



Vidhyayana - ISSN 2454-8596

An International Multidisciplinary Peer-Reviewed E-Journal

www.vidhyayanaejournal.org

Indexed in: Crossref, ROAD & Google Scholar

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Mythical Resurgence and Feminist Exploration of Samhita Arni's *The Missing Queen*

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Abstract

This present research paper explores the intricate amalgamation of myth and feminist discourse in Arni's literary works, revealing a narrative that re-conceptualizes the societal roles of women in ancient stories and its significant ramifications for present-day gender equality. The literary work, situated within the context of Indian mythology and history, revitalizes the perspectives of marginalized female protagonists, granting them autonomy and challenging conventional storylines. Arni's narrative discourse not only examines the convergence of feminist ideology and the reimagining of mythical narratives, but also dives into the significant impact of mythology on societal constructions of female identity. This research investigates the ways in which *The Missing Queen* challenges and reappropriates the portrayal of female characters found in Indian epics, enabling them to assume positions of



strength and complexity. By doing so, this study makes a valuable contribution to the wider academic conversation around feminist interpretations of mythology in literature.

Keywords: Mythology, Feminism, Re-telling, Women Empowerment, Gender and Myth

Introduction:

Within the domain of literature, the convergence of myth and feminism has sparked a significant and influential discourse that establishes connections between the ancient and the modern, the sacred and the ordinary, and the legendary and the feminist. This discourse presents a reinterpretation and reassessment of the traditional depiction of women in classical tales, affording them a significant and essential presence in narratives that were traditionally dominated by male characters. Amidst the diverse range of feminist literary inquiry, the literary contributions of Samhita Arni stand out as a notable embodiment of mythological revival. The book titled "The Missing Queen" explores the vast realm of Indian mythology with a daring approach, using a distinct and fascinating narrative that challenges conventional frameworks in order to give agency to overlooked female protagonists. This study undertakes an investigation of the intersection of myth and feminism through the works of Arni, examining how these two themes interconnect and interact throughout the narrative.

Myth and Feminism: A Confluence of Voices:

The novel titled "The Missing Queen" takes readers on a comprehensive exploration of a wide array of myths, tales, and enduring narratives that are intricately connected to the cultural and historical legacy of India. Arni's narrative style challenges traditional limitations by including feminist perspectives. This fusion not only recontextualizes women in ancient tales, but also presents a challenge to established narratives and prompts an examination of how these stories have shaped societal understandings of gender and agency.

One of the primary ways in which Arni infuses feminism into her narrative is by reimagining the roles and narratives of mythological women. In her words, she reshapes these characters to give them their rightful voice and agency:

We've heard enough of the stories of men, those tales have been sung a thousand times. Our lives are intertwined with myths, but our stories are



unrecorded, and our voices are silenced. It's time for our voices to resonate through the ages. (The Missing Queen 55)

Within this passage, Arni effectively communicates the fundamental nature of her feminist inquiry, emphasizing the significance of elevating the perspectives of women who have been marginalized within narratives dominated by male-centric myths. The primary objective of this approach is to critically examine and reshape the conventional narratives that have historically oppressed and marginalized these women and their narratives over an extended period of time.

Mythical Resurgence: Reclaiming Forgotten Heroines:

The novel "The Missing Queen" by Samhita Arni serves as a critique of the historical marginalization of women in mythology, while also addressing the conventional representation of these female figures. The book presents a narrative that incorporates elements of mythology, including a landscape populated by powerful women who have endured marginalization for an extended period of time. The narrative provides these women with the chance to demonstrate their autonomy and distinctiveness, therefore questioning conventional gender norms.

Arni reconstructs the narrative of Sita, the central character from the Indian epic "Ramayana," by presenting her as an independent and strong-willed woman who reclaims her agency. Sita states: "I am not just a character in a story. I am a woman with dreams, desires, and the right to make my own choices." (The Missing Queen 102)

The transition of Sita from a submissive character to an empowered heroine exemplifies Arni's feminist reinterpretation. The representation of women in ancient stories is often characterized by certain conventions, although the depiction of Sita in this particular narrative challenges these norms. This alternative portrayal enables Sita to be shown as a complex figure with the agency to shape her own fate.

Myth and Feminism: An Enduring Relevance:

The Missing Queen portrays a mythological rebirth that serves as a tribute to the enduring power of narrative. This statement highlights the inherent ability of literature to



question, undermine, and rebuild myths that have influenced our shared awareness. Furthermore, this observation highlights the lasting significance of historical myths in influencing present-day viewpoints about gender, empowerment, and cultural identity.

The Missing Queen is a notable piece of literature that effectively demonstrates the convergence of myth and feminism. The story crafted by Samhita Arni serves to empower women via a process of redefining their roles within the context of Indian mythology. In doing so, Arni effectively challenges deeply ingrained preconceptions that have persisted through time and subverts the traditional narratives that have long been accepted as the norm. Arni employs the perspectives of her female characters to create a discourse that resonates through generations, shedding light on a trajectory towards a society that is more inclusive, equitable, and enlightened.

Conclusion:

The Missing Queen exemplifies the lasting significance of old myths in influencing present-day viewpoints towards gender, empowerment, and cultural identity. Arni's feminist inquiry not only surpasses temporal limitations but also extends beyond the confines of mythological constructs. This phenomenon presents a challenge to existing assumptions, reviving overlooked female protagonists and granting them agency as influential and complex characters who choose their own fates.

The intersection of myth and feminism shown in *The Missing Queen* sheds insight on a trajectory towards a society that is more comprehensive, equitable, and enlightened. The literary contributions of Samhita Arni serve to revive the narratives and perspectives of women that have been neglected throughout time. Through this endeavor, Arni's work ignites a renewed interest in feminist ideals, effectively connecting the enduring tales of antiquity with the contemporary need for gender parity and the advancement of women. This statement serves as a poignant reminder that within the realm of literature and beyond, the voices of women are not just fictional entities inside a narrative, but rather dynamic and enduring truths that demand acknowledgment, empowerment, and the chance to reverberate throughout history.



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