



Draupadi: Modern woman voice in ‘The Palace of Illusion’ by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni

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Abstract:

The Palace of Illusion is revisiting novel of Mahabharata by Chitra Banerjee Devakaruni. In this novel she gave new voice to Draupadi and written female point of view. The great Indian epic Mahabharata written male point of view and Draupadi voice has neglected. But she has tried to justify character of Draupadi or Panchaali. All earlier version Myth written focuses on male heroes and kept female back stages. Here novelist illustrates Draupadi character must be Centre. This Paper focuses on Draupadi has modern woman voice in this novel.

Keywords: *Feminism, Identity, Suppression of woman*

1. Introduction

Chitra Banerjee Devakaruni is eminent novelist who has written ‘The Palace of Illusion’ from Draupadi’s perspective. She is an acclaimed Indian American writer. Indian epics Ramayana and Mahabharata has written only male point of view. So, female writers retelling it from central female point of view. In our sanctified scriptures have neglected female then followed it our society. Female must keep chain bondage of patriarchal domination. Most of female writers try to improve that it becomes tradition of our society because some rules follow only woman but her place is nowhere. Here novelist gives strengthen and courage to Panchali. In ‘The Palace of Illusion’ Chitra Banerjee attempts rendition to new perspective and creates new shape of novel. Any modification in our Hindu Mythology would have harsh criticism for the novel and author too. It becomes a great acclamation of author and national bestseller over a year in India. Many versions of Mahabharata but all have written only andocentric view. Ved Vyasa is the narrator and originator of Mahabharata but he has shown importance of heroes and counts to them superior. Here novelist removes gender bias and importance to heroine of the novel and reflected she must have individual identity. Divakaruni has written that: “I would uncover the story that lay invisible between lines of men’s exploits. Better still I would have her one of her tell it herself, with all her joys and doubts, her struggles and triumphs, her heart breaths, her achievements, the unique female way in which she sees her world and place in it”. (XV)

One of the most prosperous kings of the continent of Bharata who is the ruler of Panchaal king Drupad was the father of Draupadi. Her own father had not expected to her so he had long prayed to Gods for a son to avenge Drauna. So, her father wanted to a son, not a daughter. Draupadi whose future had been prophesized to change the course of history.

“You will bring about the death of the evil kings and your children’s and your brother’s. A million women will become widows because of you. Yes, indeed you will leave a mark on history”. (39) So, Drupad didn’t want to daughter so he didn’t indicate affection to her. So, Draupadi become unexpected gift from God so her father hesitates to welcome her. So, by the childhood she feels difference between

a son and a daughter. So Simone de Beauvoir says: **“One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman”**.

It is Patriarchal society which believes in sexual difference between men and women. Though she had born in king Dhrupad’s home but her’s upbringing never like a Princess. Her father focuses only his son Dhristadyumna. Whenever she becomes young then she experienced she is a woman. In education matter she has given lessons of playing, singing, painting, dancing, music and drawing who is painful. Her brother has given another lesson. The education she craved to learn was the education of men, education of governing kingdom and its politics. Her friend Krishna prepared to her for future. So gender bias kept between men and women in educational matter also. So, **“Boys are different from girls...When will you accept that?” (25)**

Her father and tutor always discouraged to her learning the ways of a rule in kingdom and govern. Girls need didn’t focus in the royal family of Panchal. In the Patriarchal society parameters are different from boys to girls. But here novelist shows to us Draupadi is strong and courageous woman so she refused to give lessons to her and her education must substantial to her brother.

King Drupad arranged Swayamvar but it is just like formality because he wants to Arjune for Draupadi. First Draupadi was happy about this news but after she knew it is competition and felt just like a trophy of game which her father organized for Arjune. First in this swayamvar, Karna had won and Draupadi feels love towards him. But she has asked questions about his parents then he feels humiliated and left this place. After Arjune has come and he had won so Draupadi felt just like commodities. In earlier versions woman just likes object, not subject. So she felt, **“I was nothing, but a warm dangled at the end of a fishing pole”**. (57)

Draupadi attracted to Karna because he has great warrior. Karna was the son of the God sun and Kunti but after he known as a sutputra. So, she wants to marry Karna but her father didn’t accept Karna and choice to Arjune. Her father takes revenge to Drauna. So, in this matter she has not freedom though it is Swayamvar. After Kunti wants to Draupadi should be wife of five brothers of Pandvas. She wants to marry only Arjune but She must have married to five Pandvas because wants of mother- in- law. So, here her deprived of her freedom. But Chitra banrjee Devkaruni kept to Draupadi ‘central point’ in The Palace of Illusion. After married to five husbands, her life totally changed and she meditates over,

