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Sita: An Illustrated Retelling of the Ramayana

Devdutt Pattanaik

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It is significant that the only character in Hindu mythology, a king at that, to be given the title of ekam-patni-vrata, devoted to a single wife, is associated with the most unjust act of abandoning her in the forest to protect family reputation. This seems a deliberate souring of an uplifting narrative. Ram's refusal to remarry to produce a royal heir adds to the complexity. The intention seems to be to provoke throught on notions of fidelity, property and self-image.

And so the mythologist and illustrator Devdutt Pattaanik retells the *Ramayana*, drawing attention to the many oral, visual and written retellings composed in different times, in different places, by different poets, each one trying to solve the puzzle in its own unique way.

This book approaches Ram by speculating on Sita: her childhood with her father, Janaka, who hosted sages mentioned in the Upanishads; her stay in the forest with her husband, who had to be a celibate ascetic while she was in the prime of her youth; her interactions with the women of Lanka, recipes she exchanged, emotions they shared; her connection with the earth, her mother, and with the trees, her sisters; her role as the Goddess, the untamed Kali as well as the demure Gauri, in transforming the stoic prince of Ayodhya into God.

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