

## Celestial Catastrophe and Divine Justice in *The Forest of Enchantments*

**Shubha Mukherjee**

Department of English Guru Nanak Khalsa College Matunga, Mumbai – 400019, MS, India

### Abstract

Analyzing upon the isolation and adaptation, the misery and the trauma, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *The Forest of Enchantments* emphasizes upon innumerable diversifying problems attached to the lives of women from time immemorial. The pristine glory of Sita has also evolved from a shadowed backdrop of anguish and distress and has finally found its way, gradually and potentially with an identity strong and glorious, demanding and divine. The story of Ram definitely revolves around *Ramayan* but today's focus is on the *Sitayan* that has seeped deep and touched upon the existence of that secondary support that is always passive but persuasive, compliant but resilient.

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The isolation and the adaptation, the suffering and the trauma, the alleged incapability and in- intellectuality of women have always been exposed by various authors in diverse forms, but very few have dug into the mythological stories to find out the situation of women then and have proved to the world that those women were not just captives of distress but pathbreakers for future. Standing strong on the quintessence of audacity and power, confidence and faith, these powerful women characters excavated and uncovered the past allusions, strengthened and stabilized the present quandary and entrusted and assured the future potentiality. Projecting such strong yet docile, powerful yet submissive characters who have always found their place as the secondary support and beneficiary in the society, many of today's authors are turning the tables upside down to reach out to their cry and concern, courage and compliance, capacity and commitment. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni explains her intense desire to write about Sita in the Author's note of her novel, *The Forest of Enchantments*:

*I wrote other books, contemporary novels set in India and America. They featured complicated women protagonists, some strong-willed, others downright stubborn, making waves wherever they went and suffering the consequences. I admired these heroines and thought of them as very different from Sita. Wasn't she, after all, good and meek and long-suffering, bearing her misfortunes with silent stoicism the way the perfect Indian woman was supposed to? Wasn't that why, when our elders blessed us, they said: May you be like Sita? And wasn't that why that statement always angered me? (Author's note, *The Forest of Enchantments*)*

But gradually Sita's choices and reactions, courage and manifestations, humility and enchantments unveil itself and grip over those who go into the depth and understand the difference between the passion of unsubdued love and the problem of devoted responsibility. The choice becomes crucial and catalyst – the ardent faith on divine

justice encapsulates the ultimate bond between existence and rejection. A colossal metamorphosis can be seen in the Sita that everyone knows and the Sita that gradually uncovers herself with pristine glory. Rightly does Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni enhance the opinionated argument to a sublime justification:

*As I send *The Forest of Enchantments* out into the world, I ask for the benediction of Sita, goddess, daughter, sister, lover, warrior, mother – and a role model for women all over the world. I pray that the novel lodges deep in the hearts of readers regardless of their gender; for Sita’s story has much in it to inspire and console us all.*

*And, finally, I hope that it brings new meaning to that old blessing: May you be like Sita. (Author’s note, *The Forest of Enchantments*)*

Analyzing upon what Sita might have undergone when Rishi Valmiki had brought the manuscript of *The Ramayana* to her so that she can have a look at it because Valmiki believed that Sita has a right to – though undoubtedly Ram is in the center it’s her story too. What might have been Sita’s reaction then? Though appreciating the superb poetry, the sublime descriptions and the perfect rhythm, was she gripped with anger too? Knowing very well that Valmiki has flawlessly captured the histories of both earth and heaven, the adventures of wars, the weddings, the deaths, the betrayals, the farewells, the palace, the forest, everything; why then was she upset? Why was there an outrage in her voice? Why was there a sense of despair? Knowing Valmiki’s respectability and position as well as understanding very well that he was guided by a divine vision while writing, why was she still reluctant in accepting the wonderful epic creation? Did she feel that the divine justice too is gender prejudiced?

