

# Deconstructing the Post-Feminist Outlook of Sita and Draupadi: An Analytical Approach

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**Abstract**—The research paper will explore the outlook of the post-feminism approach. It will unravel the notion of post-feminism and traverse the journey from a Feminist approach to a post-feminist approach with a unique reference to Sita and Draupadi, the memorable feminine characters from the great Indian Epics Ramayana and Mahabharata. First and foremost, the paper focuses on exfoliating feminist ideology, and further, with the continuation of the thought process, the study comments on views on Indian mythology. Ultimately, summarising the whole notion, there will be a conversation about the remarkable feminine characters Sita and Draupadi, who eventually emerged as a strong woman under the dominance of a patriarchal society and thereby embody the notion of feminist ideology for the young women through which they have illuminated the world of Academia with the captivating hues of Post Feminism which have revitalised in the Cascade of Epic Literature.

**Index Terms**—Feminist Approach, Feminine characters, Indian Mythology, Epic Literature, Post- Feminism, Feminism

## I. FEMINIST IDEOLOGY

“A strong woman knows that she has strength enough for the journey, but women of strength know, it is in the journey where she will become strong” (<https://www.goodreads.com/quotebyLukeEaster>).

In light of the thoughtful lending of the Feminist perspective, the present study seeks to envision and comprehend Feminist Ideology with a substantial study of the mythological heroines Sita and Draupadi, often worshipped as the epitome of Postfeminism in the contemporary world. With the development of the ongoing thought process, the present approach seeks to endeavour and encapsulate the historical references to this ideology to comprehend the genre better and, therefore, to furnish it in the cascade of Epic Literature. Initially, the study discusses the notion of feminism as an ideology that tends to focus on the equal treatment of women compared to men. They

have long fought for this equality for ages in the historical and contemporary world. However, their main concern for equality lies in the social and political ethos of the modern world.

In lieu of the thought process, the study tends to enhance the understanding of the notion of Feminism as an intreated system of women’s belief, which throws light on women’s equality by men, which is further restricted through the waves of feminism, whose main objective was to unravel the inner thought process with the strong image of robust and independent women under the supremacy of male-dominated society. In addition, the study revisits the panorama of Indian mythology. It adds colour to this ongoing thought process by alluding to the two women characters duly worshipped and reckoned as Sita (Ramayana) and Draupadi (Mahabharata) in legendary narratives in the literary canopy. Building upon the discussion, the study evaluates their similarities and differences. But despite everything, they have endured a long battle with society, created their own independent identity in Epic Literature, and have become role models for the younger generations in literary academia. Hence, by encapsulating the whole thought process of Feminism and Feminist Ideology, the study enriches the perception with the thoughts of Mary Wollstonecraft (a pioneer of Feminism), which have added richness to the thought process through her prolific words, where she conjectures:

*“My sex, I hope, will excuse me  
if I treat them like rational creatures,  
instead of flattering their fascinating graces and  
viewing them as if  
they were in a perpetual childhood, unable to stand  
alone.”*

(Wollstonecraft)

## II. INDIAN MYTHOLOGY

With the flow of ideas, the study tends to furnish a Feminist Analogy of ideas. With the progression, the study revisits the mythological epics of Ramayana and Mahabharata with the potent figures of Sita and Draupadi in a literary canopy. It seeks to travel through the meadows of Mythology literature and explore the world of classical epics for the upcoming generations. Thus, Indian mythology and literature are copiously known to the outside world via fables and Orality culture channels. In the light of this tradition of Orality, the treasure of India's past is communicated to the audience through fables and folklore. Similarly, the patterns changed from Orality to written literature, and the digital or New Media world was further created to communicate folklore and fables to the younger generations.

#### A. Folktales in storytelling

In lieu of the ongoing thought process, the study focuses on some Indian authors who have stated their views on Mythology to enrich the ongoing research and provide some aspects of it to the readers. To begin with, Vikram Singh Thakur, an Indian author whose main area lies in 'Bard of England', presented his views on mythology in his paper Impact, where he stated his perspective about Mythology. As he asserts: "The Mythical stories across cultures are viewed as an embodiment of beliefs, values and philosophies that serve the national interests of people" (<https://oaji.net/moderntellingofindianmythsastudyofrerehashingmythologythroughpopularfictions>).

