

Shakuntala

Sati



Radha

Ahilya



Draupadi

Renuka

Mythicising women
who make a choice:

**a prerogative of
the Indian**

collective

unconscious to

demarcate

modesty and

right conduct for

women

Urvashi

Sita

Menaka

Kunti

Vedavati

Central Indian Myths



flood myth

quest myth

fire myth

exile myth

fight between

dharma and adharma

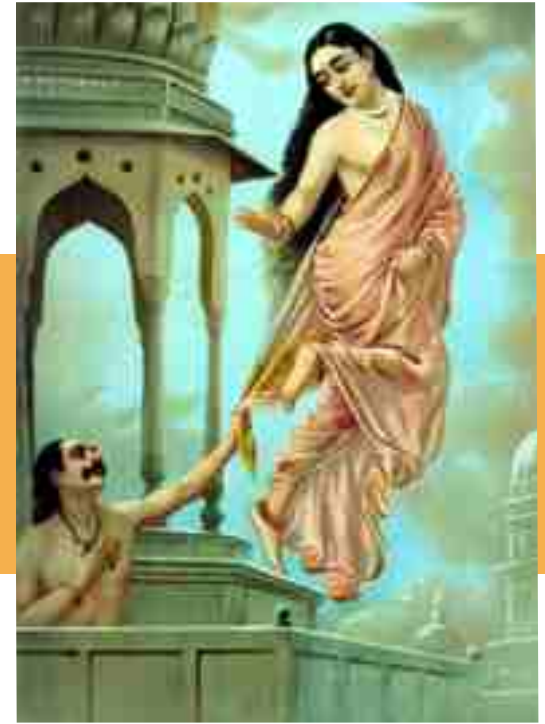
Objective Myths of

To preserve and reinforce the socio-cultural aspect of the male female dichotomy and ensure the uninterrupted and undisturbed running of the patriarchal setup.



goddess

nymph



human

The chaste and the
virtuous woman:
a central female
archetype

*preserves the male/female
dichotomy
and hierarchy*





Sita is sexually vulnerable.

Fatally attracted to Maric the asura disguised as a golden deer
Lusts to possess him and sends Rama then Laxmana after him.

Sita's final act of dissolution of being: misread as mute
acceptance of her fate, the great sacrifice of a virtuous woman
and not silent resistance.



Stepping out of her confinement or
the laxmanrekha and thus defying
her protector's orders leads to her
subsequent abduction and captivity.



Sita: the ultimate symbol of a chaste woman



*Sita:
a common
household deity*

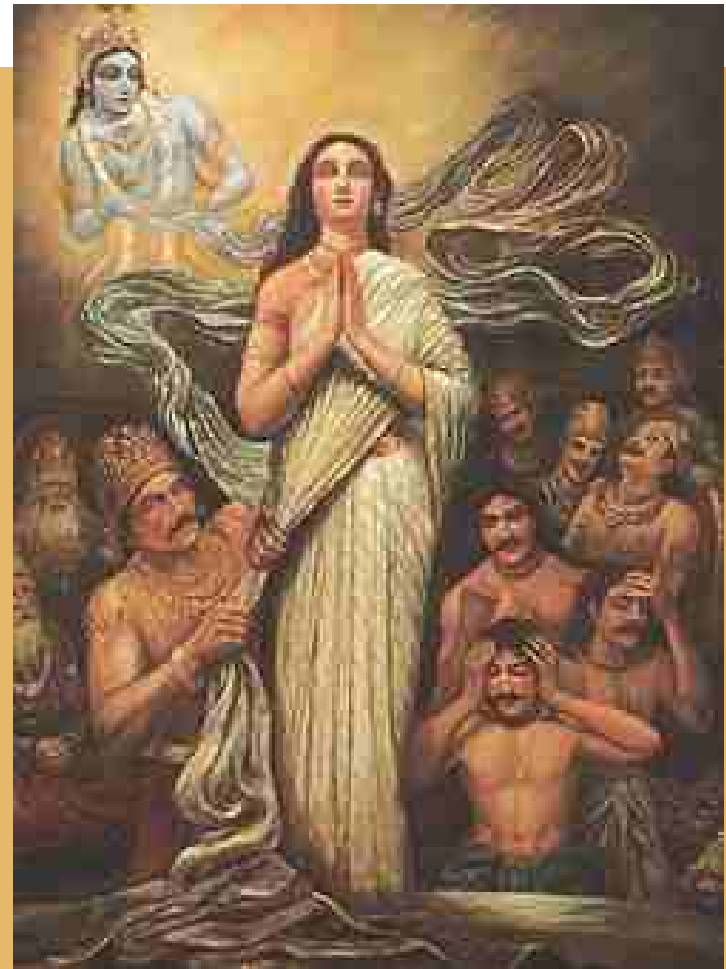
The virtuous mistress of a house who keeps family together and is benevolent towards those who serve the household.