*‘It must have been a god that brought it to you, then, and not a goddess,’ I said drily. ‘For you haven’t understood a woman’s life, the heartbreak at the core of her joys, her unexpected alliances and desires, her negotiations where, in the hope of keeping one treasure safe, she must give up another,’ (The Forest of Enchantments, Prologue, p.2)*

So Sita begins her script journey with the endorsement of Valmiki who entrusts her with the colour red – ‘Red. But of course. How else could I write my story except in the colour of menstruation and childbirth, the colour of the marriage mark that changes women’s lives, the colour of the flowers of the Ashoka tree under which I had spent my years of captivity in the palace of the demon king?’ (*The Forest of Enchantments*, Prologue, p.3-4) And so Sitayan starts with not just the story of Sita but all those women who have changed the course of Ramayana but had still remained concealed under the influential fortifications of the ‘so called’ strong gender. Be it Urmila or Manthara, Kaikeyi or Mandodari, Ahalya or Surpanakha – it is the story of all those who ‘have been pushed to the corners, trivialized, misunderstood, blamed, forgotten’ – all those for whom victory and sacrifice, adulation and desolation, insurgence and commitment were entwined for a graver cause. Though unrecognized, their presence definitely marked a red flag on the path of history.

Sita, with her extreme power of healing the pain of others and her immense secret knowledge of marital arts, never wished to confess her strength to her family until she reveals everything to her mother. Her mother, with her sharpness of intellect, clarity of vision, balancing kindness and justice was the actual force behind her father and the real ruler of Mithila. With so much power and potentiality, with so much virtue

and divinity, both the mother and the daughter, like any other woman, knew one – that their life was pejorative in the male controlling society:

*But we both knew that was wishful thinking. Girlhood was as ephemeral as a drop of water on a lily pad. Soon I'd have to leave all that I loved – parents, sister, palace, garden, the healing house – to take my place in another family, which I must then call mine. That's the lot of daughters, commoner or princess. (The Forest of Enchantments, p.10)*

Howsoever strong or wise a woman is, she cannot take the reins in her hands; she has to be a follower of the male fraternity and bow down to their demands and desires. The gods even are too weak to change the custom that has been prevailing from generations past. Even thinking about any such change is a delinquency because it is expected and understood that the traditional norms and values cannot be defied under any circumstance. Even Sita, the goddess and power of women, fails to change the mindset of her mother, another intellectual and righteous woman; what to say about the male world. Sita's revolt is the revolt of any other woman who has determination and confidence in thy own self and her mother stands for all those women who, despite their power and potentiality, glorify their submission towards the male scripted world:

*But when I confessed these wishes to my mother, she shook her head. 'Even if you were a goddess among women,' she said, and from her face I could see that she'd heard the whispers, too, 'it wouldn't be possible. The kingdom of Mithila can be ruled only by a man. This has been the custom of the country since before the scribes began to write it's history.'*

*'Why can't customs change?' I asked angrily. 'Especially ones that don't make sense?'*

*'Not this one. Because it's built upon an age-old belief the citizens of Mithila hold: no woman is strong enough – or wise enough – to guide them.'* (The Forest of Enchantments, p.14)

So from the custody of her father, Sita is handed over to the custody of Ram who had the potentiality to win her over by breaking Shiva's sacred bow during the *Swayamvar* organized by King Janak. As a wife now Sita has just to fit in as the most appropriate soulmate of Ram, understanding all his responsibilities, his family, his kingdom. The righteous man that Ram is, she has to be the perfect lady beside him – this is her sole duty. Nothing to argue, nothing to comprehend. The duty for the nation has to be justified before any other obligation. Sita tries to be the perfect wife – watching Ram closely, understanding everything about him, following every word of his as a dogma – yet what is it that she was missing? Is it that she finds a gap between the stakes of love that she is holding and the pillar of dharma that Ram sticks to? Is her expectation more than what she receives and is it worth not mentioning because a lady has no wish or desire to enhance? Is she just a model of clay that will be given shape by the hands of her benefactor?

*Right conduct was clearly important to him, as was his word – more important than anything. Again the question came to me: 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? (The Forest of Enchantments, p.40)*

Very rare are those women, like Sita's mother, who are blessed. Especially the women in the palaces are not fortunate enough as she is. She knows that it is undoubtedly a blessing and this can be understood when she reveals about it to Sita when Sita is about to leave for her unknown destined future –

*'Your dear father,' my mother continued, 'is a saintly man. He was never interested in expanding his kingdom, either through war or marriage alliances. Thus I have the good fortune of being his only wife, loved by him even though I failed to produce a male heir to whom he could pass on the kingdom. He cherishes Urmila and you as much as he would have cherished sons. You don't know how rare this is in royal families! Sometimes I regret that I sheltered you so, here in our peaceful little corner of the world, because now you are going abroad with little armour to protect yourself from the intrigue that is common in palaces.'* (The Forest of Enchantments, p.46)