Pertaining to the thought process, another Indian Author of Mahabharata in Adi Parva Churning of the Ocean written by Amruta Patil, has presented his views by asserting: "Mythology is one of the earliest efforts to engage with and document human psychology" (<https://www.ijcrt.org/AstudyofretellinginIndianmythologywithspecialreferencetositaabookbydevduttattanika>).

However, these viewpoints of Indian authors give an impression of the ideology of Mythology. Mythology is a cluster of stories, and the assembled stories are known as Epic. However, sometimes, these epics create a sense of allurements to the readers and audience by providing them with a source of encouragement and pleasure. With the development of digital media, these Mythological stories have created many television shows based on this Mythology where the context or story remains the same. However,

despite that, characters, dialogue, scenes, and episodes sometimes add beauty and influence the audience. They are shown in highly exaggerated forms in literary academia. However, these folk tales have deeply impacted Indian culture, through which young writers or aspiring authors always take the base of these epics and then create their masterpieces in a literary domain. Even though many Indian writers have tried to revise the great epics in the literary world by elucidating some of the examples, which could be cited as Devdutt Pattanaik: Sita an Illustrated Retelling of the Ramayana

Amish Tripathi: Sita – Warrior of Mithila

#### B. Post-Feminist Approach

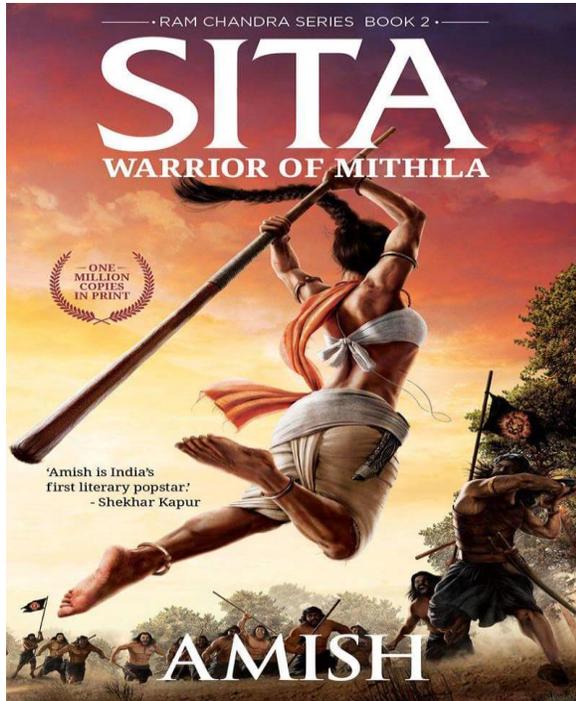
By exploring the concept of Feminism and Feminist Ideology, the study focuses on the Post-Feminist Approach. owing to the lucid expression, post-feminism emerges as an ideology that deals with the issues of the 2nd and 3rd waves, which have yet to be achieved in the contemporary world. Thus, to ensure the achievements of these issues, Post Feminism heralded the academia of women's perceptions and individualistic expression, which in turn gave rise to many new theories, and, most importantly, the concept of new womanhood added finesse to literary academia. In addition, theoretically, post-feminism commenced somewhat during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. But the term was familiarised in 1919 in the Journal "Female Literary Radicals", in which the revolutionists stated that;

"We are interested in people now, not in men and women, that moral, social, economic, and political standards should not have anything to do with sex, that it would be a pro-woman without being anti-man, and then their stance is called "Post-Feminist" (<https://en.wikipedia.org/postfeminism>).

However, the post-feminism approach has given the image of new womanhood to the woman who seems to be independent, making their own choices, and, most importantly, have formed their own identity in contemporary society. However, this evolution of new women who have been submissive and inferior throughout their lives under the patriarchal system of society is now emerging in society and further becoming role models for the upcoming generations. Therefore, this emergence was stated as post-feminism in a literary canopy. Further, the thought process rereads substantially the past decades of Indian Mythology, which saw the emergence of the two

strong female characters who had struggled hard and fought for their own independent identity under the male-dominated society, becoming the epitome of the young women generations.

