

SITA

**BY
TORU DUTT**



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- Toru Dutt was born in Calcutta on 4 March 1856 to a Bengali family, which had converted to Christianity. Her father was [Govind Chandra Dutt](#) and her mother was Kshetramoni Dutt (née Mitter), of the Rambagan Dutt family.
- Her cousin [Romesh Chandra Dutt](#) was also a writer and Indian civil servant. Dutt's father converted to Christianity in 1862, when Dutt was six years old.
- Toru was the youngest child of three, after sister Aru and brother Abju.
- Dutt was educated at home by her father and by the Indian Christian tutor Babu Shib Chunder Banerjee, learning French and English, and eventually Sanskrit, in addition to her first language, Bengali. During this time, she learnt [John Milton](#)'s epic poem of Christian allegory [Paradise Lost](#) by heart. She also learned stories of ancient India from her mother.

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- In 1869, when Dutt was 13, Dutt's family left India, making her and her sister some of the first Bengali girls to travel by sea to Europe. The family spent four years living in Europe, one in France and three in England. They also visited Italy and Germany.
- When Toru Dutt returned to Calcutta in 1873 at the age of 17, she found it challenging to return to a culture that now seemed "an unhealthy place both morally and physically speaking" to her Europeanized and Christianized eyes.
- Toru Dutt died of consumption, at the age of 21 on 30 August 1877.

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Three years after returning, she wrote to Mary Martin, "I have not been to one dinner party or any party at all since we left Europe," and "If any friend of my grandmother happens to see me, the first question is, if I am married."

Both remarks express frustration with what she found to be a restrictive and conservative society. However, she also recognized that Europe could not replace India as her true home.

She took consolation in reinvigorating her studies of Sanskrit with her father and hearing her mother's stories and songs about India.

TORU DUTT - Publications

- *A Sheaf Gleaned in French Fields*, Saptahik Sambad Press, Bhowanipore, 1876
- *Bianca, or the Spanish Maiden*, serialized in *Bengal Magazine* from January to April 1878 (posthumous)
- *Le Journal de Mademoiselle d'Arvers*, Didier, Paris, 1879 (posthumous)
- *Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan*, 1882 (posthumous)

Sita

Three happy children in a darkened room!
What do they gaze on with wide-open eyes?
A dense, dense forest, where no sunbeam pries,
And in its centre a cleared spot.—There bloom
Gigantic flowers on creepers that embrace
Tall trees: there, in a quiet lucid lake
The white swans glide; there, "whirring from the brake,"
The peacock springs; there, herds of wild deer race;
There, patches gleam with yellow waving grain;
There, blue smoke from strange altars rises light.
There, dwells in peace, the poet-anchorite.
But who is this fair lady? Not in vain
She weeps,—for lo! at every tear she sheds
Tears from three pairs of young eyes fall amain,
And bowed in sorrow are the three young heads.
It is an old, old story, and the lay
Which has evoked sad Sîta from the past
Is by a mother sung.... 'Tis hushed at last
And melts the picture from their sight away,
Yet shall they dream of it until the day!
When shall those children by their mother's side
Gather, ah me! as erst at eventide?

SUMMARY

- In the poem "Sita" the poet Toru Dutt conjures up the mythic past and tries to infuse into it the past glory. She gives a picture of Sita in exile. What fascinates the reader is her description of nature in which flowers, lakes, peacocks, and a herd of deer find a place.
- The narrator in the poem is the mother who is telling the story of Sita in exile to her three children- Toru, her sister Aru, and their brother, Abju. In the darkened room the three children gaze, through the eyes of their mind, on a dense forest i.e., the Ashram of Valmiki where Sita was in exile. They see gigantic flowers blooming on creepers that embrace tall trees; a quiet clear lake where white swans are swimming smoothly; the peacock springing the herds of wild deer racing; the small areas gleaming with yellow waving grain. And among all these, they see Sita weeping because she has been put in exile in Valmiki Ashram.
- The sorrow of Sita's life has deeply touched the children. They can see the Valmiki Ashram where Sita was in exile through the eyes of their mind. They feel sorry for Sita, and tears roll down their eyes. The children are so affected by the story of Sita that they dreamt of it whole night after the mother has finished telling the story.

Three happy children in a **darkened** room!
What do they **gaze** on with **wide-open** eyes?
A **dense**, dense forest, where no **sunbeam** pries,
And in its centre a **cleared spot**.—There **bloom**
Gigantic flowers on **creepers** that **embrace**
Tall trees: there, in a **quiet lucid** lake
The white **swans glide**; there, "**whirring** from the brake,"
The peacock **springs**; there, herds of wild deer race;

- Darkened – অন্ধকার
- Gaze- দৃষ্টি
- **wide-open**- সম্পূর্ণ খোলা, অব্যাহত
- Dense- ঘন
- Sunbeam- সূর্যকিরণ
- cleared spot – পরিষ্কৃত স্থান
- Bloom – মুকুলিত, প্রস্ফুটিত
- Gigantic – দুর্দান্ত, অসাধারণ, খুব বড় আকার বা পরিমাণের
- Creeper – লতা
- Embrace – আলিঙ্গন
- Quiet – শান্ত, স্থির
- Lucid- স্বচ্ছ, পরিষ্কার
- Swans – রাজহাঁস
- Glide - ধীরে ধীরে প্রবাহিত
- Whirring - দ্রুত স্পন্দিত ডানার শব্দের মতো
- Spring - লাফানো

There, **patches gleam** with yellow **waving** grain;
There, blue smoke from **strange altars** rises light.
There, **dwells** in peace, the poet-**anchorite**.