Sita enters by the side of Ram to the palace of King Dasharath and his three queens – adjusting to the unaccustomed situations and recognizing unfamiliar characters. On the one hand she's touched by Kaushalya's simplicity and solemnity and on the other she's impressed by Kaikeyi's being a charioteer and a healer. Warned by her mother not to trust anyone too soon, especially Kaikeyi, Sita knows that she has to deal with complicated situations and intriguing characters in her new family. At times she has to cajole, at times she has to appease, at times she has to comfort, at times she has to avoid – she knows she has to tread carefully with confidence and commitment, caution and claim. She knows she has to build in a strong relationship with her husband without interfering into his relationships in the family territory or challenging his utmost devotion for the people for whom he is their 'loved Ram'. Sita's apprehensions and qualms grow with every step she puts forward towards her beloved husband who had taken away her heart during their marriage ceremony by vowing that he will never marry again. To have more than one wife was a customary approach of the kings and Ram's verdict, *'Sita will be my only consort and beloved, all the days of my life'*, was not appreciated by King Dasharath too. But with this statement Ram had acquired a permanent position of deep love and extreme respect in the heart of Sita. This vow though was not solely for Sita; it was also for his mother Kaushalya whose uncomplaining wretchedness had always remained a heavy weight on Ram's heart. Ram understood her pain and sacrifice, her agony of sharing the most precious person of her life, her hesitancy and her helplessness. But he was also aware of his position and reverence, the role of a son and heir of the great King, his own attributes and dimensions. On the one hand he had no capacity to challenge the life of his father and on the other he was shaken by the torment of his mother. Ram's realization and acknowledgement towards the pain and suffering of his mother is very well-justified when he shares his feelings with Sita:

*'When I vowed to marry only one woman, I did it as much for her as for you. To tell her that I felt her pain and would never make another woman suffer as she did. I hope she understood. What else can I do without going against my father?'*(The Forest of Enchantments, p.70)

But why does Ram, the most considerate son who took a decision never to have a second wife because he understood the pain of his mother, hardly thinks about the betterment of the women folk of his territory when he plans about the betterment and extension of his nation? Why are his approaches and recommendations so gender

biased? Why is his vision so focused that he fails to see the other half and just thinks of the enhancement of one half of the society? Very rightly has Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni brought out the conflict that had inflicted the mind of Sita at that time when everything must have seemed very blur and antagonistic from her point of view. The two contradictory images of Ram might have evolved in her mind – Ram, the family man and Ram, the ruler. Was she confused about her own demeanor too – the way she should handle Ram as her husband and the way she should deal with Ram, the monarch? Questions might have shrouded her mind and cloaked her heart but as the mistress of the palace and the empress of the nation she might have been in a dilemma always in her approach and acceptance, queries and conclusions –

*‘Are you planning to change anything when you become king?’ I asked.*

*‘Yes, actually I am,’ he said, sitting up in his excitement. ‘Though I’ll do it gradually so as to not offend my father. In my kingdom, every man will have a voice, no matter how humble he is. No one should feel his concerns are ignored, or that he doesn’t receive justice.’*

*I wanted to ask, ‘what about the women’? But Ram was totally focused on his vision, and I didn’t want to interrupt. (The Forest of Enchantments, p.96)*

Sita knew her limitations; she knew her womanly voice will not echo through the hard and strong walls of her husband’s ears; she knew her feminine opinion mattered not in the history of men. A woman is treated as a man wants her to be – some abuse, some love, some respect, some ignore, some use, some admire – the different forms women take, at times knowingly, at times unknowingly. Women walk on the way men pave for them and if by chance they divert to another route (maybe intentionally or unintentionally, it doesn’t matter) the path is made darker and deeper for them to sustain. Even Sita who is respected and revered for generations is not worshipped for her competence and wisdom but for her commitment and devotion. The tag of a woman is attached to her male counterpart and if at all she desires to tear the label off, the bruises tear her apart.

