

14

**RE-READING RAMA(SITA)YAN IN TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF CHITRA BANERJEE DIVAKARUNI'S INTERPRETATION OF RAMAYAN IN THE FOREST OF ENCHANTMENTS**

*Suswagata Chowdhury, Research Scholar, Department of English and Modern, European Languages, University of Lucknow, Lucknow, India*

**Abstract:**

*Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's The Forest of Enchantments is one of the latest adaptations of the Hindu epic Ramayana by Valmiki. But much like her earlier novel Palace of Illusions, an adaptation of Mahabharata, this is not simply another retelling of the celebrated epic. Apart from the fact that Forest is Sita's perspective of the whole story, the novel also differs from the original epic and its many later adaptations in its treatment of different characters, especially female characters. While not completely deviating from their original temperament, as portrayed in the epic, Divakaruni has simply provided the readers with vantage points to help them see the apparently evil characters in much more humanly light and understand their inner turmoil and motives behind their seemingly evil acts. Being the mouthpiece of the women who have been wronged, vilified and ultimately forgotten, Sita poignantly observes the cruelty and injustice prevailing in the patriarchal world of blindly worshipped mighty heroes and voices them in her own story "Sitayan." This paper attempts to assess Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's unique interpretation of Ramayan through Sita's outlook to the course of actions while also trying to analyze how this change of perspective can actually affect the very foundation of the great epic, as Sita's own version of the events essentially becomes "Ramayan in reverse" with Ram being the ultimate villain.*

**Keywords:** *Ramayan, Sita, Women, Patriarchal, Honour*

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's latest novel *The Forest of Enchantment* (2019) is a retelling of *Ramayan* through the perspective of Sita. It is Sita's version of *Ramayan* or "Sitayan" that is mostly concerned with the plight of the women who were mostly marginalised in other interpretations of *Ramayan*, thus ignored and forgotten in due course. The new insights into the already known facts make it relevant for contemporary readers. While being a telling comment on duty, betrayal, honour and infidelity, the work raises several questions about this great epic's treatment of women that may leave the readers uneasy. Just as in her earlier novel *The Palace of Illusions* Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni gives a new perspective to *Mahabharat* by giving voice to Draupadi, *The Forest of Enchantments* is Sita's story that takes the readers to an entirely different and mostly unvisited world of *Ramayan* where they experience the predicament of women in the patriarchal society and their struggle for identity and recognition.

Throughout many centuries *Ramayan* has been told, retold, written, and rewritten countless times in different languages by different authors, recognised or unrecognised. As A.K. Ramanujan has observed, "The number of Ramayanas and the range of their influence in South and Southeast Asia over the past twenty-five hundred years or more are astonishing." (133) These many versions of *Ramayan* sometimes overlap or sometimes contradict with each other. But one thing is more or less similar in most narratives- they are male versions of the exploits of mighty heroes like Ram, Ravan, Hanuman, Indrajit and many others where the account of the women's struggle is persistently missing. Even though in many versions, Sita is put in high pedestal and gradually becomes the epitome of compassion, purity and honour, few

version is willing to give her a voice to speak for herself and for the women who had been beleaguered by males as well as the norms of society finalized by them and had to suffer for no faults of their own. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's "Sitayan" is about those women who nonetheless have played crucial roles in the events but whose sacrifices have been long forgotten or reduced into insignificance amidst the splendid adventures of great heroes. This paper attempts to analyse critically Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's interpretation of *Ramayan* that turns into a saga of women's endless struggle against patriarchal domination.

The novel is written in first person narrative technique as Sita narrates her own story. This imposes an obvious problem while retelling an ancient epic because readers can only know what Sita sees and have no access to other characters except through her viewpoints. Many details have to be omitted and many have been conveyed to the readers by other characters from whom Sita learns about those events. Sita is no Goddess in Divakaruni's *Ramayan*. She is a human being with desires, emotions and follies of her own. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni appears very daring in her portrayals of explicit sexual scenes of Ram and Sita but the scenes highlight the very humanly quality of Sita who has desire as well as the right to be satisfied and happy. She is a practical woman who can accept frankly that the secret of a happy conjugal life lies in sexual satisfaction of both partners-

And at night when Ram and I were in bed, I could let myself dive into the current of our passion without worrying about anyone hearing our love cries. Perhaps that was one reason our relationship was doing well. (75)