“I couldn’t quite believe what a transformation in my life had undergone or that I helped to bring about this new destiny we were living”. (139)

Karna and Draupadi’s relationship is special because Karna has attracted attention of all and Draupadi also. His place is special in her heart. She is apologetic behavior of her because she has rejected to Karna’s ways in Swayamvar because he was sutputra. So, Karna has great jealousy for Draupadi and Pandavas. Karna was the friend of Kaurava because they were against to Pandavas.

When playing the game of dice between Pandavas and Kauravas at that time Karna towards the side of Kauravas. Pandvas had lost the game and they had lost to Draupadi also. But first of all they lose to their-self and after lose to Draupadi. So, in Patriarchal society; husband has allowed losing her wife. How husband had lost his wife after lose to him? Suspicion and detest lead Karna to do most unforgiving act of supporting Draupadi’s disrobing at the court of Kaurava after the game of dice.

“Why should Draupadi be treated any differently? Take her clothes, too. A woman like Draupadi who married to five is not a wife but a whore and whore has no honour”. (192)

When Draupadi has taken in half naked condition by Dushasan then all elders were silent at that time. No one can have courage to speak against this involuntary act. In Patriarchal society women just like toys in the hands of men. In sabha Draupadi asked question one to all, "If Yudhistir had lost first him and after lost to her?" No one replied to this question. So, earlier versions Mahabharata women don't give justice. So, novelist tried to give justice to Draupadi. She has married to five husbands but Pandavas have another wife outside also. So, Pandavas have allowed keeping another wife although they married to Draupadi. But Draupadi didn't allow another husband and if she acts just likes to them then it would be rejected. So, here we have seen that gender bias. Rules must be equal to all. Here, Devkaruni has written revisiting Myth about Draupadi's point of view. Here Draupadi has become subject.

Draupadi's life as a married woman is not easy task because she has five husbands and she must live to each one a year one by one. She has virginity boon also. But she has no right to choose. Draupadi tried to forget Karna but her heart has place of him. When Draupadi came in the court her eyes glanced to him. Her desire for Karna is unthinkable desire because she was married although she keeps desire for Karna. Scripture says,

"A wife who holds in her heart desireful thoughts of a man who is not her husband is an unfaithful as a woman who sleeps with such a man". (185)

But these rules made by Patriarchal society. If man has done this, it became no crime. Rules are only for women which made by men.

Here novelist give title "The Palace of Illusion" properly because Illusion means Maya. This Palace is Maya for Draupadi. Many years Pandvas and Draupadi reigned throne of Indraprastha. Pandvas lost everything in the game of dice. Yudhistir lost the throne, brothers or even Draupadi also. He was gambled a game and lost everything. So, Draupadi became puppet for them. She was summoned in the court just like whore. So; Draupadi portrays condition of all women. **"The wife is the property of the husband, no less so than a cow or a slave". (190)**

Draupadi complaints to all elders but all are silent. In Indian society all rules made by men and follow it by women. Draupadi had asked her question to all but all made be silent. Woman has not individual identity and she has no any rights. But men have rights to defeat her wife just likes property. But Draupadi has needed to give respect inspite of insult in sabha just like a dancing girl. Even karna was smiled towards ill treatment of Draupadi. In male dominated society woman just likes commodity only. After this act resulted into dreadful battle of Kurukshatra. When Draupadi takes her clothes then she came in anger and said,

"All of you will die in the battle that will be spawned from this day's works. Your mothers and wives will weep far more piteously than I've wept". (194)

Draupadi had taken vow that not to comb her hair till she had taken bath in the blood of Kauravas. After they had gone for twelve years in forest. So, no one gives Draupadi any pleasure even she had tolerated in all matter.

2. Conclusion

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni portrayed the theme of Feminism. She has tried to justice Draupadi in this novel. In Mahabharata Draupadi is just like object but she has tried to made Draupadi as a subject and superior character. In male dominated society Draupadi had to act many roles just like, as a 'daughter', 'wife' or 'mother. These roles are not natural but it made social. So, women always trained to think, act to fit in this society. So, Draupadi has modern woman voice in this novel given by novelist.

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