C. Sita



Sita (Ram's wife) questioned the societal norms regarding 'Women's Chastity', although she had gone through Agnipariksha, the criteria set by society to prove the sanctity of a woman's purity. But after going through Agnipariksha, Sita never returned to Rama but preferred to return to 'Janam Bhumi' from where she had originated rather than go again and face humiliation and agony from society. At the same time, Sita's strength and independence of character can be foreseen in her early stage of life as a child. When Sita played with Shiva's bow, which seems to have provided enormous strength to her, even her father had a statement about her: "Once while playing a ball game with her friends, Sita lifted the bow very easily" (<https://www.newindianexpress.com>>ThestoryofSita'sbow). At this point, King Janak (Sita's father) tends to be astonished by her strength and decides whoever wants to marry his daughter, Sita, should also be able to uplift the bow. So, there seems to be an equal match between them. In addition, Sita's strength can be foreseen in the episode when Ravana, the king of Lanka, enslaves Sita. Still, despite that, she never surrendered to him and stood as a strong woman,

hoping King Rama would set her free. However, Sita's hopes never get shattered; Rama conquers Ravana by defeating him and unbinding Sita from Ravana's clutches. But this seems to be just the beginning of Sita's agony in the male-dominated society.

With this continued thought process, even her independence of character can be verily envisioned when she takes a firm stand to go on exile with Rama (14 years), where she must leave the luxurious lifestyle and live with her husband in the forest. Sita's speech clearly Shows that she will make a home in the forest as Rama is with her, and secondly, she's in the lap of nature from where she had taken birth, for her nature is like a mother that has accommodated her with nourishment and care, etc. As Sita conjures her thought process that

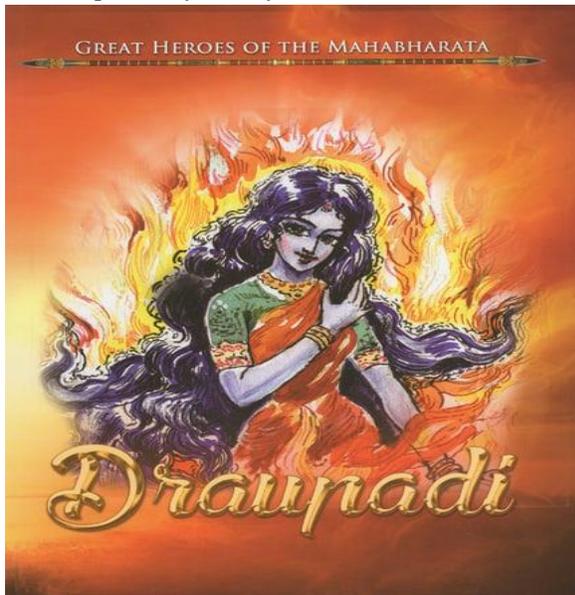
"The earth will yield me roots, these will I eat, and woodland fruits, and as with thee I wander there, I will not bring thee grief or care. I long, when thou, wise lord, art nigh, all fearless, with delighted eye. To gaze upon the rocky hill, the lake, the fountain, and the hill; To sport with thee, my limbs to cool, in some pure lily-covered pool, while the white swan's and mallard's wings are splashing in the water springs" (Ramayana 2.24.15)

In addition, even her strength can be witnessed in her second exile to the ashram of Valmiki, where she gives birth to twins (Luv and Kush) and nurtures them as a single mother to help them to be a reasonable being, despite taking help from her husband Rama, she independently had done nourishment of her children. In the final scene, when Sita had done her duty of reunion her sons with their father. She accomplished her goal and asked her motherland to absorb her as she did not want to face the humiliation again of going with her husband, where, at every point, she had to prove her innocence to a patriarchal world. Marking her reminder words were: "If I am truthful and pure, please absorb me, Madhav" (Ramayana, Uttarakhandam. Sec CX. 1910)

D. Draupadi

Now, while glancing at Draupadi's character, the study observes that She was often considered an extraordinary character from an epic named Mahabharata. The saga of Mahabharata is often considered a bloodshed war, revengeful outlook, hatred scorching for love and, most importantly, the periodic occurrence of winning and losing. But despite this, Mahabharata is also about women's

empowerment and independence as a strong character and further becoming an epitome of womanhood in the contemporary world. To begin with, Draupadi (wife of Pandavas) evolved as an independent character throughout the epic from different situations in which she was placed by society.