The question arises when there is a conflict between two ethical situations – when the woman stands on the crossroads – and neither she nor the others are able to decide what will be relevant for her. Sita stands at such a junction when she, and of course the inmates of the palace and the men of the society too, has to decide between her obligation towards her queenly responsibilities and her commitment towards her husband. It is only through her words of duty and obligation that a wife needs to have for her husband that Sita could finally win over the mind of Ram and it is only because of that utmost devotion for her husband that she received the permission of accompanying him to the forest. Though Ram is shocked at the proposal of Sita initially because he could never imagine in his dreams too that a woman should take such a dangerous step, but finally he accepts understanding the womanly duties that Sita makes him understand. The prayers of Sita are heard while Urmila’s (Lakshman’s wife) are not – some are fortunate, some are not. Urmila is left behind in the palace as Lakshman accompanies Ram and Sita towards an unknown future. At this juncture a question might arise – whose sacrifice was greater – Sita’s or Urmila’s? This comparison can very well justify another strong female character whose voice remained unheard behind the dark chambers of human history. Everyone remembers Lakshman, the devoted brother who followed Ram to the jungle, but does

anyone realized the pain he inflicted on Urmila. Lakshman remains a super-hero and Urmila – well, no one bothers. She is just that wretched whose misfortune didn't allow her to accompany her husband to the jungles – that's all. How did she spend the fourteen years of detachment – well? Let that be ignored!

The story of Ahalya, another woman battered by fate and the harsh fact of being a lady, also sneaks into the hearts of those who realize the humiliation of gender discrepancy and the incongruity of destiny. Deceived by Indra, the king of gods who believed that such a beautiful woman should belong to him, Ahalya unknowingly falls a prey to Indra when he disguises himself as Rishi Gautam, the husband of Ahalya, and approaches her. Chastened and punished by her husband only because she couldn't recognize the unethical Indra, is a torture beyond acceptance. She is cursed to turn into a stone by rishi Gautam before she could prove her innocence – which very clearly justifies male dominance and female negligence. And strangely enough the curse can only be mended by a man - what a catharsis! Ahalya becomes a victim of Indra's vicious trickery, a mockery of Gautam's uncontrollable anger and a proof of Ram's divine blessing. This very notion clearly justifies that men have the right to go to any extent whereas women can just be a plaything in their hands.

Even when Sita is captured and is taken in the custody of Ravana she meets Mandodari, the wife of Ravana who has no different fate from any other woman. Despite warning Ravana that Sita might bring ill-luck to Lanka she is forced by Ravana to make Sita agree to the whims of her husband. The suffering of Mandodari is like any other woman – chided and reprimanded, silenced and suffocated. Sita dissuades Ravana's approaches and curses with a complete faith that Ram will definitely come for her rescue. Sita's power and confidence pull her towards Mandodari and Mandodari's command and composure attract Sita's gaze. Away from the clutches of Ravana, they meet, they confide. Mandodari discloses her past to Sita – her giving birth to a girl child, not a normal conception, Ravana's displeasure especially when foretold that the child can be the cause of the father's death and the ruin of the kingdom, Ravana's decision of killing the baby, her pleading and Ravana's ignoring, her bribing the rakshasa who promises to leave the baby somewhere far and safe, how she had wrapped the baby in beautiful yellow silk and hand over to the rakshasa, her never mentioning this to anyone, holding the dangerous secret in her dark and cold heart, and how relaxed she was when the retainer rakshasa passed away soon after, how she had resigned to the fact that she would never see the child again but had always thought about her. Mandodari, the mother who had to spare her child for the sake of her husband and country – a sacrifice beyond explanation! It's only when she sees Sita – her stubborn way of titling her chin, her bravery of refusing to obey Ravana – that she gradually becomes convinced about Sita being her daughter. What a revelation for Sita who is shaken by surprise and shock as she is engulfed into the chasm of wonder and dilemma. Though Sita refuses to fit into the story of Mandodari blaming her that it is actually her guilt seeking mercy and Mandodari maintaining her queenly reputation of never asking Sita again, deep within Sita becomes nervous about her own story – King Janak's finding her wrapped in an expensive cloth which no one would have owned in Mithila and everyone believing that it is the gods who had left her there in the field. She dreads the connection but fails to avert it. The more she tries to detach herself, the greater is the pull of the link

*I couldn't stop thinking about Queen Mandodari either, although it annoyed me. As the days passed, a reluctant sympathy grew in my heart, and this annoyed me further. It would have been so much simpler if I could have hated her. Now I kept imagining her in the dead of night, swaddling her infant daughter with loving anguish and handling her over to a grizzled retainer. I heard her whispering frantic instructions as she pressed a bag of jewels into his hand. Against my will, I felt her agony twist my heart as she watched them disappear into the inky ocean. Her agony over the years as she remembered that terrible, dangerous, guilty moment! And now, her greater agony: watching me and wondering, unable to speak her suspicions to her husband, who was infatuated beyond reason with a woman who might be his daughter. (The Forest of Enchantments, p.195)*

