



Chief Editor

Dr. A. Singaraj, M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D.

Editor

Mrs.M.Josephin Immaculate Ruba

Editorial Advisors

1. Dr.Yi-Lin Yu, Ph. D
Associate Professor,
Department of Advertising & Public Relations,
Fu Jen Catholic University,
Taipei, Taiwan.
2. Dr.G. Badri Narayanan, PhD,
Research Economist,
Center for Global Trade Analysis,
Purdue University,
West Lafayette,
Indiana, USA.
3. Dr. Gajendra Naidu.J., M.Com, LL.M., M.B.A., PhD. MHRM
Professor & Head,
Faculty of Finance, Botho University,
Gaborone Campus, Botho Education Park,
Kgale, Gaborone, Botswana.
4. Dr. Ahmed Sebihi
Associate Professor
Islamic Culture and Social Sciences (ICSS),
Department of General Education (DGE),
Gulf Medical University (GMU), UAE.
5. Dr. Pradeep Kumar Choudhury,
Assistant Professor,
Institute for Studies in Industrial Development,
An ICSSR Research Institute,
New Delhi- 110070.India.
6. Dr. Sumita Bharat Goyal
Assistant Professor,
Department of Commerce,
Central University of Rajasthan,
Bandar Sindri, Dist-Ajmer,
Rajasthan, India
7. Dr. C. Muniyandi, M.Sc., M. Phil., Ph. D,
Assistant Professor,
Department of Econometrics,
School of Economics,
Madurai Kamaraj University,
Madurai-625021, Tamil Nadu, India.
8. Dr. B. Ravi Kumar,
Assistant Professor
Department of GBEH,
Sree Vidyanikethan Engineering College,
A.Rangampet, Tirupati,
Andhra Pradesh, India
9. Dr. Gyanendra Awasthi, M.Sc., Ph.D., NET
Associate Professor & HOD
Department of Biochemistry,
Dolphin (PG) Institute of Biomedical & Natural Sciences,
Dehradun, Uttarakhand, India.
10. Dr. D.K. Awasthi, M.SC., Ph.D.
Associate Professor
Department of Chemistry, Sri J.N.P.G. College,
Charbagh, Lucknow,
Uttar Pradesh. India

ISSN (Online) : 2455 - 3662
SJIF Impact Factor :3.967

EPRA International Journal of
**Multidisciplinary
Research**

Monthly Peer Reviewed & Indexed
International Online Journal

Volume: 3 Issue: 10 October 2017



Published By :
EPRA Journals

CC License





WOMEN IN DECISION-MAKING

Puspita Das¹

¹Associate Professor,
College of Home science,
CAU, Tura, Meghalaya, India

Ayuta Mohanty²

²Guest Faculty in English,
Rajdhani College,
Bhubaneswar, Odisha, India

ABSTRACT

India, being a patriarchal country, has always shown traces of gender differences. One of the major effects of this gender differences can be seen in the field of decision making as women are always seen lagging behind in this field. "Women make up 48.5% of India's population. Yet, their presence in key decision making positions-be it governance, law enforcement or corporate leadership- is far from proportionate" (livemint.com). The process of empowering women is impossible to achieve without women coming forward to take decisions and make choices by themselves. And to achieve the goal of making society aware of the power of decision making in the process of women empowerment, literature can play an important role. Literature can help to reform the patriarchal mindset of the society and motivate them to move forward with the new trends and broaden their vision. This paper focuses on Devdutt Pattanaik's *The Girl Who Chose* where he portrayed the epic Ramayana from a new perspective- building it on the five choices that Sita made and how these choices influenced her life as well as the lives of other related to her. This paper also analyses how Sita stood strong by the choices she made and came out with a strong and independent personality breaking all the stereotypes set by the society. The book serves as an example for the contemporary women and motivates them to not only follow rules but to challenge and change them by making choices when needed. It tries to awaken the Sita present inside every woman who has the power to make choices and bear any consequence that results from those choices.

KEYWORDS: Decision-making, choices, women, Sita, power

DISCUSSION

Decision making ability remains one of the major tools in the process of empowering women. But in a patriarchal society like India, which still is a man's world as was during the ancient times, women rarely have a role in decision making. In this 21st-century everybody talks about emancipation and empowerment of women but when it comes to decision making, men takes the lead and expect women to accept the decisions and follow them. This is one of the major hindrances that blocks the path of women development in India. Be it domestic sector,

or business, or administration, or political sector, everywhere the women are lagging behind as far as decision making is concerned. But situations can improve if we can let the women choose for themselves. The decisions of their life should be taken by them. This can bring changes in mindset of society at least at the grass-root level. Importance of decision making should be instilled in them from the beginning. Self-confidence and decision making are inter-related. One accelerates the other. These two things are the key to achieve women empowerment. To instil these two qualities in women, literature can

serve as a great tool. Literature helps us in changing the mindset of the society and becomes instrumental in reforming the society. Similar is the case in Devdutt Pattanaik's *The Girl Who Chose*. In this book, Devdutt Pattanaik attempted to portray Sita from the epic Ramayana as a girl who took her own decisions. From Valmiki's Ramayana, we generally get an image of Sita as an obedient, dutiful, meek, faithful damsel in distress. But Devdutt portrays her as a strong woman who breaks the stereotypes of the society by choosing what she wants and not just by following rules that she was expected to follow by the society.