With the enhancement of the thought process, the origin of Draupadi seems to have emerged from a sacrificial flame called Yajna, which appears to be a dominant figure of our Indian culture. Therefore, Draupadi appears ferocious in her act, envisioned in the literary epic. The way Draupadi is portrayed in the narratives communicates that she has strong willpower and never seems to be submissive before the male-chauvinist society. Moreover, Draupadi is the child of King Draupadi, who nurtured her; later, she was married to Arjuna in Svayamvara. However, during the series, her will was so strong that she never denied the act of Polyandrous marriage, even though she had fallen for Arjuna in Svayamvara. Still, due to societal norms, she had to marry all five brothers because, in that period, it was considered sinful if the younger son was married before the elder one. But shockingly, polygamy was never considered a sin, which was an attack on women's sexual image at that time.

Despite everything, Draupadi seems to be a dauntless and virtuous woman who agrees with the culture of polygamy and eventually creates stability between five husbands. Moreover, the era in which Draupadi lived was the period when women seemed to be submissive and inferior and couldn't raise their voices against the injustice that happened to them through the ages. On

the contrary, Draupadi somehow managed to fight the injustice that had happened to her. She had staunchly opposed the injustice, whether it was a Cheer Haran episode or a period of exile (12 years). She always voices her mind rather than sorrows on her destiny part.

Delving deeper into the context of the Cheer Haran episode. She firmly stands out and devotes herself to lord Krishna. When Duryodhana tries to strip down Draupadi to nakedness in an open court, she devotes herself to Krishna to help her out. And at that heat of the moment, Draupadi had taken an oath in which she publicly declared war with Kauravas. When she angrily responds, *"She would not wash her hair until she first washes it with the blood of Dushashana and Duryodhana"*

(<https://www.thisday.app>>DraupadiAtaleung,awo manunheard).

However, Draupadi's bold and fearless nature helped her win in this episode, as the Kauravas were defeated by their plan. Even her strength lies in the episode of the exile, where she prepares her husbands to behave like soldiers and get revenge from the Kauravas. She had never forgotten the humiliation done to her, and she was eagerly waiting for an opportunity to punish them.

#### E. Parallel reading of Sita and Draupadi

With the progression of the thought process, the study delves into Indian Mythology, which has immensely created renowned Epics for the upcoming generations in literary academia. Still, parallel to it, they have created unforgettable characters like Sita and Draupadi in the scholarly domain. However, these two extraordinary characters showcase women through the trials and tribulations that have happened to them for ages and how they emerged as independent and empowered women in the patriarchal society. These characters often have many similarities, which can be portrayed as follows: Sita and Draupadi seem to be the epitome of Hindu goddesses. Sita is the formation of Goddess Lakshmi, while Draupadi appears to be the formation of Goddess Parvati.

In addition, both characters appear to have had supernatural emergence in the literary narrative. For example, Sita originated from Earth, while Draupadi originated from fire. Even further, both were always considered their father's daughter as the role of mother in their nourishment was minimal. By elucidating, Ramayana's protagonist, Sita, was called Janak's

Janaki, while in Mahabharat, Draupadi was called Draupad's Draupadi. Despite everything, both had their choice of partners in their svayamvara, showcasing their empowerment from the beginning of the legendary narratives in the literary domain. However, both Sita and Draupadi had to face the exile period in the forest. Sita was exiled for 14 years, while Draupadi was exiled for 12 years, which was considered part and parcel of their individual empowerment and right to choose. However, despite many similarities, there are specific differences between the two. Sita has always remained calm and very soft-spoken, while Draupadi has an aggressive nature. Even Sita was a quiet sufferer, while Draupadi appears to be outspoken. Although Sita and Draupadi have similarities and differences, both characters dominate Indian Mythology. On one side, Sita appears quiet and calm, whereas Draupadi seems quite ferocious in her actions.

### III. CONCLUSION

Summing up the whole thought process of Sita and Draupadi as a Post-Feminist epitome. That is how these women had fought battle for an injustice that happened to them in every strand of their lives, and despite the fact, they emerged as strong and independent women in the series. However, these women had never been submissive to society but always followed societal norms. Even though they never allowed society to hide their real identity. Therefore, Sita and Draupadi emerged as post-feminism icons in Epic literature.

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