Can Sita relate to the plight of Mandodari because she as a woman can feel the pain and the predicament, the plight and the pathos? Does Sita realize the fear of keeping a secret and the agony of parting with a child! Maybe she does. And so more than the mother-daughter attachment it is woman-woman connection that pushes her towards Mandodari. She maintains the distance but knows the bonding. Under the imprisonment of Ravan Sita shows confidence and control, trust and faithfulness as she waits patiently for Ram to take revenge. Her wait is blessed with Ram's intervention as he comes to rescue Sita by winning over and killing Ravan. But does Ram come to rescue Sita for his love for his wife or for the sake of duty towards his wife? Sita having waited for years is extremely happy to be reunited with her husband but she is taken aback by Ram's response. Was it for this she waited so eagerly? Was it for this she held her pride and passion? –

*'I have rescued you, Sita,' said the voice. 'I have built a bridge over the ocean and crossed over it with my allies of the monkey nations. My followers and I have suffered greatly in the process, for the rakshasa army was a powerful one. Now we have slain Ravan, and set you free. Here ends my duty to you, and my responsibility. Go where you will to live out the rest of your days.'* (The Forest of Enchantments, p.242)

What should be Sita's reaction at this point? For no fault of hers she is degraded by her most loved one to the depth of humility. She tries to prove her innocence as Ram doubts her for being abducted by Ravan and living in his palace for so long. She tries to justify her guiltlessness giving all details of how she stayed there avoiding Ravan. Pulling down her dignity she even pleads Ram to check with all the inhabitants and Hanuman about her way of living there. Is this what Sita owes Ram as his wife? Just a kind of responsibility and nothing beyond! How demeaning must have Sita felt when Ram had doubted her character in front of all the inhabitants! She is shocked at Ram's response and is surprised at her own justifications. Is it always necessary for a woman to prove her chastity? Is there no concept of faith and trust in the divine knot of marriage? Is the male mentality so stigmatic and stinking that it fails to allow any essence of belief and belonging?

By doubting her virtue in front of the entire populace, by rejecting her because of the apprehension of what his subjects might whisper, by shaming her by suggesting that she is free to take another husband – is Ram degrading Sita or himself? Although Sita is embarrassed as she stands on the stakes defending Ram's illogical accusations, but on behalf of every woman she takes up an overwhelming emotional discourse –

*'If you reject me now, word will travel all across Bharatvarsha, and men everywhere will feel that they, too, can reject a wife who has been abducted. Or even been touched against her will. Countless innocent women – as innocent as I am – will be shunned and punished because of your act. Is that dharma? Is that what you want?'*

*'Ravan stole me away forcibly,' I continued, 'but even he didn't insult me as you've done here today. He respected me enough to not violate my body. And over my mind he never had control. But you – you have violated my heart, which I'd given to you in love.'* (The Forest of Enchantments, p.243-244)

Sita knows that once rejected she is abandoned forever. So she requests Lakshman to build a fire for her that can engulf her from the pain and suffering of doubt and despair. Against the wishes of Lakshman, Vibheeshan and Hanuman, the massive fire is lit and Sita walks into it. It is Agni, the fire god, who declares her innocence as Sita emerges out of the fire and the god places her hand in the hands of Ram catching the heartbeat of every person in the crowd cheering *'SitaRamSitaRamSitaRamSitaRam.'* But isn't this *Agnipariksha* a disgrace for a woman like Sita? Sanctified by the flames of the God of Fire, the transformed Sita glows with satisfaction as she finds the look of Ram filled with respect towards her. Her years of captivity has taught Sita that even love, howsoever deep it might be, cannot transform another person, so it is best to change our own selves. Sita now comes back to Ayodhya with mixed feelings of pleasure and apprehension – her heart beating unevenly to think of the many responsibilities that await her there – and a special feeling of how would she be a suitable wife to Ram, someone that he would be proud of? Why is Sita still so concerned about Ram's satisfaction – the man who had accused and embarrassed her, who had thought of abandoning her had not the Gods intervened? Whatever be the charges, whatever be the consequences, a woman's heart dissolves all agony and anguish. Even when Surpanakha plays a trick with Sita, sticking her sari to the image of Ravan, and cursing Sita to realize how it feels to lose everything that one cherishes; Ram's faith for Sita diminishes. Is this what Sita has acquired through her devoted love and supreme divinity? Though no fault of hers, she has to plead and pray to Ram to believe her. Why does Ram take so long to believe Sita? This crucial question lies deep into the heart of not just Sita but all those who have valued the strength of trust and reliance in the sacred knot of marriage.

