

From Earth to Earth: An Eco-Feministic Study of Sita's Prakriti and Cosmic Resistance in Nandini Sahu's *Sita a Poem*

Dr.P.Hemalatha

Associate Professor, PG& Research Department of English, M.V.Muthiah
Government Arts College for Women, Dindigul.

Paper Received on 10-07-2026, Accepted on 12-08-2026
Published on 13-08-26; DOI:10.36993/RJOE.2025.11.08.473

Abstract:

Nandini Sahu's *Sita a Poem* rewrites the traditional story of *The Ramayana*. It challenges the old idea that Sita is just a silent and submissive wife. Instead of looking at her as a helpless victim of exile, this paper attempts to explicate that she represents prakriti (nature), the powerful, independent, and strong force of nature. By using an eco feminist framework this study shows the unfair control and judgment Sita encounters in the court of Ayodhya, it also presents way human beings try to exploit and control the natural world.

By analyzing her unique birth from the soil and her final decision to return to mother earth (Boomidevi), this paper demonstrates that Sita's journey does not end in sad defeat or surrender. But her final return to the earth is a powerful choice to regain freedom and completely rejecting the patriarchal ownership. By thriving in the forest as an independent mother or refusing a second trial by fire, she proves that she belongs to the earth not to the king. Ultimately the study highlights Nandini Sahu's use of traditional Indian philosophy to reinvent Sita as a modern heroine. Thereby, she proves that the freedom of woman and the protection of nature are deeply connected.

Key Words- Eco-Feminism, Nature, Prakriti, Myth, Freedom, Regain, Indian Philosophy.

Introduction

Indian Myths are not old stories of the past. Instead they are living arts of everyday culture. The great Indian epics like *The Ramayana* and *The Mahabharata* still shape new social rules, morals and gender roles today. For centuries, traditional onto-centered story telling has used these myths to teach women how to behave; the character of Sita in *The Ramayana* is the greatest example. Traditional stories praise Sita for being a silent, submissive and obedient wife. They teach that the willingness to suffer without complaining is the highest virtue. However Indian Mythologies have

always been flexible and open to change. *The Ramayana* does not belong to one single book or version. There exist hundreds of folk, local and regional versions. Today, modern writers use this flexibility to write the ancient stories. This process is called 'the revisionist myth making'. This is a powerful way for the poet to interpret an old story change its perspective. Thereby give a strong voice to characters who were previously silenced. Nandini Sahu's *Sita a Poem* is a highly important example of this modern poetry.

Nandini Sahu is a distinguished Indian poet, novelist, essayist, critic and an academic translator. Her poetry is renowned for its lyrical richness, feminist vision ecological consciousness and reinterpretation of myth. Her long narrative poem, *Sita, a Poem*, presents Sita as an empowered female voice. He challenges the patriarchal interpretations of *The Ramayana*. Thereby the poem explores the theme of identity, autonomy, motherhood, resilience and justice. Sahu, through her creative and critical writings, has made significant contributions to contemporary Indian literature and feminist literary discourse.

Nandini Sahu's *Sita, a Poem* is a unique long narrative poem consisting of 25 cantos written in English. It is highly celebrated for its breaking away from traditional male centered tales on telling *Ramayana*. Unlike the traditional epic which used on all outside narrators Sahu writes the poem entirely in the first person narrative voice. Every event from her childhood to her exile is presented strictly through her pointed view. Thereby Sahu gives her voice which was denied for century.

Sahu presents Sita not merely as an ancient, distant goddess, but as a symbol for the shared experience, struggles, and quiet strength of all women across history and modern times. The poem re-examines Sita's two exiles. It shows her first exile into the forest as a conscious choice made out of love and duty, and her second exile as a period where she emerges as a "dignified, resilient, single mother raising her sons (the Sita-putras) independently in the wilderness. To understand the foundational strength of Sahu's protagonist, the character must be examined through the post-colonial eco-feminist concept of Vandana Shiva. In her famous work "Staying Alive women ecology and Development" Siva theories the traditional Indian view of Nature not as a passive, inactive source but as prakriti. It is the living dynamic and self-sustaining feminine principle that creates, sustains and reviews all life forms. Shiva argues that patriarchal capitalist mindset introduces a 'reductionist' world view which see is both nature and human as passive material to be dominated, exploited and managed. On the contrary, indigenous Indian cosmology recognizes that female productivity and planetary productivity are inextricably blended through this shared cosmic energy. In *Sita, a Poem*, Nandini Sahu executes Shiva's concept of Prakriti by radically emphasizing the protagonist's "Telluric" or earth born origins. Traditionally discovery of Sita in a furrowed field by King Janaka is treated as a passive miraculous

ornament to patriarchal image of Mithila kingdom. Sita is literally soil made flesh, the very breadth and biology of the extension of earth. By centering her identity of this non-human lineage, Sahu establishes that Sita's primary accountability is not to the human laws of marriage or war kingdom but to the cosmic ecological order.

This telluric connection directly influences Sita's endurance of her trials and a reductionist patriarchal view. Her capacity to suffer silently is often celebrated as the final form of female compliance. By applying Vandana Shiva's concept, reveals that Sita's endurance is actually the courageous unyielding Prakriti just as the soil endures being ploughed, tuned and manipulated only to consistently regenerate and give life. Sita's tolerance is a form of deep-rooted courage. She does not break down because the roots extend far beneath superficial structures of ideas of the political court. Furthermore, she emphasizes that Prakriti is inherently free and does not require external validation to create life.

