



DRAUPADI'S SUFFERING AS A WOMAN IN CHITRA BANERJEE DIVAKARUNI'S THE PALACE OF ILLUSION

NEHA SHARMA

RESEARCH SCHOLAR; DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH, MMH COLLEGE GHAZIABAD, CCS UNIVERSITY MEERUT

"Today's women born yesterday Dealing with tomorrow

Not yet where we're going but not still where we were" -Adrienne Rich

ABSTRACT - In the Indian society women are always supposed very dependent and less important part. Women do not get respect and position as they deserve. But now time is constantly changing, besides all these humiliation and disrespect, they raise their voice to get the entire rights equivalent to men. They want their separate identity. Women do not suppose to be a puppet in the hands of man. This dominance can be seen from ancient to modern time.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is one of the prominent feminist writers. She shows through her novels how women shifting their worse position into good. Now they are becoming smarter. They are willingly trying to modify conservative thinking. The four walls are not enough for them to survive. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni showed in this novel how women being treated because India is a male powered country. Male are supposed superior to female. This gender biasness can be seen since childhood. The present study has been taken out with the main objective of presenting Draupadi as a role model for all Indian women. Draupadi's sufferings and her pain which she bore throughout her life. Her character was bold and appreciable. She has become an epitome for all modern women.

KEY WORDS- Indian society, patriarchy, women, conservative thinking, feminist.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is an Indian- American author. She has written a number of novels. Her largely works set in India and America. *The Palace of Illusion* is her masterpiece. It is about the story of the great Indian epic Mahabharata. She wrote this novel from the perspectives of women in which Draupadi is the leading character. The whole story revolves around her.

To get a deep understanding of the perspectives of women the feminist theories are important. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni depicted the real picture of women condition in the society as they are treated in the male powered world.

The Palace of Illusion, having the ancient time it interprets the story of the greatest epic, Mahabharata. This epic shows the miserable condition and exploitation of women how they suffered and discriminate in this male dominated society.

The story of the present novel *The Palace of Illusion* is about Draupadi's swayamvar, (marriage) to five husbands. She was not interested in being the wife of five Pandvas, she is compelled to be so. But in the Indian conservative society if a woman has more than one husband, she does not seem good in the eyes of people. Why not a man to do so? This indicates the one sided power, a woman was forced to marry with a number of men. Draupadi's life was full of trouble. Fate also plays a crucial role in her life. Having five husbands, she has also referred by other name Panchaali.

"One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" -Simon de Beauvoir

The time when she was bought up was highly male centered. Draupadi was told by Dhaimaa how to behave, talk and dress up like a girl. This all create womeness in her character. She was learnt to follow the footsteps of male. Draupadi has been trained like that way. She had to face ultimate challenges to make her own existence. In the previous time women were supposed to be only a domestic goods. Female infanticide, child marriage, dowry system etc., are in practicing and have had a long time in India.

Draupadi's character can be seen as a pioneer of feminism. She has considered by many as the first feminist of Hindu mythology. Her genuine attitude towards patriarch society is powerful. Her marriage plays a big role of her all sufferings. She dreamed to be a queen but result was quite different. She had always the punishment of being a woman. She faced many humiliations. In the court of Hastinapur, Yudhishthir played gamble with kouravas which was organized by Duryodhan. Yudhishthir lost all his property, his younger brothers and even his wife Draupadi too. She was as take in the gamble as an object by her own husband. When we go through the story of the great epic Mahabharata, It is clearly showed that in the ancient time women were treated like goods, personal property and like a soled object. Duryodhan ordered his younger brother Dushasan to take Draupadi into the sabha. Dushasan went in the room of Panchaali where she was laying in her royal bed. Dushasan said her to come with him when she denied going with him, Dushasan dragged up her by her hair and presented into the court.

Draupadi, the queen of kingdom, the wife of five brave worriers was thrown disgracefully in front of all courtiers, king Dhritrastra, Bheeshma and her husbands. Her eyes filled with tears and she said: *"I'm a queen. Draughter of draupad, sister of dhristadyumna. Mistress of the greatest palace on the earth. I can't be gambled away like a bag of coins, or summoned to court like a dancing girl"*. (p190)
"If perchance a man lost himself, he no longer had any jurisdiction over his wife". (P190)

It was the question about the honour of a woman. She raised her voice against this extreme torture. She was asking questions again and again into the court for her rights. Being a woman she was not the property of her husband. She lost her honour. Why did Yudhister wager her? Man is supposed to protect a woman not to humiliate her physically. She said;

"I found myself in court, a hundred male eyes burning through me. Gathering my disordered saree around me. I demanded help from my husband's" (p191)

Possession of male is explicit. There was no voice to argue and no hand to protect her. Draupadi was ashamed badly in the court. Everybody was silent on this dishonour because the court was full of men having all the powers. Wiping out of her tears Panchaali gave curse to the entire Kuru dynasty and the viewers of her insult- everything will destroy, nothing remains here, there will be no heir to continue this kingdom. People will know the result of dishonoring a woman in each period of time. This was revengeful attitude of Draupadi when she said:

“I stitched discontent onto my features and let my hair fall, matted and wrathful, around my face. Each day as i served them meals, I reminded the pandvas how they’d failed me, and what I’d suffered as a result in Duryodhan’s sabha.” (199).

And now she became a new woman who has broken old barriers in the society.

To sum up, it can be clearly viewed in Mahabharata that the Indian women surrounded with the pain and sufferings of conventional boundaries from the very ancient time to till now. They were always being restricted. Women have paradoxical position in the society. They made several sacrifices in her whole life whether she is broken or tries to support her family, her husband. Silence empowers women. Draupadi was presented as a bold character. Draupadi stood against her humiliation and dishonor. Patriarchy system is always supposed superior even in the present time, and this is followed by all religion. Women are suppressed everywhere they have to kill all their desires, and never allowed to express freely.

As Greek philosopher Aristotle said, *“male is by nature superior and the female inferior; the one rules and the other is ruled[...], it is better for them that they should be under the rule of their masters”*. (Politics 190).

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni shows the sufferings, pain and humiliation of an Indian woman, who has always a secondary status. Divakaruni established a new outlook for male perception. It is clearly showed in the present novel that women status have no existence in ancient time. But in the modern era, time is constantly changing. It is like two sides of coin, one side is worse which indicates ancient time and other is promising which indicates the present time.

Man is not separate from women. The separation which he feels and experience is mental and due to his blindness of superiority, he did many mistakes.

This is also true in modern culture. Society is referred to as patriarchy.

RenukaNaryanan appreciated this novel *The Palace of Illusion* as *‘perhaps there was a modern Draupadi story in English before Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni’s but it has n’t come my way. Unsure of what I’d get as her earlier books did n’t quite work for me; I began to read The Palace of Illusion in a tentative sort of way. The ‘mysterious woman’ style of narration is unmistakably Divakaruni’s.*

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