Sita of twenty-first century *Ramayan* has the courage not only to think but speak openly of her sex life while writing her own story that parallels that of her husband's. Divakaruni's Sita is a brave, perceptive but innocent girl whose story is an account of her journey from innocence to knowledge, knowledge about human nature and more importantly about different facets of love and what love is capable of. In the prologue where the author makes the ground for Sita's writing of her own story, "Sitayan", the readers can glimpse the seasoned and sagacious Sita who recalls, with a tinge of sorrow, her earlier self when she was "burnished with innocence, believing that goodness and love were armour enough." (4) But "Sitayan" is, as mentioned before, not only Sita's story, she represents all the women who have been "pushed into corners, trivialized, misunderstood, blamed, forgotten-or maligned and used as cautionary tales." (4) Significantly, she writes in red, the colour of blood, of menstruation, of marriage mark, of child birth, of the colour of the flower of Ashoka tree representing Sita's imprisonment in Lanka. Thus, the colour itself is symbolic of the bleeding and wounds of women that are invisible to most eyes as they are not from heroic warfare. The red is also the colour of love, rage, rebellion and also sacrifice.

The readers are hinted from the very beginning that it is a story of the betrayal of love where rage turns to a rebellion that ends with a sacrifice. Sita is no longer docile and amenable wife of Ram obeying his every command; she becomes the symbol of the new woman who can stand up and say, "Enough! No more!"

The novel has been structured into thirty-five chapters with a prologue and an epilogue. The situation in which Sita is writing her story is rather troubling as Ram, ignorant of the existence of Sita and her two children invites Valmiki to Ayodha who has planned to bring Lav and Kush with him so that Ram recognizes and accepts them as his sons and heirs. But Sita's fate remains undecided. Such unsettling situation is bound to influence her writing but she defends herself saying that it is not only her story she writes for other ignored women too who completes her story; thus, she has to be faithful to her tale. The language used is rather lucid suited for a woman who has never composed anything and suddenly given a duty to write her own story.

Though the author re-imagines *Ramayan* in twenty-first century, it is an ancient epic; thus, the use of modern terms like 'manicure' (41), 'martial arts' (7), 'male gaze' (17) may seem out of place but these are,

as it appears by assessing the contexts, intentionally put by the author to indicate its contemporaneity. It is a retelling of an old epic but Sita just like Panchali of *The Palace of Illusions*, is an every (wo)man figure who represents Indian woman of all time, subject to male oppression and whims. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is not the first one to take up the theme of victimization of women and the issue of gender and identity in two great Indian epics- *Ramayan* and *Mahabharat* through the characters of Sita and Draupadi; those issues have been critically examined by scholars like Paula Richman, Linda Hess, Jodi Erickson et.al. What is striking in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's version of *Ramayan* is that it portrays otherwise reprehensible characters like Surpanakha, Kaikeyi, Manthara, Ahalya in sympathetic light and allows defence for these characters while recalling the long-forgotten sacrifices of women like Urmila, Mandodari, Sarama, Tara who suffered endlessly to fulfil the so called "divine wish."

From the very beginning, Sita is portrayed as an ambitious girl who wants to rule the kingdom of Mithila and is outraged at the suggestion that no woman can be ruler of Mithila because of the "old belief the citizens of Mithila hold: no woman is strong enough-or wise enough-to guide them." (14) The rebellious nature of young Sita, a characteristic feature of teenage has been accentuated from the beginning of the story. This adds to her humanly qualities.

As the story evolves the character of Sita also undergoes transformation and becomes more controlled and dignified. Her immediate foil is her sister Urmila who is a simple cheerful girl desirous of a happy married life. Urmila is a character who is most ignored in almost all versions of *Ramayan*. In *Valmiki Ramayan*, Urmila is described to proffer a unique sacrifice for the sake of her husband, called Urmila Nidra. She receives a boon from Nidra Devi who confers her fourteen years of sleep as she volunteers to take the share of Lakshman who has to remain sleepless to protect Ram and Sita in the forest. In later adaptations of *Ramayan* these details are gradually omitted and Urmila is forgotten. In an essay called "Kabyer Upekkhita" (The Disregarded Women of Poetry) Rabindranath Tagore observes how Urmila's suffering is completely overshadowed by that of Sita's; how Valmiki too did not do justice to the character who remains as an eternal newly wedded wife in readers' imagination as there are hardly any vivid detail about her after the wedding. In her version of *Ramayan*, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni makes the plight of Urmila more poignant by contrasting her intense longing for a happily married life and desire to be closer to Lakshman with her unfortunate fate. Here, Sita too feels guilty for abandoning her sister. But at the end of the novel, the author provides her with her due happiness and the life she had always craved for.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's re-imagination of Kaikeyi, the second wife of Dashrath is quite ingenious though she tries to remain faithful to the original story. The *Valmiki Ramayana* acknowledges Kaikeyi as Dashrath's favourite queen, perhaps because it was foretold that she would bear an illustrious son and Dashrath was eager for one. She was daughter of Aswapati, master of horses and she herself was well trained in horse-riding and drove Dashrath's chariot in the wars. The story of saving Dashrath's life in battle comes from later narratives. As her mother was banished by her father, she was brought up by Manthara who was one of her closest person she trusted and loved so dearly. In the southern text of the *Valmiki Ramayana*, as Devdutt Pattanayik has observed, Sumantra, "Dashrath's charioteer and counsellor speak of Kaikeyi's father abandoning her mother. Details of the story are part of folklore of Odisha and Andhra Pradesh." (113)

But Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni omits these details. Here Kaikeyi's mother is described to be dead while giving birth to her and she is given to Manthara, her nurse-maid to be brought up. Thus, a greater sense of intimacy is underscored between them. "Where Kaikeyi is concerned, Manthara's as fierce as a lioness with a newborn cub." (Banerjee Divakaruni 85) In *Valmiki Ramayan* and most of its retellings, Manthara is one of the vilest characters who instils her venom in Kaikeyi. While retaining the evilness of Manthara, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni calls attention to the love and possessiveness of Manthara towards Kaikeyi and the unsatisfied mother in Manthara. Their relationship is that of interdependency where

Kaikeyi needs Manthara to fulfill the void of a mother and Manthara clings to her as an only solace in her cursed life. When Sita first time sees Manthara from a distance she mistakes her to be an animal. “Was it an animal? Perhaps one of the queens had a pet ape?” (87) This is how a so called ugly woman with a severe physical deformity that renders her unable to work can be reduced to the status of an animal by society. Her hunchback makes Sita uncomfortable. But she realises that “her deformity- and the way people looked at her because of it with disgust or fear- was not her fault.” (101) She feels guilty for being uncharitable towards someone whose fate has been so unkind. Though the author does not defend Manthara's deeds, she indeed portrays her in sympathetic light, so she does for Kaikeyi.

In *Valmiki Ramayan*, Kaikeyi is portrayed as so wicked that Ram thinks she will delight in Sita's abduction:

This day will dark Kaikeyi find  
Fresh triumph for her evil mind,  
When I, who with my Sita came  
Return alone, without my dame. (Griffith 302)

Her portrayal of Kaikeyi is that of brave combatant woman, master of sword fighting who challenges Sita in a duel. Sita hears many scary stories regarding her even before she reaches Ayodhya. But Sita is struck by her personality in spite of the fact that her first meeting with her was not at all pleasant. - Against my expectations, I found I was enjoying myself. Kaikeyi had a sharp sense of humour, which she often turned on herself, sharing funny stories about her follies when she was a new bride. She delighted in divulging embarrassing facts about people, and such was her wit that she made me feel that she and I were allied, in our superior intelligence and charisma, against them all. (Divakaruni 84)

Such details well counterbalance the growing sense of evilness regarding Kaikeyi. She is a considerate woman who is sensitive enough not to hire any beautiful maid that may upset Manthara. Even when conveying Ram and Sita about the boons, she hesitates and feels guilty for a moment. She needs Manthara for emotional support. “For a moment, Kaikeyi hesitated. Was it shame that fitted across her face? She glanced at Manthara, as though gathering her resolve.” (104)