In his book, Devdutt lists the five choices that Sita made and elaborates on how these choices changed her life and her personality. He starts the book with the prophecy of Sita's arrival that Lord Shiva made to King Janaka, Sita's arrival when King Janaka tilled the field in Mithila and her marriage with Rama, the Prince of Ayodhya. He also describes how Rama was selected as the heir to the throne of Ayodhya and how his step mother Kaikeyi asked for the two boons that her husband King Dasarath had promised her when she had saved his life. Queen Kaikeyi asked King Dasarath to make her own son Bharat the king and to send Rama to forest for fourteen years. Rama being the Sun-prince decided to fulfil the promises that his father had given to his step mother and go for exile. Lakshman, his younger brother, also decided to go with him. Sita also decided to follow Rama in his exile. When Rama tried to forbid her, Sita said, "You are bound by rules, but not I. I am free to choose. I choose to follow you" (Pattanaik, 23). And going with Rama to forest for fourteen years was Sita's first choice. She left all the comforts of the palace to struggle in the forest for the sake of her love for her husband.

After Rama, Lakshmana and Sita left for forest, King Dasarath died in grief and Bharat declined to accept the crown. He went to persuade Rama to return back but he declined as he was a Sun-prince and he must follow the rules and keep the promises. Thirteen years of exile passed. In the fourteenth year of their exile, Surpanakha fell in love with Rama and asked him to marry her. Lakshman in a fit of rage chopped off her nose. To take revenge, her brother Ravana planned to abduct her. When Rama went to catch a golden deer, Lakshman and Sita heard Rama's cry for help and Sita asked Lakshman to go for Rama's help. Lakshman drew a line, later known as 'Lakshman rekha', for Sita's protection and asked her not to cross the line and he left to find Rama. Ravana came in disguise of a hermit and asked for some food. Sita offered the food by staying inside the line but he declined. Sita had to make a choice. "Either she could let the hermit be hungry while remaining safe herself. Or she could take a risk and step outside the rekha to feed the poor soul. Sita understood that her choice would help someone and so she decided to take the risk" (Pattanaik, 42). Thinking the same she made

her second choice- she crossed the Lakshman rekha. As soon as she stepped out of the line Ravana abducted her and took her to Lanka.

When Rama found out that Sita was kidnapped, he set out to rescue her. Ravana made several attempts to convince Sita to accept him as her Lord but Sita never gave in. She had her faith that Rama will rescue her. One day she found a ring which was dropped by a monkey. She immediately recognised the ring- it was Rama's ring and came to know the monkey was Hanuman, a member of Rama's army that he had collected to defeat Ravana. Hanuman asked Sita to come with him. He can take her safely to Rama. But Sita knew that being a sun-prince, if Rama was unable to defeat Ravana and rescue Sita, then it would harm his honour. She said to Hanuman, "I want my husband to cross the sea, come to Lanka, kill Ravana and rescue me himself, thus restoring the reputation of his family. For Rama is a prince, and Royal reputations matter a lot to princes, especially to those who belong to the sun-dynasty" (Pattanaik, 63). So she declined Hanuman's offer and decided to wait for Rama. It was her third choice.

Ravana's men caught Hanuman and Ravana order to set Hanuman's tail on fire. Hanuman flew with the fire and burnt the kingdom of Lanka. Rama reached Lanka with his army and defeated Ravana and his army and rescued Sita. Sita was very happy as her wait was finally over but when she met Rama, she received the greatest shock of her life. Rama thought that the society would consider Sita impure as she was in another man's house for some time. He said, "I have defeated the man who had kidnapped the queen of Ayodhya, the daughter-in-law of my family. And, therefore, I have saved my family's reputation. Now, Sita, you are free to go wherever you wish" (Pattanaik, 80). But Sita wanted to go with him and she took her fourth choice. She decided to walk into fire to prove her purity and came out of fire unharmed. They returned to Ayodhya but peace didn't last longer and rumours started to spread that Sita lived in another man's land and she is not pure. She was an imperfect queen for their perfect king. Rama also came to know about these gossips. For Rama "the rules were clear-anything that stained the royal reputation had to be removed. Sita had to go" (Pattanaik, 87). He asked Lakshman to leave Sita in a forest. Sita took refuge in the forest where she gave birth to Rama's twin sons Luv and Kush. After many years, Rama came across Sita and his sons. Rama asked Sita to come back to him Sita asked her sons to go with their father and serve the kingdom but she decided not to go with Rama to the kingdom where reputation mattered more than love. It was her fifth and final choice. She called out her mother Earth and asked her to take her into her lap. "Sita then called out to the earth beneath her, which opened up like a mother spreading her arms to welcome her daughter. Sita slipped into earth's embrace" (Pattanaik, 100). Rama

tried to stop her but she had gone. He also decided to end his life and walked into the Sarayu River and never returned back.

Through this retelling of Ramayana, Devdutt wants the readers to understand how humans have the special power of decision making. They can make choices. "Thus human society is all about choices and rules. We can choose to help or choose not to. Rules are meant to force humans to help others. When rules do not help people, we have the choice to challenge and change them." (Pattanaik, 106). Sita followed rules when it was helpful to other but when these rules restricted her decision making ability, she preferred to break the rules. "All choices have consequences" (Pattanaik, 110). Sita serves as an example that women should have the power of taking decisions and making choices for themselves and learn to accept the consequences of those choices with grace. Decision making ability should be strongly instilled within women so they can achieve liberation, emancipation and empowerment in its true and complete sense.

REFERENCES

1. Pattanaik, Devdutt. *The Girl Who Chose*. Gurgaon: Penguin Books, 2016. Print.
2. www.livemint.com/Politics/1Vik7Ud6SL0b8WRgXS5QNM/Women-in-decisionmaking.html