

THE PALACE OF ILLUSION: TRAVERSED THE WOMEN DESIRE

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Abstract

Mahabharata is an epic but it has revitalized by Divakaruni in her novel 'The Palace of Illusion', who gave a new voice to Panchali. The book is undoubtedly a feminist work of literature in which myths are revised, rewritten, and presented from a female perspective. The inner life of a woman is the foremost crum of this novel. In the novel 'The Palace of Illusions', the protagonist Draupadi is described as being solid and as a woman with sturdy resolve. It involves interpreting a woman's individuality and sense of self in relation to the society. Indian epics are magnificent contributions made by the Indian people to international literature. In her masterpiece 'The Palace of Illusions,' she examines how the patriarchal structure of society has filled even the epic 'Mahabharata'. She demonstrates how women have been compelled to live in such kind of positions for centuries on end. Panchali tells the story of the Mahabharata, therefore her voice takes on a universal meaning. It is a feminist version of the Mahabharata myth that is done carefully. From the viewpoint of a magnificent woman named 'Draupadi,' the well-known Hindu epic 'Mahabharata' is told. The Palace of Illusions transports us to a period that is both historically and mystically significant for us.

Keywords: Women, Marginalisation, Domination, Feminist, Contemporary

Since the first moment it appeared in this everlasting universe, social space has been constantly changing and evolving. The most significant species of God on earth is the human being, but there are hierarchies and clear partiality for men in the roles and responsibilities that go along with that rank. If you could remember a century ago, you would notice that women were placed only at the home. The woman's domain was her home, and her primary responsibilities included cooking, having children, reproducing, and cleaning at all. In general, women are viewed as crucial nurturers and homemakers. The achievement of gender equality has significant social repercussions even though it is not only a fundamental shared freedom. Women's writing serves as a vehicle for expression and a means of satisfying one's desires. In the current situation, it has undoubtedly gained momentum. We no longer view women as weak and submissive, but rather as icons.

'A Valediction of the Rights of Women', written by Mary Wollstonecraft, debuted on the literary scene in 1792. It was the first time a writer had penned a book about women's rights. Since Simone De Beauvoir's book *The Second Sex* was released, there has been a stronger understanding of

the rights and equality of men and women. The distinction between the terms sex and gender was emphasised in Kate Millet's other work on the subject, *Sexual Politics*. The distinction is that although gender is a sociological issue, sex is a biological inclination. This research paper provides a fresh perspective by telling the story through the eyes of Panchaali, the wife of the Pandavas from the greatest epic 'Mahabharata'. 'The Palace of Illusions', retells the importance of women in society and reexamines women's lives. This aids in highlighting contemporary problems such as gender identity, marginalisation, and discrimination in a patriarchal culture.

In Indian English writing, Divakaruni holds a prestigious position. She successfully retells the story while maintaining both originality and distinctiveness. 'The Palace of Illusions' addresses issues of gender inequality, female identity crisis, and male dominance, tradition, and ancient culture. Instead of using a male character as the novel's protagonist, author Divakaruni came up with a female one, offering readers a fresh perspective on the well-known plot of the great Hindu epic. Most likely, the re-narration emphasises Draupadi's fight for identity in a patriarchal culture. The novel provides explanations for the protagonist's tenacity and bravery.

The main protagonist 'Draupadi' is a flawed yet endearing character who always seeks out truth and love despite making many mistakes. By recounting the events from Panchaali's perspective, the author explores Panchaali's involvement in the conflict between the Pandavas and the Kauravas. The ultimate product is a tragic tale of human tragedy that, in the author's perspective, provides light on a pivotal character from the Mahabharata who is largely silent about her reasons of her sentiments and motivations. This paper explores the struggle of a woman who was born as a princess but faced problems throughout her life. The biography of Draupadi aims to shatter preconceived notions about what it means for woman to be a woman. The battle between myth and modernity is attempted to describe here. It presents a fresh take of the novelist's portrayal of Draupadi's voice. It is no longer necessary to view the study of mythology as a means of escaping reality and entering the world of primitive people, but rather as an effort to gain a deeper understanding of the human psyche. It explains how myth is important and how it works in people's lives in the context of existing time. Legends from an old Indian epic are intertwined to form Panchaali's fate, which is as fragile and golden as the lotus she discovers. Women's oppression, identity issues, male dominance, distinctive female viewpoint, and situation of women throughout the previous era are all topics covered in this masterpiece 'The Palace of Illusions'.

