**“A STUDY ON WOMEN’S PURSUIT FOR LIBERATION AND EQUITY IN CHITRA BANERJEE DIVAKARUNI’S THE PALACE OF ILLUSIONS”**

1Ms.D.Mani Bhagyasri, 2 Dr. A. Vijayanand
1Lecturer & Research Scholar, 2Professor (Kalinga University, Raipur)
1Department of English,
1 Ch.S.D.St.Theresa’s College for Women (A),
Eluru, Andhra Pradesh, India.

**Abstract:** The purpose of this paper is to explore women’s pursuit for liberation and equity in patriarchal society with special reference to Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni’s The Palace of Illusions. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is the author of fifteen books including the award winning novels such The Mistress of Spices, Sister of My Heart, Queen of Dreams, The Palace of Illusions. Most of her works are translated into many languages. Her female protagonists are always aware of the injustice that they countenance in marriage. Most of her female characters are liberated and break out the bonds that make them unhappy. They are ready to take up strong stand against human circumstances. The Palace of Illusions deals with the myth of Draupadi which is grounded in the history of the great Indian epic the Mahabharata. This novel is a written discourse on interaction between God and human being. The tale is action oriented where most of the things are ideological with political intentions.

The Mahabharata's history serves as the foundation for the Draupadi tale. It is a written discourse about how God and people interact. It is an action-packed story with a lot of ideological and political undertones. The Kurukshetra War is attributed to Draupadi in the Mahabharata by Vyasa, giving this figure a bad reputation. This object, which is the focus of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's fiction, is subjected to many forms of discrimination, hardships, and struggles. The Palace of Illusions is a symbol for how marginalised women are in society. The bond between Draupadi and Krishna, a manifestation of Vishnu who represents the majesty of divinity, is also celebrated in the book. The present paper explores and interprets the significance of the myth of Draupadi and that of Krishna in Divakaruni’s The Palace of Illusions using the ideals provided by the cultural critic Roland Barthes.

**Index Terms - Domination, Gender Sensitization, Liberation, Patriarchal Injustice.**

I. INTRODUCTION

In The Palace of Illusions, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni offers a contemporary interpretation of the myth's resurgence. This retelling blends classic mythology with contemporary modernism, sending a message that will be understandable to both people who are firmly anchored in accepted traditionalism and others who have disconnected themselves from the moral values of their own society. Draupadi has been portrayed by Divakaruni as a modern woman who desires to share her views and ideas with the world. By telling the tale of love, betrayal, retribution, battle, freedom, and friendship, Divakaruni has attempted to bring the past into the present in a novel way. In the 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”.(Purdon)

Women’s writings are a medium of expression and an outlet for women’s emotions and desires. Women writers like Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni chose to write their own narrative can be attributed to the fact that they were not happy with some prejudices by male writers since they choose to write their own narratives. There is a sense of rectification that defines women’s literature rather than criticism of male writers which is a popular accusation. The focus is more laid on how women portray the gender issues and how they write about themselves. Even as a contradiction to what male writers write, then it should not be considered as a revolt against men but rather as a biased narrative. Women’s writing celebrates the rights of telling one’s story. It focuses on dark corners of a woman’s heart and essence and with new facts about history and fiction.

The Palace of Illusions is an ingeminate of Mahabharata from women protagonist Draupadi’s perspective. Noting on the narration that is made through a female perspective the project focuses on a feminist reading of the text. Indian history is inseparable from myth. It carries powerful ideological significance. The narratives of the epic Mahabharata occupy a major space in Indian culture. Even in Hindu mythology there are few women who are aggressive and who spoke their mind in a world of patriarchy. Draupadi was one of them. She is considered by many as the first feminist from Indian mythology but she was also a heroine thrown in unusual circumstances. Her marriage was more of a contest arranged by her father who had a secret wish of marrying his daughter to Arjuna. So the whole design of a winner, lifting a heavy bow and aiming at rotating fish and piercing its eye with the arrow was cleverly planned by him. It is mordant that it is called ‘Svayam-
The novel opens with the rejection of a girl child. Dhai Ma retells the miraculous story of how Panchaali and her brother Dhrishtadyumna were born out of the sacrificial fire and adopted by King Drupad. Draupadi is introduced as the Girl who is not invited. When Drishtadyumna stepped out of the fire, everybody drooped their jaws. Draupadi’s rejection at her birth signifies female infanticide. Drupad named the boy Drishtadyumna meaning the destroyer of enemies and her, Draupadi meaning the daughter of Drupad. The name given to her signifies women as second sex.

The novel is narrated from the perspective of Panchaali, a princess who is born from fire. Her brother Dhrishtadyumna is also born in this way as well. They dwell in a world where celestial beings and the supernatural are commonplace. Panchaali grows up in the palace of her father King Drupad who wants to seek revenge on his nemesis Drona. When Panchaali was young, the sage Vyasa foretold that Panchaali would become a great and powerful queen married to five husbands.

When Draupadi is about to marry five husbands, the readers are introduced to her personality and character in the Epic. She is portrayed as a woman who possesses a distinct identity and to question existing restrictive laws. Divakaruni asks questions and says that Draupadi’s marriage to five husbands may have been the result of her high status and the power she held in society.

When Draupadi is about to marry her fifth husband, she questions whether she will ever find love and fulfillment in her life. She asks herself whether her marriage will bring her happiness and satisfaction. Draupadi is depicted as a woman who is in search of identity and purpose in her life. She is portrayed as a woman who is not content with her fate and is determined to pursue her dreams and desires.

The contemporary issues of identity, marginalization, and discrimination faced by women in patriarchal societies are brought to light by this revisionist literary work. This is demonstrated by a mythical character. The Mahabharata made no mention of Draupadi’s character in any way. Draupadi does not have a voice, a choice, or an identity of her own in the original text; however, Divakaruni brings all of these aspects to light and gives life to the character of Draupadi.

In this book, Draupadi not only continues to exist in the epic as a passive character but also develops into a symbol for contemporary women. The reader is presented with a society that gave up on women’s rights as a result. Draupadi maintains her strength and demonstrates that she never submits to men by pleading for her dignity. She reinvents herself as a strong woman who can defend herself without the support of her husband. She never received a response to any of her inquiries in court. The conflict that resulted in the demise of the Kauravas was caused by her rage and desire for retribution for the dishonorable deed committed against her.

**Conclusion:**

Revisionist writing. The Palace of Illusion reexamines our perceptions of women’s lives and the place women hold in society. Divakaruni has made it abundantly clear that Draupadi has been released from the shackles of perfection and what is commonly referred to as divinity. The personality of Draupadi trusted that no guys will safeguard her from hopelessn. So he told her that no guys will save her from hopelessness like most ladies. They assist themselves by locating and overcoming obstacles. They are able to create an identity of their own while rejecting the norms and values that have always marginalized women.

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