

THE STUDY OF MYTH LITERATURE FROM “THE PALACE OF ILLUSIONS” BY CHITRA BANERJEE DIVAKARUNI

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ABSTRACT

Myth is a legendary or a traditional story that usually concerns an event or a hero/heroine, with or without using factual or real explanations. These particularly concern demigods or deities, and describe some rites, practices, and natural phenomenon. Typically, a myth involves historical events and supernatural beings. There are many types of myths, such as classical myths, religious myth, and modern myths. Myth exists in every society, as they are basic elements of human culture. The main function of the myth is to teach moral lessons and explains the historical events and the sufferings of living things in those periods. How they believe the supernatural stories. Here we can understand a culture in a much better way, by knowing and appreciating the stories, myths, and dreams. Myth came before religious, and all religious stories are, in fact, retelling of global mythical themes. Besides literature, myths also play a great role in science, philosophy, and psychology. Here I have chosen the book which was written by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, “THE PALACE OF ILLUSIONS”. The novel is a rendition of the Hindu epic MAHABHARATA, as told from Draupadi’s viewpoint, namely, that of a woman living in a patriarchal world. It take us back to the time of Indian epics that is half-history, half-myth, and wholly magical. Through her narrator Panchaali, the wife of the legendary five Pandava brothers, Divakaruni gives us a rare feminist interpretation and mythology of an epic story

KEYWORDS: *Illusions-a false idea, belief, supernatural-the cannot be explain by laws of science, interpretation-an explanation or understanding something , myth- a story from past times, especially one about god and men of courage.*

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INTRODUCTION

The Palace of Illusions is a reimagining of the world famous Indian epic, the Mahabharata-told from the point of view of the wife of an amazing woman. Relevant to today’s war-torn world, The Palace of Illusions take us back to a time that is half history, half myth, and wholly magical. The novel traces the princess Panchaali’s life beginning with her birth in fire and following her spirited balancing act as a woman with five husbands who have been cheated out of their father’s kingdom. Here Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni gives voices to bold and sensuous retelling and captivating stories from the epic. Woven into the fabric of traditional tales from the ancient Indian epic, Panchaali destiny is a thread as golden and as fragile as the lotus she discovers. With devotion to Panchaali’s tale, Divakaruni also presents a stirring account of the interplay of warriors, god, and the inscrutable laws of destiny, offering wisdom for today’s war-torn world. The entire novel is embellished with elements of supernaturalism. Panchaali’s narrative provides a radiant entree into an ancient mythology virtually unknown to the western world. Divakaruni’s impulse to flesh out the women of the Mahabharata

results in a charming and remarkable book. A truly epic narrative myth calls for bitter experience descending, avalanche-like, down dynasties, incorporating impact; curses; looming fates; tricky and meddlesome gods; feuds; sages, sorcerers and wars. These elements and many more are found in abundance in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's novel.

Divakaruni has shown Draupadi as a contemporary woman who wants to express her thoughts and ideas to the world. Divakaruni has tried to bring out the past into present in a different way by showing the story of love, betrayal, revenge, war, freedom and friendship. In a book review of *The Palace of Illusions*, James Purdon says that, "A little jejune at times, Divakaruni's languid and elegant prose remains seductive as it reimagines the woman at the heart of the story and weaves myth into a modern idiom". *The Palace of Illusions* was a national best-seller for over a year in India and is a re-telling of an Indian epic *The Mahabharata* from Draupadi's perspective. It is a about strong self-cantered voice of Draupadi from Vyasa's *The Mahabharata*. She wrote this novel as she was not contented with the portrayal of women characters in mythology she says "I was left unsatisfied by the portrayal of women characters they remain shadowy figures; their thoughts and motives mysterious, their emotions portrayed only when they affected the lives of the male heroes, their roles ultimately subservient to those of their fathers or husbands, brothers or sons. In every famous epic, novels and famous books majority of male characters takes place there is no importance to female characters in ancient period. Here we don't know about Draupadi's character, idea and thought before we read this book, while reading we shall realize how the ancient men's are treated their daughters, wife. Here we can see the male domination in ancient period. Divakaruni presents Draupadi's life as a series of choices made by herself and not by the people around her, thus giving her a voice overwhelmingly patriarchal society that prevailed in ancient India.

In the novel, *The Palace of Illusions* Draupadi's character is not a woman who suffers within herself and is not able to speak about her views. Here her first impact was an education which is not given to her. Draupadi's father did not allow her to get education. Her father and tutor told her brother to inform her that 'A Kshatriya woman's highest purpose in life is to support the warriors in life' (Divakaruni, 26). When she questioned her brother "who decided that women's highest purpose was to support men?", he replied that is what I'd like you to do. This shows that nobody cared about the education of women and women were required to do what men wanted them to do. Here we can realize how those period women were. Marriage is taken as their decision to abide by social regime and family acceptance. Swayamwara means the practice of searching their own groom. Draupadi was subjected to Swayamwara, but she was already pledged to Arjun by her family and Krishna. How cruel this society is, a daughter is a toy in the hands of her own family. This novel shows the hidden feelings of Draupadi because she fell in love with Karna at first sight. Because of her family and Kshatriya convention she was married to Arjun and his brothers. This is special novel from this book we can learn the whole *Mahabharata*. In some places Draupadi failed to express her inner views. When Kunti asked her to marry all the five, she was waiting for Arjun to stand up for her against marrying all the five as they were committed to each other but nobody protested against the words of Kunti.

Draupadi was a strong woman. She questioned the elders in the court where she was gambled away by her husband. The description of the scene in this novel as it proves that the law which was equal to all. We see Draupadi not only a strong woman but also a sorrowful person who wishes to be with Karna. Even though she married to the five but she was in love with Karna in the depth of her heart, No one ready to hear Draupadi's wishes, the male domination society shattered the wishes and love of Draupadi. Till her death Draupadi keeps a special place for Karna where she regrets not having divulged her feelings to him. Her feelings for Krishna are also more those of a friend. Sri Krishna is a companion, caretaker and a guide in every deed from the beginning to the end. This may be the reason for her to fall for Krishna.

In the original text Draupadi has no voice, choice or identity of her own but Divakaruni brings out all these and give a life to the character Draupadi, who stands as a person with unwavering courage and strength to stand in any situation.

Vyasa’s Mahabharata shows Draupadi as a character that took birth to destroy the kauravas. The Palace of Illusions show her as a reasonable person who was not able to stop the destruction of Kauravas. When we read the novel we can understand the Draupadi’s personality and power and we can have a soft corner of her. From retelling, we can assume there was no priority for women in those times. That the death of Draupadi is because of ego, jealousy and lust has been explained. It is shown that whether it is a main character or negative one, human beings are not completely perfect. Draupadi is portrayed as an ordinary woman with lots of imperfection in this novel.

This novel is best for mythology lovers, take us back to the period we have learned about the character of Draupadi which was not shown in The Mahabharata.

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