And then when Sita is carrying the twins she is banished forever to Rishi Valmiki's ashram even without her knowledge. Ram, who had loved Sita so much, could fall into the trap of the gossiping that was going around the town – the questions arising on Sita's chastity after being abducted by Ravan, doubts on Sita's immediate pregnancy, anxiety related to the behavioral change of other women taking advantage from the episode of Sita. Innumerable such gibber ran through the town making the wall of fame and love crumble down to pieces. Ram's chauvinism is exposed as he cares not for the women, including his own. Sita alone has to tackle all her agony and misfortune, including the pleasure and pain of childbirth which every woman loves to share with her husband. She is strong enough to stand by her children and be their guardian to guide them on the right path. Her suffering is the strength of every mother who wants to give her children the strongest education in the stringiest situation. She grieves and yet she stands as a sturdy pillar of support and sustenance –

*'Don't be afraid, little ones,' I whispered, pushing my way determinedly into the dark, if though I had no idea of what it held. Hot tears scalded my cheeks. 'I'm going to live for you. I'm going to guard you with my last breath. I'm going to love you enough for mother and father both, so you feel no lack. I'm going to teach you everything you need to know to be princes. But more than that, 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.'* (The Forest of Enchantments, p.317)

Is Sita's banishment by Ram valid in the true sense? Is marriage not a harmony of trust and faith? Why should the proclamations be one sided – Sita always apprehensive whether she is a suitable wife for Ram for whom Ram can feel proud of and Ram judging Sita not by her qualities and capabilities but for circumstances she is not responsible? Why is it that though Sita passed her 'Agnipariksha' in Lanka she has again to go through it once she is back in Ayodhya? How many times can a woman be humiliated for no fault of hers? And that too by someone who is the closest of all and loved deeply by her? The two sons, Luv and Kush, are accepted as the sons of Ram and the heir of Ayodhya without any opposition; but when it is the question of accepting Sita, so many objections and predicaments hover in the minds of all. When mortification is beyond cure, one justifies one's existence and presence through surrender, as Sita does by getting engulfed into the flames lit for the purpose of her sanctification. The ruler by whose side Sita always felt if she is worth his mistress proves his inefficiency and failure with his actions of banishment and testing her by fire. He banishes her to the ashram of Valmiki without her knowledge and then when Luv and Kush are big enough to be trained as heirs to the throne, they are brought to the kingdom and Sita can also be admitted only if she goes through the test of fire so that the fire god can vouch her innocence and purity. But Sita does not encompass, though she understands Ram's priorities and commitments, because she realizes that if she does not refuse the tempting offer of living happily with her husband and children, she will actually be doing injustice to the women world. She knows that the society will use her stroke persistently as an evaluator for other women as the 'men would punish their wives harshly or even discard them for the smallest refractions saying that *King Ram did so*'. Innocent Sita calls for help from mother earth and father fire and the flames engulf her and the earth cracks open to assume her within. Sita's voluntary martyrdom is her gift of power and authority to all those women who will be born after her –

*'For the sake of my sons, I made myself live when it would have been much easier to give up and die than to go through the pain of having the person you love most in the world abandon you. For the sake of my daughters in the centuries to come, I must now stand up against this unjust action you are asking of me.*

*I wish you all happiness with my dearest Luv and Kush. I bless this land, its men and women. I bless my sons. And finally, I bless my daughters, who are yet unborn. I pray that, if life tests them – as sooner or later life is bound to do – they'll be able to stand steadfast and think carefully, using their hearts as well as their heads, understanding when they need to compromise, and knowing when they must not.*

*And that is why, O King Ram, I must reject your kind offer to allow me to prove my innocence again. Because this is one of those times when a woman must stand up and say, No more!’(The Forest of Enchantments, p.357)*

Sita’s deliberate and assertive decision ensures blessing and endorsement for the generations of women born after her. Every woman walking on the path that Sita paved for her owes a lot to this goddess of incarnation who had thought not about her own pleasure and benefit but had endorsed herself to resign into the hands of destiny to certify a better and blessed future.

Works Cited:

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