

## **A critical review on “Hagar: Tough woman - an Epitome of Strength.”**

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**ABSTRACT:** *This article focuses on how the character , represented both in the Bible Hagar and in the Quran as Hajar, had been the first lone woman in the history to be associated with Diaspora and how all the sufferings have made her as the strongest woman ever. This review is an attempt to throw light upon the strength of women during and after sufferings. The scope of the research is to make the younger generation girls and middle aged women to realize their own potential and to stand up for themselves by themselves at times of need.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Hagar, Women. Sufferings, Strength, God,*

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### **I. Introduction**

A plant or a seedling moved away from its birthplace undergoes a painful process of growth in a strange land. New ambience, new humidity, new soil, same sun but different sunshine. Same is the plight of Hagar, moved away from Egypt. Born as the princess of King Pharaoh, Hagar was given as a slave to Abram and Sarai, to ensure a dignified life rather than an ignoble living. From the very beginning Hagar was constantly relying and believing the words of God. Sent as a slave, her dreams and life was vandalized by the events which took place henceforth in her life. Technology has improved, skills are enhanced but the psyche of the human mind remains the same forever. Being Vindictive and sadistic is a natural trait of any afflicted spiteful soul. Sarai was extremely spiteful towards Hagar who was almost half her age.

### **Strength emerges from Sufferings**

For any woman to become stronger than what she thinks she is, she needs spiritual strength. Spiritual strength emerges from total surrender. In one extreme we have Sarai, to whom God Himself spoke on two occurrences through Abram, promising them children. In another extreme we have Hagar who believes only in God and does everything according to HIS will, though she has not heard HIS voice until the first time she runs into wilderness escaping from the torment and torture of Sarai.

As a woman or the so called First Lady of the Tribe of Abraham, Sarai did not stand upon “the Trust”. Though she is well aware of the fact “Not to lean against her own understanding and only to Trust upon God” She is victimizing herself to her emotions and feelings which sways her towards incidents that change’s the life of Abram, Hagar and Her own self. Brought in as a slave by Sarai, Hagar suffers tremendously due to Natural animosity spitted out by Sarai. The venomous feeling of animosity connotes willful disobedience to the words of God.

As John Milton quotes, “The mind is its own place and, in itself can make a heaven of hell or a hell of heaven.” Sarai was able to make herself feel the hell out of Heaven. The feeling of discontent, the feeling of helplessness, the feeling of being wrecked and the feeling of having been given up is all what is knotted and webbed by the self to destroy the self. Self destruction begins when, as the proverb quotes “A heart at peace gives life to the body, but envy rots the bones.”

The more the torture and the torment Hagar faces, the more she wants to be away from them all. As we find in Hebrews 12:15 “See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.” Tart root had started budding up throttling the peace of both the women. The contempt Sarai had for Hagar led to more conflict which did never pave way for reconciliation. Sarai regarded Hagar as unworthy or inferior which made her assertive in mind that Hagar was disdainful.

Hagar does a moonlight flit. She is perfectly stopped, through the Voice of God’s angel which acts as a deterrent. The Voice continues on provoking the thoughts or the conscience of Hagar, by asking her “Where do you come from and where do you go?” (KJV) These questions by the Voice of the angel of God throws more

light towards "TIME" as the conceptual rudiment of everything. "Where do you come from?" signifies the past and "Where do you go?" relates to the future.

We are all time bound. Time is the greatest tool that is provided by God. Proper utility of time paves way to proper feeding of the soul. Proper feeding of the souls paves way to a purposeful life.

Sarai did not know what the future held for her. Neither had she had the brains to simply Trust God nor to think rationally. "The world and the desires pass away but whoever does the will of God lives forever( 1 John 2:17 KJV ) Whereas, out rooted from parental care Hagar is provided an opportunity by God to contemplate upon what "TIME" is.

Hagar became strong when she was at her weakest just because she blindly obeyed God's words. She had a firm faith and an attachment with God that "He has made everything beautiful in its time." He has also set eternity in the human heart. Yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to End."( Ecclesiastes 3:11)

Her life was with full of difficulties, yet she did have natural faith upon God and believed in His words "For I know the plans I have for you." (Jeremiah 29:11) She is wonder struck when the voice asks her about where she was going. Yet she believed and yet returned to Abram and Sarai when she was commanded to return. "In their hearts humans plan their course, but the Lord establishes their steps." (Proverbs 16:9) Now let's try to understand what is sought by the providence from both Sarai and Hagar. It is well explained through the verse "The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with us, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3:9) because humans "are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes."

"There is a time for everything." (Ecclesiastes 3:1-8) Hagar gets conceived by Abram through the arrangement made by Sarai. Leaning upon one's own understanding and not trusting upon God, is the utmost common stupidity ventured by human beings. When a woman tries to uplift others, she becomes even stronger than what she already is. But when she pulls others down, depending upon her prejudices, there begins an epoch of self destruction. Unable to bear the burning jealousy, Sarai dives in frustration and depression when she sees Ishmael, son of Hagar born and brought up in Abram's household. Abram was eighty six years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to Abram.

Now the burning hatred instigates her to make Hagar and Ishmael to get away from their household. She has contempt for Hagar as she says "Hagar looked down upon me" and she is unable to bear the insult of being looked down upon. Hagar sent away by Abram and Sarai, feels helpless and insulted. Having her child of 16 years in one hand and with a meal for one time in another, she is sent away into wilderness.

A girl born as a princess, sold as a slave, treated as a concubine, driven out of the shelter out of contempt, Hagar experiences untold ordeal in each and every stage of life. She is able to get the Grace of God as she has firm faith in God. She obeys God from the beginning incessantly. Her faith in God is more than that of the struggle that she undergoes. On the way, in the desert Ishmael faints because of dehydration. There is no water to be given. Hagar runs madly between Alsafa and Almarva in search of water.

## **II. Conclusion**

She feels helpless, kneels on her knees and pleads to God. She calls God by name "El-Roi" meaning "the God who sees me." We can envisage the flawless faith of Hagar when she calls God as "El-Roi". God unveils her eyes and she is able to locate the well and water. She gives Ishmael the nourishment of water. Water signifies life. Life bestowed by God. Strong women don't bother about the destiny. They simply focus only on journey. The strength of a woman is revealed when she is made the weakest. The sufferings that a woman undergoes make her the kindest woman. The woman who has suffered a lot will never let another soul suffer. Strength is in disciplining one's one self. Strength is in sticking on to one's conscience. Strength is never to give up amidst life threatening challenges. In all these aspects Hagar has stood up as a strong woman, an epitome of strength.

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