

The Ramayana Of Valmiki Vs. Sita Sings The Blues

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Nina Paley's film "Sita Sings the Blues" reveals the culture and values conveying a message of art across cultures and generations. The Ramayana of Valmiki is an epic poem portraying the [ideal relationship](#) between Rama and Sita. A comparison of the epic poem and film leads to significant contradictions as the role of Sita illustrates a different story.

The role of Sita in Ramayana is a traditional one that transforms into a modern and enlightened one in Paley's film. The film provokes criticism as it is against the Hindu fundamentalist. The film carries parallel narratives disparate through visual threads. It represents a doubtful narrative when one compares it with the original poem. Paley creates a subversive feminism against the idea of the ideal Sita.

In the Ramayana of Valmiki, the concept of feminism displays patience, obedience, and calmness. The poem portrays Sita as an idealistic woman who represents the perfect model, thus fulfilling the conditions of the Indian culture. In Indian culture, the women remain subservient to their male partners and have a duty to take all the pains in keeping their relationship. It also conveys the theme that females have to take all the trouble in maintaining their relationships with their husbands irrespective of their harshness. Compared to Ramaya, Paley, in the film, tries to recreate the story of Sita in modernized settings. Paley, in the film, stresses the fate of Sita more and transmits a modern view that happiness for women is not limited to marriage life. Understanding remains an important element of a happy relationship. Paley changes the gender depiction as she represents Sita as a woman with desires and hopes. Her focus is not limited to fulfilling her duties but also on attaining her dream (Rochlin).

The most profound difference between the poems is female dharma. The Ramayana of Valmiki tries to maintain originality by exhibiting Sita as a follower of religion and caring more for her dharma. Her only focus is on fulfilling her role according to her religion and conveys her limitations. Dharma specifies idealistic behavior that is apparent in her acceptance of her traditional duties. In the poem, both Rama and Sita are perfect role models and justify the definition of perfection according to Indian culture. Sita expresses Dharma through her strength, bravery, faithfulness, and devotion towards her husband. Rama also plays a loyal and perfect husband, son, and brother. Sita, in Paley's film, plays an entirely different role under her own personalized image. Sita lacks the satisfaction and happiness that she had in the epic poem. Paley recreates Sita's role and displays her pain through her crying. The film captures the darker side of Sita's life and portrays her crying for her fate. She becomes more of a victim due to the complications she faces in her life. There are no signs of strong Dharma or her intentions of playing a perfect wife (Richman).

An absence of loyalty makes Paley's film a different version of the epic poem. In the poem, Rama doubts his wife that she was touched by another man during her kidnap. Sita spends time separated in the forest and still remains loyal to her husband. Throughout her separation, she longed to meet Rama and remained pious; for Sita, living without her husband was impossible. Her loyalty is also apparent in her upbringing, as she taught her sons to love their father. She exhibited no hatred for him and never thought of other men. Paley's film lacks the same loyalty and tries to build relevance of her own story with Sita's. She connects the two stories and displays herself living in San Francisco with her boyfriend. The film tries to connect two different cultures as she portrays her unstable relationship with her boyfriend. When her boyfriend leaves her, she tries to reconnect and endures suffering. A woman in the film lacks strength because she is unable to forget her boyfriend, which represents her as a weak character. She has no legal relationship in the film, but she tries to hold onto it. In Sita's story, she never forgets her husband and always thinks of going back to him. The art displayed in Paley's film shows relevance in a current world where people care less about true relationships. Paley's emphasis is more on modern culture, thus eliminating the concept of purity (Richman).

Male ego and selfishness in the film transform the original character of Rama. Paley, in her film, captures the darker side of the male character, thus changing the traditional Rama in modern settings. In the epic poem, Rama is loving and loyal and fulfills his role as a good husband. The poem did not display him as the evil man as it mentions, "evil men are like hailstone". Original Rama lacked evilness and conveyed the message of love. The most visible example is forgiveness, as Rama disregarded his enemies. Rama, in the poem, disengages himself from wrong because he believes that destroying others leads to self-destruction. He was more concerned about choosing the right path and avoiding hurting others. He himself endured pain for the comfort of others, as reflected in his decision to stay in the forest. The character of Rama changes entirely in the film as Paley displays him as a selfish and evil man. In the film, the male character cares for himself and displays no concern for his love (Sridharan).

Relationship differences represent striking contradictions between the film and the poem. The epic poem simulated pure love between husband and wife. In Indian culture, love is accepted only between the married couple. The meaning of love changes in Paley's film as she illustrates the love between an unmarried couple. The cultural gap is apparent between the two stories, as in the epic poem, society never accepts relationships between unmarried couples. Compared to the poem, the film represents a modern society where men and women live freely in a love relationship without legal bindings (Richman).

The elimination of social constraints in the film makes the concept of an idealistic woman non-existent. The poem refers to the period and culture when women faced social limitations, and society never permitted them to take roles against the social taboos. The film exhibits no limitations, as the woman is free to make choices and live in any way she likes. Morality is missing in Paley's film as she lives with a strange man. Sita in Ramayana of Valmiki could not dare to live with a strange man who depicted social limitations. Paley focuses on women's rights and rejects the old myth that confines

her to her duties and responsibilities. She confers the idea of gender equality contrary to the original theme of Sita. Her sense of responsibility becomes apparent in her fourteen years of suffering spent in exile (Richman).

The language used in the epic poems tries to represent the characters as supernatural. The language creates melodramatic settings where Rama tries to rescue his wife. It emphasizes on retelling the original story in the poetic form that also transmits narrative sculptures on temple walls. Dramatic tradition reflects the theme of a village and reenacted drama conveying the Indian mythology of Sita and Rama. The tone used in the poem pleasantly uncovers the brighter prospects of Sita's life, while Paley uses entirely different figurative language. The language in the film creates metaphors that depict feminine oppression (Rochlin).

Endings lead to different cultures and time periods. In Paley's film, she only accepts reality at the end of the story, while Sita carries strong opinions from the beginning. In the end, Paley manages to overcome the pain of lost love and learns to live without her boyfriend. She learns the importance of true love and loyalty and that he is not good for her. In the epic poem, Sita struggles to prove her innocence to her husband because that is the only way to reconnect. It was a grave concern for Sita to remove the label of impure because, in Indian culture, the idealistic woman has refrained from relationships with men. Paley's film shows a woman transforming as she reflects on her thoughts and actions. She learned from her mistakes and tried to live a better life (Richman).

Paley's film breaks the cultural hegemony of the poem Ramayana of Valmiki. The epic poet demonstrated the realities and mythological functions in the Indian culture. Paley necessarily devalued the myth associated with the original story. The poem emphasizes paying attention to the myth conveying the traditional and designed roles of males and females. Paley tries to replace the mystic simplicity with chaos as the film raises questions about the social settings in limiting the role of a woman. Paley's film recognizes the story of Sita as an injustice against the Indian context. The poem portrays Sita as an erotic woman who is no less than a goddess due to her greatness and the qualities she possesses. Paley attempts to maintain Sita's splintering identity by capturing her pain and tears. The modern Sita, in her viewpoint, would resist male brutality and change her fate.

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