Sahu reflects this during the time of Sita's wilderness. When she is castaway, she does not wither. Instead she thrives in the forest drawing strength directly from her elements she says "Mother nature was the phenomenal palliative to my suffering soul. She healed my pain and in turn, I became a healer" (Sahu 91). She raises her sons as a single mother in a complete synthesis with nature. She thereby demonstrates an independent productivity that overlooks a patriarchal need for a protective purusha. By framing Sita's life through her elemental origins, Sahu relates her not with the fragile, artificial constructs of human empires, but with the eternal self reviewing vitality of earth itself. The critical crucks of rewriting the myth of Sita's life in the restoration of *Titiksha* the virtue of absolute endurance, patience and fortitude under suffering. In mainstream patriarchal reading of the Ramayana, Sita's *Titiksha* has historically being weaponised as a moral tool to domesticating women, conditioning them to accept systemic injustice, marital neglect and societal thrust with silent compliance. However when viewed through an intersectional eco feminist reflection, this endurance undergoes the radical shift. In Nandini Sahu's *Sita, a Poem*, She constructs *Titiksha* of its patriarchal associations with passivity. To reconstruct these concepts the study draws on the ecological reality of the earth's capacity to endure this never an indicator of submission. The protagonist's silence throughout her trials, her quite dignity during her initial abduction her containment in the *Ashokavatika* and her first exile is not an act of victimization rather it represents the deceptive carve of the natural world before the cosmic reassociation. Sahu uses elementary imagery of rivers, deep-roots and silent stones to represent Sita's patients to conscious, active gathering of energy rather than eraser of her voice. This redefinition becomes an act of defiance because it exposes the fragility of the patriarchal structure surrounding her.

While the political machinery of ideas break under the weight of public opinion and moral compromise, her groundedness remains completely unshakable. Her endurance is the shield. Her refusal to go for a second trial shows her fortitude. Thus, this courage transforms from a nurturing force into a disruptive one. By the time she faces the final repetitive demands of the society for self proving, her endurance has evolved from a quite under current into a Volcanic refusal to participate any further in her own commodification. Through this concept Sahu successfully shifts the narrative of suffering women, to the unyielding narrative of the planet. She thereby proves that when rooted in the earth Titiksha is a ultimate form of slow and uncontainable resistance. She sats "I am *prakriti*, born of and fading into mother nature. I a,m nature: I am inestimable moons assortments.(Sahu 111)/

To ground the concept of Titiksha in the indigenous philosophical traditions of the Indian Subcontinent, one can look to the ancient Tamil treatise *The Thirukkural* by Thiruvalluvar. In Kural 151, the poet states "அகழ்வாரைத் தாங்கும் நிலம்போலத் தம்மை இகழ்வார்ப் பொறுத்தல் தலை" (Just as the earth bears up the very men who dig into it, so enduring those who despise us is the highest virtue). Thiruvalluvar uses the earth (Nilam) as the ultimate archetype of supreme patience, nothing that the soil supports the very human actors who violently excavate and wound it. Nandini Sahu's Sita embodies this exact telluric fortitude. Her endurance under the derogatory treatment, public trials and exile imposed by Ayodhya's court mirrors the quiet majesty of the earth outlined by Thiruvalluvar. Her patience is not a sign of defeat, but a position of absolute ethical superiority. She tolerates her detractors from a place of cosmic groundedness, carrying the weight of their systemic cruelty until she chooses her moment of ultimate, sovereign withdrawal.

Conclusion

Thus, Nandini Sahu's *Sita: A Poem* completely changes how one looks at one of India's most famous mythological characters. Instead of showing Sita as a helpless victim who suffers in silence, this paper has shown that she is actually the living embodiment of (*prakriti*) the powerful, independent force of Nature. By using the ideas of ecofeminism, the study analyses that the way the kingdom of Ayodhya tries to control, test and mistreat Sita mirrors the way human beings try to dominate and exploit the natural world. However, Sahu brilliantly subverts this patriarchal control. By showing that Sita finds peace, strength, and independent motherhood in the forest, the poem proves that Nature does not need the rules of men to thrive. Furthermore, by redefining her endless patience (Titiksha) not as weakness, but as the quiet, massive strength of the earth, the text prepares the readers for her final act of resistance. Ultimately, Sita's decision to reject the second trial-by-fire and return to Mother Earth is not a tragic suicide or a sad surrender. It is her greatest victory. It is a radical choice to withdraw her from a society that refuses to respect her. By breaking

open the ground and stepping into the earth, she proves that she belongs to the cosmos, not to a thing. Nandini Sahu successfully uses this new eco-spiritual framework to transform Sita into a modern embodiment of resistance, leaving us with a powerful message: the freedom of women and the protection of our Earth are deeply connected and neither can be permanently captured or contained a king. Nandini Sahu successfully uses this new eco-spiritual framework to transform Sita into a modern embodiment of resistance, leaving us with a powerful message: the freedom of women and the protection of our Earth are deeply connected and neither can be permanently captured or contained.

Works Cited

- Chapple, Christopher Key. *Nonviolence to Animals, Earth, and Self in Asian Traditions*. State University of New York Press, 1993.
- Mies, Maria, and Vandana Shiva. *Ecofeminism*. Zed Books, 2014.
- Mukherjee, Meenakshi. *Realism and Reality: The Novel and Society in India*. Oxford University Press, 1985.
- Ostriker, Alicia Suskin. *Stealing the Language: The Emergence of Feminist Poetry in America*. Beacon Press, 1986.
- Plumwood, Val. *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*. Routledge, 1993.
- Ruether, Rosemary Radford. *New Woman, New Earth: Sexist Ideologies and Human Liberation*. Beacon Press, 1975.
- Sahu, Nandini. *Sita: A Poem*. Authorspress, 2014.
- Shiva, Vandana. *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Development*. Kali for Women, 1998. Reprint ed., Zed Books, 2016.