Sita is glorified and worshipped to this day for her eternal faithfulness and lasting devotion to her husband. This quality of hers override her other mortal or 'lesser' qualities that make her more human.

Sita: former and next life



Vedavati renounces her life on being ravished by Ravana and is reborn as Sita.



Sita makes an existential choice of dissolution of being and is reborn as Draupadi with a potentially sexual future.

Vedavati

Draupadi

Ahilya's subjective choice of copulating with Indra earn her the wrath of her ascetic husband Gautam rishi whose curse turns her to stone.



Ahilya

Ahilya is best remembered for her patience, her ready resignation and acceptance of her fate, her long-standing suffering and her penitence.

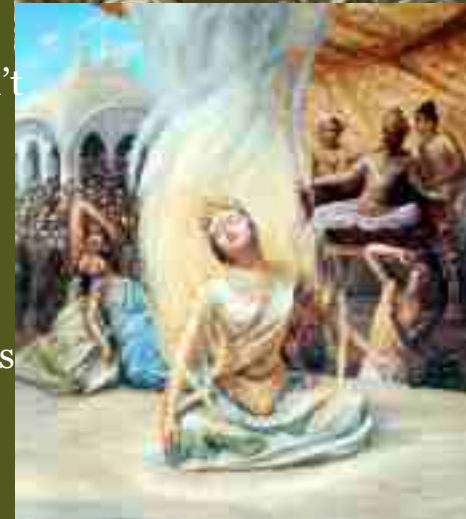
A touch by a male other than her husband or a par purush is the cause of Ahilya's doom and ironically is also the means of her redemption. She is rescued and her curse lifted by the divine touch of Lord Rama.

*Sati & Sita:
subjected to
similar fates*



Shiva rejects Sati as she has lied to him and he can't take her back with 'the body she wears now'.

Sita and Sati: mythicised as devoted wives who laid their lives for the sake of their husbands.





Draupadi: redefining virginity

Draupadi: born of fire has to pass through the fire and purify herself every time in order to regain her virginity for each of her five husbands.

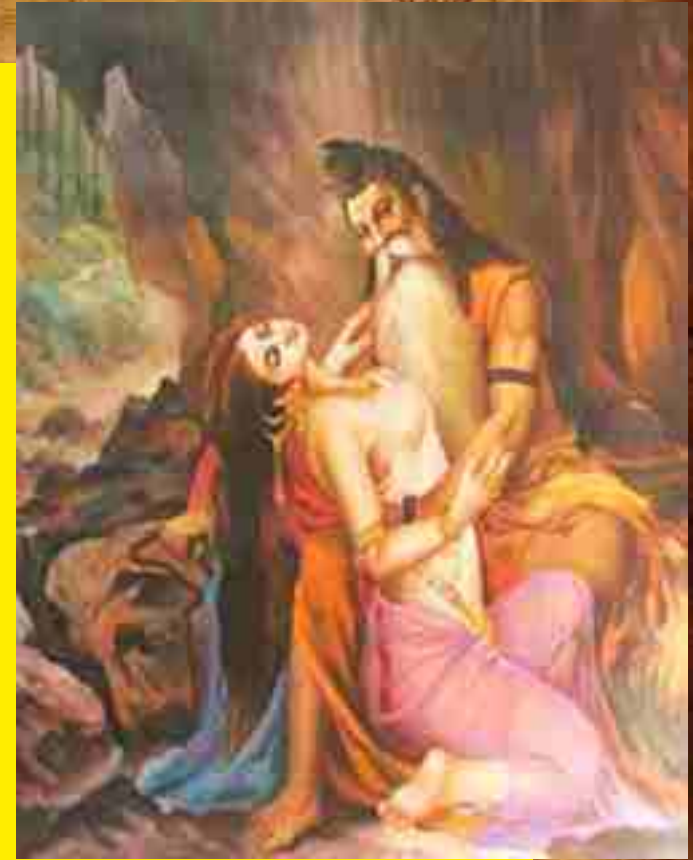


Kunti



Kunti: her choice of having her children fathered by different men is not reprehensible as she has her husband's sanction and it is done in order to have successors to the throne.

Celestial nymphs are different from humans and so their moral codes too are different. Menaka in the act of seducing Vishwamitra.



Menaka

Radha and Krishna are the very embodiment of love despite Radha being older and married.

Radha



Rukmini



Rukmini's elopement too has Lord Krishna's support and sanction.