In Bhavabhuti's *Mahavira-Charita*, Ravan's uncle and minister Malyavan gets Surpanakha to possess Manthara's body and influence Kaikeyi. In *Adhyatma Ramayana*, the Goddess of knowledge Saraswati influences the two women. Such narratives attempt to humanise the villains by making them critical pawns in a larger narrative. There is no such divine or supernatural influence on these women. Yet, the readers do sympathize with the characters instead of condemning them. Sita, in spite of being one of the worst victims of Kaikeyi's scheming, realises that it is indeed one of the many faces of love. Both Manthara and Kaikeyi are driven by the force of love that impels Kaikeyi to turn on Ram in order to guard her own son's interest and Manthara to whisper directives to Kaikeyi “whom she still saw as the innocent child to whom she'd devoted her entire misshapen life.” (107) After returning from exile, Sita finds the regretful Kaikeyi in pitiable condition who has arranged for her own funeral pyre to welcome death once after she meets Ram and Sita. Manthara's fate is unknown as there is no reference to her after she is beaten half to death and thrown out on the street. In Divakaruni's *Sitayan*, Kaikeyi and Manthara are forgiven at the end, both by readers and Sita.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's delineation of Surpanakha also diverges from the other adaptations of *Ramayana*. In the *Valmiki Ramayan*, she is foul, ugly and demonic. In *Kamban Ramayan*, she is lovelorn and beautiful. In Ram-leela plays of the Gangetic plains, as observed by Pattanayik, she is comical in her vulgar display of erotic desire. (198) In Divakaruni's reimagination of *Ramayana*, Surpanakha is the innocent forlorn woman with an intense craving for love after the death of her husband. She is one in the long list of women who were maligned and vilified but in her case it is mainly due to her deviance of the



norms of maidenly behaviour and overt assertion of sexual desire. Sita feels sympathy for the girl who is hungry for love and is humiliated by two apparently just and serious men just because she openly proclaims her desire for a man. Her blatant declaration of love for Ram is a violation of norms and a clue enough that she is not a woman of honour and decency; thus, can be easily mortified. She is reduced to an “immoral, unnatural creature” (149) for transgressing the social norms that dictate decent women's behaviour by her unconcealed asseveration of yearning for a mate. Ram and Lakshman act as the agent of patriarchy who punishes the woman that dares to defy patriarchal code of decorum. Whether Surpanakha is at all to blame for the destruction is a recurring question in Sita's mind.

I still remembered the happy, trusting girl she'd been in the forest before Lakshman mutilated her, and I couldn't shake off the thought that if my husband and brother-in-law had been kinder and more forgiving of her innocent overtures on that day...all the tragedies that followed could have been averted. (Divakaruni 252)

Another woman in this Indian epic condemned for so called 'grave sin' is Ahalya who has been portrayed in a very negative light in *Valmiki Ramayan* and its later adaptations. In *Valmiki Ramayan*, she is delineated as an immoral woman who succumbs to carnal pleasure and consciously cheats on her husband sage Gautam when God Indra fascinated by her charms comes to her in disguise to make love. The main objection against this character is that she identified the disguised God but could not resist sexual desire leading to a highly immoral act as it has been committed in full consciousness. Even after perpetrating the crime, instead of being repentant, she thinks only of how to secret the deed:

She knew him in the saint's disguise,  
Lord Indra of the Thousand Eyes,  
But touched by love's unholy fire,  
She yielded to the God's desire.  
'Now, Lord of Gods!' she whispered, 'flee,  
From Gautam save thyself and me.' (Griffith 60)

In *Valmiki Ramayan*, Indra flees after making love to Ahalya but Gautam catches a glimpse of disguised Indra and understands everything. He curses both Indra and Ahalya. Before Ahalya can say something, she is turned to stone. In R. K. Narayan's adaptation of *Ramayan* which is inspired by Tamil version of Kampan, Gautam “surprised the couple in bed...Indra assumed the form of a cat (the most facile animal form for sneaking in or out) and tried to slip away.” (67) After he curses Ahalya, she repents and seeks forgiveness. The compassionate Gautam then mentions Ram who can only redeem her. But Divakaruni's depiction of Ahalya is altogether different. She not only sympathises with her, but also implies how both her husband and Valmiki i.e. the poet representing the character have misunderstood her action and intent. She becomes the epitome of all victimised woman suffering silently, her vow of silence being symbolic. In her delineation of Ahalya deviates from all previous adaptations as she represents her to be completely innocent and wronged woman who has suffered endlessly for no fault of her own. She becomes the common woman figure who is never given any opportunity to speak, instead has to conform to patriarchal norms that dictate her fate. Even before she could explain the situation, her punishment is decided. She is put in trial without being given any chance to defend herself.