The story of Draupadi demonstrates how women are compelled to follow tradition and culture without challenge. Draupadi has completely different perspectives than regular women, and her actions are just as potent as she is. The story follows the life of the princess Draupadi starting with her birth story from fire and continuing with her energetic act with 'pandavas', who had been defrauded of their monarchy. Panchaali joins them in their journey and help them to restore their heritage. Her courage and tenacity have been described throughout the entire book. It attracts readers with its own charm. The lives of women have not changed over time, whether it is the ancient or modern era; there have only been challenges to overcome and situations to act in. She explores and invents a new legroom for women. The majority of myths are educational, teach people regarding their life style in society. They provide an

explanation for events and particulars, both cultural and usual. Through storytelling, humanity can find healing and new power to tackle issues and live peacefully. In Indian popular culture, the stories from the epic Mahabharata take up a significant amount of space. The narrative starts with Draupadi's birth from fire, develops as people think back on her life, and comes to a close with her last exit.

Draupadi liked to hear the tale of her birth from her grandmother, Dhairya. Draupadi disapproves of the manner her father handles her after she escapes the fire. Regarding the foretelling that she would transform the path of history, even King Draupad expresses scepticism. His desire for vengeance against Drona, his former friend who had become his antagonist, gave birth to Draupadi. He started a sacrifice fire in an effort to exact revenge on Drona, and she is born from it. He prays for a son named Dhristadyumna to be born so that he might accomplish this goal. Draupadi, who follows her brother in the rite for King Draupad, is not anticipated by either of the priests. The heavenly prophecy that she would transform history is present at her birth. The first thing that Draupadi changed was education. She was denied a degree because her brother was given preference. "A Kshatriya woman's highest duty in life is to support the warriors in her life," her tutor instructed her brother to inform her (26). Her schooling was neglected by her father.

This demonstrates that nobody gave a damn about women's education and that they were expected to follow men's wishes. Because it is their duty to take care for their husbands and to pray that they die valiantly in war, women were not given the same education opportunities as males. The role of women in Indian society is limited to the house, and only men should engage in any form of adventure such as battle, hunting, trips, or unrestricted freedom. The chance that was provided to her brother is not available to her due to the rigid social system. The episode of Draupadi's marriage represents the hegemonic male dominance. In Swayamvar, she now has the advantage of choosing her life spouse. But it ended up being a pivotal moment in her life. Arjun, the third Pandava, triumphs in the archery match that Draupad holds to wed off his lovely daughter.

Because he is aware that Arjun is the finest archer of his time, he is concentrating on keeping this contest in order to entice Arjun to attend the swayamwara. His wish is

granted, but it causes him trouble when Yudhishtra announces that all five of his brothers will wed Draupadi in accordance with his mother Kunti's contrary orders: "All five of you must wed this woman" (108). Kshatriya men frequently engaged in polygamy, although polyandry was unheard of. She finds it astounding. Women were expected to live chaste, faithful, and dedicated lives with just one man. However, Draupadi engaged in polyandry here for the first time. Despite the fact that Kunti accidentally revealed it, nobody views her as a fellow human being. She was used as a shared object by five males. Nevertheless, she married each of the five brothers, demonstrating her strength and subservience to her mother-in-law. It has long been said that the husband should provide his wife with security, comfort, love, and care. She is a princess here, nevertheless, and the spouse of the Great Pandava brothers. Although she has five husbands to care for her, none of them rushed to her aid when Duryodhan degraded her. Draupadi is portrayed in *The Palace of Illusions* as both a strong woman and a mournful individual who was unable to wed Karna due to his birth.

In Vyasa's *The Mahabharata*, Draupadi is depicted as a person who was born in order to kill the Kauravas. She is depicted as a sane individual in *The Palace of Illusions* who was powerless to prevent Kauravas' demise. According to a review by Tariqa Tandon, Divakaruni's version gives the epic a humanistic touch that makes it seem more natural, relevant, and intimate. This provides the epic with fresh understanding. Draupadi is projected as being the main reason for the battle of Kurukshetra and is seen as having a highly strong, smart, and impressive personality. The most widely read modern fiction is the Indian legendary epic known as the *Mahabharata*. In her book *The Palace of Illusions*, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni named Draupadi as "Sutradhar," a strong-willed and resolute figure from the *Mahabharata*. King Draupad of Panchaal's daughter and the wife of five Pandavs is known as Draupadi.

