

The role of the women in gilgamesh, oedipus and ramayana

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of the World Literature of the Concerned 20 February The Role of the Women in Gilgamesh, Oedipus and Ramayana The roles of the women in ancient epics are they the Gilgamesh, Oedipus or Ramayana tend to affiliate to a common trend. In all these three epics, the women are presented as the repositories of insight, wisdom and inspiration.

The ancient epic Gilgamesh is of Sumerian origins. It dates back to 18th century BC. In this epic the hero is shown to be undertaking a mythic journey. The purpose of this journey is to achieve special awareness. Women are shown in this epic to be characters that embody this special awareness. For instance priestess Shamhat is an important character in Gilgamesh. She conveys and embodies wisdom. She is sent to tame the wild Enkidu. She civilizes Enkidu as she "stripped off her robe and lay there naked (79)" as Enkidu made love with her.

The other important woman in Gilgamesh is tavern keeper Shiduri. She signifies learning and wisdom. Gilgamesh is deeply moved by Enkidu's death. He wanders around seeking immortality. It is then that he meets Shiduri. It is Shiduri that imparts pragmatic wisdom to Gilgamesh. She tries to explain to Gilgamesh the fact that, "Humans are born, they live, then they die/this is the order that the gods have decreed (168)." Shiduri tries to encourage dejected Gilgamesh. She presents to him the positive aspects of life. Still Gilgamesh rejects her wisdom and insight.

Oedipus is a play written by the Greek playwright Sophocles. It is said to be first performed in 429 BC. In Oedipus women play the role of comforter and cautioner. Jocasta is an important character in the story. She is Oedipus' wife and mother. Oedipus is extremely worried by the prophecies. These

prophecies state that Oedipus will marry his mother after killing his father. It is Jocasta that tries to console Oedipus. She also tries to restrain him from seeking the truth about prophecies. However, Oedipus insults Jocasta as he says, “ Let us leave this woman to brag of her royal name (749).” Sphinx is another important character. She signifies the women’s power to move and inspire men.

Ramayana is the famous Indian epic. It was written by Sage Valmiki. It dates back to 4th century BC. Sita is the most important female character in the epic. She is depicted as a woman of virtue and restraint. She is the wife of prince Rama. She accompanies Rama on his fourteen year exile. She is abducted by demon Ravana. In Ravana’s custody she keeps her virtue and honor intact. Sita is totally committed to her husband. It is to rescue Sita that Rama fights a war with Ravana.

Thereby, in all these ancient works of literature, the salient women characters do come out as sources of inspiration, motivation and inspiration. It is these women characters that tend to be the custodians of wisdom, virtue and insight who play an important part in the life of central male characters.