When Sita meets her in the exile, she is told by Gautam that Ahalya has taken up vow of silence to gain spiritual merit but only Sita understands that it is her act of protest against her husband who has failed to understand her love and loyalty. When Surpanakha is punished for challenging the feminine code of conduct set by patriarchal society, Ahalya is an innocent victim of patriarchy destined to suffer perpetually.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni not only provides defence for the characters who has been misunderstood, misrepresented and misjudged, her version of Ramayan or “Sitayan” acknowledges those

women whose sacrifices have never been taken into account. Mandodari is an important example in this case. After going through *The Forest of Enchantments*, readers cannot help sympathising with the character as the novel conveys a strong impression that it is Mandodari who is the worst sufferer, much worse than Sita. She cannot protest to her husband's lecherousness, has to watch silently his fascination with a woman whom she suspects to be their daughter and then helplessly witness her long cherished kingdom fall apart. She has lost her kingdom, her subjects, her husband and her only son whom she tried to protect fiercely. As Ram observes, "among us all, her lot is the hardest, since she has lost both husband and son as well as all position and power." (248) Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's portrayal of Mandodari too deviates from convention. Her Mandodari, for an unusual reason, cannot but love and take pity on the person responsible for her destruction i.e., Sita.

In Sanghadasa's Jaina version of *Ramayan* and also in *Adbhuta Ramayana*, Sita is born as daughter of Ravan. Banerjee-Divakaruni uses these facts to give another dramatic turn to the story. That's why Mandodari's position is more conflicting. If Sita accepts Ravan's proposal, she will end up marrying her own father, if she does not, she will meet a ghastly death. Mandodari is eager to reunite with her long-lost daughter; again she knows that Sita, according to the prophecy, will be the reason for the destruction of Ravan and his kingdom. She is the only person to know the secret and is torn apart inside. Her relationship with her husband is also unusual. Ravan loves and respects her beyond doubt but he is infatuated and sexually engaged with other women subjecting her to humiliation.

Sita is perceptive enough to sense this. "I could feel anger emanating from her as well as shame. I could imagine how insulting it must be for her...to have anything to do with Ravan's latest conquest." (176) Her continuous plea to release Sita to save all destruction appeals to the deaf ear. Ultimately, it is Mandodari who has to suffer perpetually as the final portrayal of her is that of a doomed woman "to wait tragically by Ravan's funeral pyre, neither wife nor widow, until death claims her." (250) But she herself has chosen the fate, as Sita later realises, as a declaration of her love and forgiveness. In *Valmiki Ramayan*, there is not much mentioning of Mandodari except in the canto devoted to her i.e. "Mandodari's Lament" (Griffith 494-96). In Banerjee-Divakaruni's "Sitayan" Mandodari's calm but majestic presence always haunts the readers since her first appearance. Banerjee Divakaruni has portrayed the character with such care and attention that her helplessness does not diminish her dignity rather adds to the reverence the readers feel for her. Such delineation can be interpreted as a tribute on part of the author to one of the most tragic characters whose greatest sacrifices has long been ignored and eventually forgotten.

Another such character is Sarama whom the readers of *Ramayan* may not remember. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is very attentive while portraying ironic fate of this character. Needless to say, Sarama is another one in the list beside Mandodari, Ahalya who is a worst victim of patriarchy. While her husband Vibheeshan morally takes Ram's side, she is troubled by constant fear of banishment. After Vibheeshan finally leaves for Ram, she is torn between her ideological support for Vibheeshan and anxiety for her son Taranisen who is stubbornly devoted to his uncle Ravan. Taranisen, trained by Vibheeshan himself is undefeatable but finally dies in the war as the secret of his death is revealed to Ram by his own father Vibheeshan. After the war is over and Vibheeshan is coronated, Sarama having lost her only son, becomes the new queen of Lanka whom Sita can barely recognise because of the grandeur in her attire. But the question is did she want this? She has got the crown at the cost of her son's life. But she certainly didn't choose this. No woman, as the author suggests, has the right to choose her fate. Sita, Urmila, Ahalya, Mandodari, Sarama, Tara- nobody has ever been given any right to opt. Their destiny has always been designated by the agents of patriarchy as this sole privilege lies with the men only. They cannot choose; they can only suffer. When the story is written about their husbands' great exploits, they are not included in this as even the "divine vision" inspiring Valmiki to write *Ramayan* doesn't allow for women's plight. When Sita decides to tell her own story "Sitayan", it becomes the story of other women too because, as Sita

says, "Without them, mine can't be complete." The solidarity based on common victimhood is the essence of Divakaruni's version of *Ramayan*, where Sita can sympathize with Kaikeyi, Manthara or even Surpanakha.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *The Forest of Enchantment* stands apart from all other versions of *Ramayan* as it gives careful attention to those events and characters, especially female characters that are largely ignored in other adaptations. Its purpose is to uncover the story that lay invisible between the lines of the men's exploits. Though not an active feminist, she is very much concerned with lived reality of woman's life, her predicaments, her sufferings. Her feminism is strongly coloured by social and cultural context. *The Palace of Illusions* was born out of the urge to place the women in the forefront action, to convey "her joys and doubts, her struggles and her triumphs, her heartbreaks, her achievements, the unique female way in which she sees her world and her place in it." (PI xv) In Author's Note on *The Palace of Illusions*, she writes,

