

Revisioning Mahabharata: Voice of Draupadi in Chitra Banerjee's 'The Palace of Illusions'

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Abstract

The paper attempts to read Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's novel *The palace of Illusions* as a feminist interpretation of the Indian epic *The Mahabharata*. In the Indian scenario, women have been encouraged to follow the ideal women of the past: Sita, Savitri, Draupadi but their stories are provided to us by the male writers from a male perspective. Women's writing has gained momentum in the present age and it serves as an outlet for her emotions and desires. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *The Palace of Illusions* offers a feminist reimagining of the *Mahabharata*, presenting Draupadi as a complex, self-reflective, self-willed and strong woman rather than submissive, frail victimised and symbol of sacrifice. Through her voice, Divakaruni delves into Draupadi's innermost thoughts, desires, and emotional turmoil, exploring the struggles of a woman confined by the rigid expectations of a patriarchal society. She exposes the fact that for centuries all over the world women have been forced to be in the marginalised position. While traditionally portrayed as a passive figure enduring hardship for the sake of duty, Draupadi in this retelling becomes an active force in shaping her own destiny, challenging the societal structures of gender and power. The novel reveals Draupadi's quest for self-identity, and her yearning for autonomy in a world that diminishes her power. The paper seeks to delineate the character of Draupadi using textual strategies to give prominence to the voice and thoughts of one of the central figures of this great epic. The paper uses the method of discourse and context analysis to arrive at the conclusion that Divakaruni has ably articulated the thoughts and voice of Draupadi and has successfully brought the story to the audience from a feminine perspective.

