Not only is the division of labour by sex not universal, but there is no reason why human culture should not be diverse and endlessly variable. They are the creation of human inventiveness rather than invincible biological forces” (Haralembos and Heald 373).

Pattanaik’s Sita is not docile and feeble, rather she is a strong woman having strength of mind, body and heart. She is given the responsibility of cleaning the entire palace. She enters the armoury with the intention of cleaning cumbersome Shiva’s bow. Despite being warned by her sisters she retorts, “Still it needs to be cleaned” (Pattanaik 47) She effortlessly picks up the bow with one hand and vigorously wipes its under surface with the other. The Valmiki’s *Ramyana* does not depict Sita as having strength to lift the bow, but it is part of the folklore from where Pattanaik has picked up the episode (48). Since women cannot be expected to be strong as they are looked down upon for having masculine features, Sita’s act led to an instant shock. It is shocking that her strength is marked with her limitations. On the contrary if such strength is displayed by men it is considered fortitude in men and is eulogised accordingly. Even today, women sportspersons in the field of Kabaddi, boxing and wrestling appear disagreeable even after winning laurels for the country.

Pattanaik depicts how Sita and her sisters are not docile. They resist wherever necessary. When Ram kills Tadaka, the Videha sisters—Urmila, Mandavi and Shrutakriti—challenge the process of her last rites and shower questions about birth, death, nature, equilibrium, and resurrection. Like an environmentalist they ask the logic behind destroying forests, thus, giving a strong message to procure ecosystem. The questioning and challenging tone is seen with amazement. “It did not escape Vishwamitra’s notice that Janaka’s daughters asked questions like Gargi of the Upanishad; Dashratha’s Sons preferred obeying commands. Different seeds nurtured in different fields by different farmers produce very different crops indeed.” (41) Komal Tyagi has summed up precisely:

> In the ideal *Ramrajya*, such talent was befitting only to fetch a suitable groom but in hypothetical 'Sitarajya', the sisters (female scholars) could possibly be sages theorizing concepts and producing academic treatise. The enormous intellectual base was not put to the purpose of national development or larger comprehension. The repositories of such knowledge were given away in marriage, and the academic and martial intellect was neither employed for domestic bliss nor compilation of national framework of laws. (7)

Pattanaik not only interprets Sita's character as having physical strength but she is also depicted as strong at heart. When Ram's mother articulates her concern about the well- being of her sons during exile, Sita with unique confidence and poise reassures her, "Mother. Do not worry for your sons. In summer, I shall find shady trees under which they can rest. In winter, I shall light fires to keep them warm. During the rains, I shall find where we can stay dry. They are safe with me." (Pattanaik 82). Thus she proves equally phlegmatic and stoic like Ram. Sita, here, is not demure as she has mind of her own. She rebukes Ram for not being man enough and for being afraid of taking his wife along (83). She convinces Ram strongly and tries to dispel his doubts about her strength:

> I do not need your permission. I am your wife and I am supposed to accompany you, to the throne, into war and to the forest. What you eat, I shall taste. Where you sleep, I shall rest. You are the shaft of the bow that is our marriage; you need the string to complete it. My place is beside you, nowhere else. Fear not, I will be no burden; I can take care of myself as long as I am beside you and behind you, you will want for nothing. (82)

Here, Sita displays exceptional quality of being not dependent on others and thus refutes the conventional belief that women are reliant on men and need protection of their male counterparts. Pattanaik does nowhere seem to endorse women's reliance as daughters, wives, sisters and mothers. He has strongly undermined the notion of women's dependence on men. Though Sita is projected as tiresome, dependent, and trailing in the ancient versions of *Ramayana*, Pattanaik's Sita, in his retelling, seldom behaves as a dependent and helpless woman. She becomes a perfect

companion and human being when she arguments on dharma, nature, charity, mistreatment, and selflessness.

In the retelling of Pattanaik, Sita is rendered animal lover and a naturalist. Whereas Ram and Lakshman enjoy hunting, Sita is pained to see animals being killed. She questions Ram, "Must you hunt these poor beasts?" And once she asks, "Can't you just enjoy them as run through the forests, towards pastures or prey, or away from predators?" (121) She conveys the great message to the people of today who harm nature for their selfish motives and create imbalance in environment. She is not a passive listener to the conversation between Ram and Lakshman. She argues with them on any subject that needs attention. She seems to support independence when she says, "These days in the forest, I am sure you think they are bad. But I think they are good. There is so much freedom here in the forest, no rules and rituals and rites that bind us back home." (122).

Sita is a woman of great will power and self-confidence. She is not afraid of her abductor, Ravana as she refused to look at her abductor. She would not give him the satisfaction of seeing her wail and whimper in fear (134). She is a judicious planner who can make use of her wits during crisis. When worried how Ram would know where she is being taken by Ravana, "She pulled off her armlets and anklets, the chains around her neck and her earrings, and began dropping them below, hoping they would create a trail for Ram to follow" (135). Thus, she manages to maintain her poise during predicament and proves herself a planner in the teeth of quandary. Sita is shown here not as helpless but as alert and resourceful. Realizing she cannot escape; she thinks of a way to let her husband know her whereabouts.