But always, listening to the stories of the *Mahabharat* as a young Girl...I was left unsatisfied by the portrayals of the women. It wasn't as though the epic didn't have powerful, complex women characters that affected the action in major ways...But in some way, they remained shadowy figures, their thoughts and motives mysterious, their emotions portrayed only when they affected the lives of the male heroes, their roles ultimately subservient to those of their fathers or husbands, brothers or sons. (xiv)

*Ramayan* is no different where female characters only serve the purpose of bringing out male actions. *The Forest of Enchantments* is written with a similar object to make reader explore the celebrated epic through the perspective of a woman who has much untold stories to uncover. Divakaruni's Sita also discovers herself while recalling the past events and writing her own story. But she does not know what fate has in store for her. Though Epilogue is written in first person narrative technique, it is set in present time.

The final scene of Epilogue with Sita's final act of self-respect is perhaps Divakaruni's greatest achievement. It is a telling comment on where a woman should stop to save her honour and self esteem and say, "Enough! No More!" Though Divakaruni is retelling an old epic, she has portrayed Sita and other characters she speaks for, in her own unique way where Sita is not the devoted unquestioning wife who follows her husband blindly. Though keenly aware of her wifely duty and responsibility, she is highly critical of Ram. From the very first meeting, she has realised that Ram, though not disrespectful of women, has a tendency to belittle their worth, and may not prove a good husband- "what of his wife? Would he ever consider her to be as important as his Dharma? What would his dharma say about the importance of loving his wife?" (40)

Ram has been depicted by Divakaruni in deplorable light who is neither a good husband, nor a good human being. Sita, being her mouthpiece voices her conviction with her promise to the unborn children: "I'll teach you what you need to know to be good human beings, so that you'll never do to a woman what your father has done to me." (317) Thus, *The Forest of Enchantments* can be called *Ramayan* in reverse where Ram is no less villain than Ravan. It is in fact the dishonour of a woman by Ram and his brother that brings about all the destruction.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni makes the readers look at the well-known story in a way that was not hitherto conceived of. She has done an extensive research, used elements from most versions of *Ramayan* and produced an original "Sitayan" that gives a completely new understanding of the age-old epic. She has provided another side of the story and leaves it upon the readers to decide. Produced in this era of multiple truths and interpretations, *The Forest of Enchantments* is a powerful experiment that unsettles readers out of their complacency and provides a new way to interpret an old narrative.

**Works Cited:**

- Aiyar, T. R. Ratnam, et.al., editors. *The Mahavir Charita of Bhavabhuti*. Tukaram Javaji, 1892. Archive.org, <http://archive.org/details/MahaViraCharita>.
- Banerjee Divakaruni, Chitra. *The Forest of Enchantments*. Harper Collins, 2019.
- Banerjee Divakaruni, Chitra. *The Palace of Illusions*. DoubleDay, 2008.
- Griffith, Ralph T. H. *Ramayan of Valmiki*. Wentworth Press, 2016.
- Hazarika, Munmi. "Gender Roles and Representations of Feminine Identity in *Ramayan*: A Critical Study." *IJELLH*, vol. 2, no. 5, Sept. 2014, pp. 295-301.
- Narayan, R. K. *The Ramayana: A Shortened Modern Prose Version of the Indian Epic*. Penguin Books, 2006.
- Pattanaik, Devdutt. *Sita: An Illustrated Retelling of Ramayana*. Penguin Books, 2013.
- Ramanujan, A.K. "Three Hundred Ramayanas: Five Examples and Three Thoughts on Translation." *The collected essays of A. K. Ramanujan*, edited by Vinay Dharwadker, Oxford India, 2004, pp.131-160.
- Saklani, Dinesh Prasad. "Valmiki *Ramayana* and the Casa of Sita in Historical Context." *Spring Magazine on English Literature*, vol. 4, no.1, May 2018, <http://www.springmagazine.net/v4n108/>.
- Tagore, Rabindranath. "Kabyer Upekkhita." *Rabindra Rachanaboli*, <http://rabindra-rachanabali.nltr.org/node/7838/>. Accessed 05 Nov. 2019.