Draupadi makes the decision to write the story of her own life. The "truth" that was established by the original masculine text appears to be confirmed by Divakaruni. She seeks to convey a reality through her writing, which is also referred to as recreation. A woman's feminine perspective expressed in a literary work may be the first step toward self-definition and the ensuing empowerment of the women's

community. Women have been compelled to live on the margins of society for ages. In her masterpiece *Divakaruni* wants to portray a female interpretation of the illustrious *Mahabharata*. In the book, Divakaruni gives Draupadi a questioning tone. To reveal and expose the biases held by men, she has employed a dialogic technique.

She is being questioned on two levels: first, personally, where she discloses the prejudice held against her by others. She questions and interrogates people at the second level. She is discouraged from interrogating people because she makes them aware of their preconceptions. She is discouraged from thinking outside of traditional male constraints. Women have been urged by feminists for a very long time to talk openly about their sexuality and to break free from the oppressive male dominance that has long stifled women's sexuality and wants. 'The Palace of Illusion' opens with a discussion of historical events that Dhairya Maa and Draupadi or Panchali have previously addressed. Arjun, the Pandava Prince, triumphed over King Draupad of Panchaal on behalf of his Guru Drona. Additionally, she felt awful for mistreating Karna and putting him through the most painful question in front of everyone. When the Pandavas arrive at their residence, they humorously inform Kunti that they have brought something. Without letting on that she is there, Kunti instructs them to split up their supplies. She remained unmoved even after realising that Draupadi is a woman and not a creature. She demands that they all wed her. In her account of the incident, Draupadi bemoans her own helplessness and objectification.

Draupad is furious when the Pandavas return to him and demand that he wed Draupadi to all five of them. He disagrees and claims that his daughter would be referred to as a whore in Kampilya. In this situation, Draupadi lacked control over her own body. Prior to getting married, her father had authority over her, but after Arjun won her over, that authority was transferred to him. Arjun, who would now be sharing her with his brothers. Without taking her approval or opposition into account because it wasn't necessary, her fate was discussed and deliberated. By being married off to five brothers, she is deprived of her sexual cravings. She was handled as though she were a resource to be distributed equitably among the males. The practise of polyandry was not very common in modern society. For the average woman, polyandry is seen as a sign of female

freedom or as a celebration of womanhood. Divakaruni's Draupadi, however, casts doubt on and shatters this entire celebration of polyandry. It was not with her approval or wish that she was distributed by the five brothers. When she was forced to give in to the fantasies and wishes of five men, her own sexuality was restricted in this situation.

Vyasa grants her the favour that she will always be a virgin whenever she visits a new brother, adding insult to injury. She wonders for whom that specific blessing was intended. For her spouses or for her? Of course, her husbands' sexual desires—who would be thrilled to have a virgin come first, not her own. In her response to Vyasa's boon, Draupadi adds that it was also not overly pleased with the virginity blessing, which seemed to be intended more for my husbands than for me. That seemed to be the way boons were bestowed upon women that they were given to us as presents we hadn't really desired. The worst trauma that Draupadi experiences is the awful humiliation and assault on her body. In a game of chance with Shakuni, Yudhisthir loses not only his kingdom but his wife also. When Draupadi came to know that Yudhisthir has lost her in the gamble, she is unable to comprehend what has been done to her personally and, in her own denial mode. She was pulled by her hair to the courtroom full of all males wearing only a cloth without being given the opportunity to respond. She was asked to take off even one piece of clothing in front of her husbands and elders. In this instance, we can observe the process of subjection in two distinct ways: initially, through the establishment of laws and rules that are introduced to women as the real thing in the form of vedic texts; and second, by employing external force in response to a woman's rejection of the reality and truth set forth by a man. 'The Palace of Illusions' by Divakaruni recounts the actual circumstances that the female characters in the epic faced, clarifies the brutality of the human mind, and discusses famous heroines. Divakaruni decides to retell The Mahabharata in order to portray the status of women in a patriarchal society. The main goal of Divakaruni's retelling

of the epic is to aid Panchaali, the protagonist, in her search for restitution for the ignominious conduct. Panchaali is brought to life via the retelling thanks to the questions she poses to the patriarchal society.

Women have been urged by feminists for a very long time to talk openly about their sexuality and to break free from the oppressive male dominance that has long muted women's sexuality and wants. Draupadi doesn't feel guilty about her sexuality or her wants in 'Palace of Illusions'. Her husband was under the authority of her body, but not of her mind. Even in the feminine realm, characters like Dhai Ma describe their cravings for sex. Divakaruni breaks down the limitations on sexual desire imposed by men by having her female characters discuss their desires. Draupadi is a character written by Divakaruni, writes about her own body and sexual obsessions. Although practically all types of human difficulties are covered in the original epic, men predominate as characters.

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