

‘Not so Feminine’: Gender Construction of Divakaruni’s Sita

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Abstract :

A lot of research has been done on Sita and many have focussed on her parentage, her piety, devotion and obedience as a daughter, wife and daughter-in-law along with the immense sacrifices and trials she had to undergo, however Divakaruni’s modern retelling of the *Ramayana– The Forest of Enchantments* – constructs Sita’s gender in unconventional ways, exhibiting both feminine and masculine behaviours that seem to go against the traditional norms. Drawing on the views of Judith Butler regarding gender performativity and those of feminist linguists, this paper highlights how Sita has been (un)gendered and therefore represented differently. The masculinization of her character allows her to challenge and subvert patriarchal practices while femininity serves as a survival tactic in a male-dominated world. She, thus assumes agency and becomes a gentle yet dissenting voice to kin and foe alike, quite different from the pious, submissive and sacrificial figure she is often portrayed to be. Also, this article highlights, that by doing so Divakaruni continues the tradition of representing women’s voices through women, aptly advocated by Elaine Showalter.

Keywords: gender construction, feminist linguistics, performativity, Sita