- Patches - মাটির একটি ছোট টুকরো, বিশেষত বাগানের জন্য ব্যবহৃত একটি।
- Gleam - জ্বলজ্বল করা
- Waving – আলোড়ন, তরঙ্গ
- Strange – অসাধারণ, বিরল
- Altars – বেদি, উপাসনা স্থান
- Dwell – থাকা, বসবাস
- Anchorite – বৈরাগী, সন্ন্যাসী, তপস্বী, আশ্রমের বাসিন্দা

But who is this fair lady? Not in **vain**
She **weeps**,—for **lo!** at every tear she sheds
Tears from three pairs of young eyes fall **amain**,
And **bowed** in sorrow are the three young heads.

- Vain – অযথা, নিরর্থক, মূল্যহীন
- Weeps – বিলাপ, কাঁদা
- Lo – দৃষ্টি আকর্ষণ
- Amain – shortly, quickly, at the same time
- Bowed – নত

It is an old, old story, and the lay
Which has **evoked** sad Sîta from the past
Is by a mother sung.... 'Tis **hushed** at last
And **melts** the picture from their **sight** away,
Yet shall they dream of it until the day!
When shall those children by their mother's side
Gather, ah me! as erst at **eventide**?

- Evoke – উদ্দীপনা, আহ্বান করা
- Hushed – নীরব বা শান্ত করা বা হওয়া
- Melt – দ্রবীভূত করা বা হওয়া
- Sight – দৃষ্টিশক্তি
- Gather – জড় করা
- Eventide – ঘটনাপ্রবাহ, সন্ধ্যাকাল

RECAPITULATION

1. In 'Sita', a poem of 22 lines, a mother while putting her children to bed and relates the story of Sita to them.
2. The children are so absorbed by the story that they weep at Sita's troubles.
3. The beauty of the forest is described in the initial lines.
4. Sita was abandoned by her husband and she sought refuge in the forest in Valmiki's hermitage.
5. The mother pacifies her children on conclusion of the narration.
6. The story has made a deep impact on the children and would continue to remain with them.
7. There are some resemblance between the poem and the poet's life. Toru adored Sita and thought of her as a touching and lovable heroine. The three children in the poem could be Toru, her brother Abju and sister Aru. She derived her interest in Indian mythology from her mother.
8. Sita's inner turmoil is juxtaposed against the serenity of nature.
9. In the beginning of the poem, the children are happy. In the end, we see three sorrowful children.
10. The poem presents a story within a story.

A. Answer the following questions in one or two words.

1. Who is the poem about?

Ans: The poem 'Sita' is about the mythological character Sita the wife of Lord Ram.

2. Now many children listen to the story?

Ans: Three children are listening to the story - the poet, her brother, and sister.

3. Who dwells in peace in the forest?

Ans: Valmiki, the poet anchorite dwells in peace in the forest.

4. What is the colour of the swans which are seen gliding in the lake?

Ans: The colour of the swans which are seen gliding in the lake is white.

5. Who is the narrator of the story?

Ans: The poet's mother is the narrator of the story.

B. Answer the following questions in a few words.

1. What prevents the sunlight from entering the place?

Ans: The dense forest prevents sunlight from entering the place.

2. Name the birds and animals mentioned in the poem.

Ans: The birds and animals mentioned in the poem are white swans, peacock, and deer.

3. Where are the children sitting?

Ans: The children are sitting in a darkened room.

4. Whose heads are bowed in sorrow?

Ans: On listening to the sad story of Sita the heads of the poet her brother and sister are bowed in sorrow.

5. What does the poet remember when she listens to the story?

Ans: When the poet listens to the story of Sita, she remembers the past happy days of her children when she along with her brother and sister would listen to the story from her mother.

C. Answer the following question briefly in your own words.

1. Why are the children weeping?

Ans: The children are weeping to hear the sad story of Sita in exile in the hermitage of Valmiki.

2. Describe the hermitage where Sita is living.

Ans: Sita is living in the hermitage of Valmiki when the mother narrates the story of Sita the three children can see the hermitage through the eyes of their mind. The hermitage in a dense forest where sunbeam cannot enter.

3 What does the poet long for?

Ans: The poet longs for those past happy days of her childhood when she along with her brother and sister would listen to her mother telling them the story to Sita.

D. Give suitable answers to the following.

1. How does the poem reflect the poet's deep love for nature?

Ans: The poem reflects the poet's deep love for nature when she presents a pen-picture of Valmiki's hermitage, where Sita is living in exile. The place is densely covered with creepers, flowers, and trees. It is so dense that sunlight cannot pass through it. There are white swans gliding on a placid lake rotating their wings. The peacocks are seen dancing and the wild deer running amidst yellow grain. Blue smoke rivals from the sacred alter.

This pictorial presentation of the nature world stresses the poet's deep love for nature.

2. Write a critical summary of the poem 'Sita'.

Ans: See the summary of the poem at the top.

Extra Questions Answers

1. Who is the fair lady? How does her situation affect the children?

Ans: The fair lady is Sita who has been put in exile in the Valmiki Ashram.

Her tears and sorrow in life in exile have deeply moved the children and they also start weeping.

2. What song does the mother sing? Describe its effect on the children.

Ans: The mother sings the song describing Sita's life of pain and sorrow during the period of her exile in a dense forest.

The sorrow of Sita's life has deeply touched the children. They can see the Valmiki Ashram where Sita was in exile through the eyes of their mind. They feel sorry for Sita, and tears roll down their eyes. The children are so affected by the story of Sita that they dreamt of it the whole night after the mother has finished telling the story.

3. Who is the 'poet anchorite' referred to in the poem 'Sita'?

Ans: "Poet anchorite" refers to Valmiki.