Sita's philosophy of love is remarkable. This philosophy of hers guides today's generations. She is not ready to accept Trijata's opinions that Ravana loves Sita as he gives all she wants and protects her jealously. Sita backlashes at this:

> This is not love. He does not see me. He just wants to possess me, and finds it frustrating that I do not submit to him. Love is not about power, it is about giving up power, a voluntary submission before one's beloved. Love is about seeing; I see Ram,

and Ram sees me. I have shown Ram my vulnerabilities without trepidation and so has he. Ravana cannot love another because he sees no one, not even himself. (145)

Sita is presented in this book as a philosopher and guide. Sita's words appear strange to Trijata in whose custody she is entrusted with in the Ashok Vatika by her abductor. Trijata repeats everything she hears to the women of Lanka, "She (Sita) does not consider herself inferior to men, even though she willingly walks behind her husband" (146). Trijata is astounded to think what gives so much confidence to Sita. Sita is not only an exceptional cook, planner, philosopher and guide but also a physician, motivator and sportsperson. "She knew herbs that could heal, cure skin rashes unblock noses and aid the movement of bowels. And most exciting of all, she showed them board games that they could play" (147). It is the power of her motivation every house in Lanka People are seen playing board games designed by Sita. "She turned Lanka into a playground where everyone laughed and smiled." It is this power of Sita that Ravana wife, Mandodari is forced to tell Ravana, "You set out to conquer her heart. And she has ended up conquering all over our hearts. Let this wonderful girl go" (147)

Sita is so fearless that even in the house of her abductor, she replaces the taste and aroma of demons' food with that of prepared by her. "So enticing was the resulting aroma that other rakshasa cooks came to the Ashoka grove and asked Sita for cooking tips" (225) This swapping of aroma symbolises victory of good over evil.

Sita also symbolises power and destruction of evil. It is post Agni-priksha—an incident most debated and for which Ram is questioned. Sita is seated next to Ram. They are attacked by a thousand-headed demon said to be the twin of Ravana. "Before Ram could reach for his bow, everyone saw an incredible sight. Sita suddenly transformed. Her eyes widened, her skin turned red, her hair came unbound, and she sprouted many arms with which she grabbed the sticks and stones of the vanaras and the sword and spears of the rakshasas…. She ripped out his entrails, chopped away his limbs, crushed his heads, broke his knees and drank his blood" (254). Everyone was stunned by the realization that Sita was Gauri who was Kali. "She had allowed herself to be abducted. She had

allowed herself to be rescued. She was the independent Goddess who had made Ram the dependable God" (254). This episode justifies that Sita was equally strong and had power to fight back. Komal Tyagi has rightly asserted, "The meaning of their strength and willingness to serve (both women and tribals) has been misconstrued into submission. If only one could reverse the image; and imagine that Ram was abducted, then Sita too could have raised an army and brought him back, after all, Devdutt's Sita has better Military familiarity and finer resource management skills" (9). Yes, she is right. If the women can join army today and fight fierce battles, why could Sita not fight ferociously?

The episode of Agni-pariksha holds crucial implication in restricting and defining the boundaries for the female in India. Vinod K. Chopra highlights how woman's honour and chastity is held dear and valued in Indian society:

> It has been observed that in most national histories, the countries have idealised virtues of woman and public roles of men. Mythology, too, reinforces these perceptions. Sita and Savitri are two characters held up as ideals of Indian womanhood. However, Sita had to prove her fidelity and chastity by undergoing a trial by fire since she had been in Ravana's custody for a while. She is to most Hindu women the epitome of the proper wife. She represents the ideal towards which all should strive. (119-20)

Pattanaik's *Sita* brings us closer to meaningful dialogue between Sita and Lakshman immediately after the Agni-pariksha episode and subsequent desertion:

> 'Ram is dependable, hence God, I am independent, hence goddess. He needs to do his duty, follow rules, and safeguard reputation. I am under no such obligation. I am free to do as I please: love him when he brings me home, love him when he goes to the forest, love him when I am separated from him, love him when I am rescued by him, love him when clings to me, love him even when he lets me go.'
>
> 'But you are innocent,' said Lakshman, tears streaming down his face.
>
> 'And if I was not? Would it then be socially appropriate and legally justified for a husband to throw his woman out of his house? A jungle is preferable to such an intolerant society.'

> …. with a smile, she said 'I know the forest well, Lakshman. I remember more years here than in the palace. Do not worry about me. I am not happy with this situation, but I accept it and will make the most of it. Thus I submit to karma without letting go of dharma.' (278-79)

Sita stays back in the forest. She has a quality of being calm in every situation. Here, she seems much poised and calmer as compared to Ram. She believes, "when the farmer abandons the field, the field is finally free to return to being a forest." (279) This man-woman communication in *Sita* indicates the fact that the female is a 'natural scientist'. She knows how to strike a social equilibrium through grooming of individual personality by choosing appropriate principles of cultivation. "She could choose between being a manicure garden or a feral forest whenever required, which leads the readers to believe that this retelling of the mythological text sows the seeds of feminism." (Tyagi 10)

Finally, Sita also strikes an amicable bond with the Sarupnakha who is in pain. Through the character of Sita, Pattanaik highly speaks of the female alliance—a sort of sisterhood. She sets an example by consoling Sarupnakha. Sita accepts that though both are wronged by men but she does not feel pain, hate or rage against anyone. She inspires her, "Ram and Ravana come and go. Nature continues. I would rather enjoy nature" (Pattanaik 281). This specific instance restores peace in the mind and nature. And this is, no doubt, built upon the pattern of a shared understanding of the core issues that influence women universally leading to their possible solutions. On a larger context, this event between Sita and Sarupnakha paves the way for the hope of love and understanding even between enemies. Thus to conclude, Pattanaik's narrative counters the conventional viewpoint of women as dependent. He portrays Sita as independent. The conception this retelling endeavours to place is to withstand an "equilibrium in political engagement, create a contemporary socio-cultural atmosphere for all genders, and offer fresh viewpoints on social comprehension." (Halder and Mishra 2094)

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