

**Draupadi as an objectified and dehumanized woman in
Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *The Palace of Illusions***

Dr. S. Sharmila

Assistant Professor of English
SDNB Vaishnav College for Women
Chromepet, Chennai- 44

sharmila_anantha@yahoo.co.in

Mob - 9841196576
=====

Abstract

The Palace of Illusions by Chitra Banerjee is a retold story of the great epic *Mahabharata* in feministic perspective. The great epic which gives us innumerable life lessons speaks only about the heroes and heroism. The role of women is totally forgotten and developed as an insignificant one. Women like Sathyavathi, Ambai, Gandhari, Kunti and Draupadi played a vital role with the burdens put on them in the patriarchal society. This research paper deals how Draupadi is objectified and dehumanised. This article will further exemplify how Draupadi in the midst of suffering endured to overcome the difficulties she faced and continue to endeavor where most women would have given up. She Proved as a daughter, sister, wife, daughter-in-law, mother, mother-in-law but failed as a woman finding her own identity.

Keywords: *Mahabharata*, Draupadi, Objectification, Dehumanisation, Endurance, Patriarchal, Exemplify, Identity

Draupadi, the influential character in *Mahabharata* is been objectified and dehumanized to an extent, where she endures with the help of Krishna as her insight of realization. As a unwelcomed child by her father, she enters the world with her brother Dhristadyumna. It was the unavoidable condition to Drupad to accept her. Born with black skin is termed as a symbol of the unfortunate. The love of her brother and the support of her friend, philosopher, mentor Krishna help her to lead her life with courage. The prophecy which she carried in her inner self drives her to distress. Draupadi was secluded from all. Dhai-Ma was the only person who showered love as a mother and lived throughout her life with her, sharing whatever she knows. She was denied learning what a prince was allowed to perform duties. The denial shows clearly that woman in whole is denied learning what a man learns. Education is for everyone in this world. She longs

and shares her thoughts with Dhai-Ma. The unquenchable hunger for education at last was satisfied with the help of Krishna who suggested this to her father. The tutor's views on the highest purpose of Kshatriya woman was only to support man, which was unacceptable to Draupadi, she felt that it was a dehumanizing the gender as a whole. Boundaries of custom was always a humiliating one to her. The prophecy that she was going to be the great destruction was shattered into pieces. With the advice of holy man she hoped to put it in right way. She always lived with introspection.

Stories of Sikandhi, Gandhari and Kunti gave her courage and made her to analyse the change of woman's life after marriage. For Draupadi love is an essential element for leading a marriage life successfully, that which she deserves more. It was always a doubtful matter in her marriage life. The attraction towards Karna and learning his story developed a strong connection with him. She compared her life with his as a similar one. But the pressure and force of the patriarchal society made her to hide her love and to marry Arjun for forming strong ally. In the wedding ceremony she was an object acted according to the plans of her father, brother and Krishna. Here as a lovable and loyal princess to safeguard the life of her brother, she abused Karna by pointing his birth even though she knows that she is hurting him to the core. The act of Draupadi extinguished the light seen in Karna forever.

Draupadi, with dreams and plans, steps in into her marriage life. It all shattered when Kunti unknowingly had mistaken for alms and asked her five sons to share. The designed marriage and the boon blessed with, all thought that it has put out the problem marrying five brothers. All forgot that she was a woman as any other woman with expectations, desires, etc. But she was cut into five pieces as any object. Even the boon is considered for men. Draupadi never gave a thought of immolation, there the objectified woman stands strong to face the future and designed fate. The belief of Karma revolves her always, as she believes it because she insulted Karna. The only expectation was the love of Arjun for her. Here, she was objectified by a woman rather than man. The customs, vows, words, actions and intuition play a vital life-changing concepts in one's life.

Hastinapur palace was always a haunting place for Draupadi. Her inner self searched for Karna. The birth, unnatural sacrifice and the boon of Beeshma always queered her. On the contrary he is the Godfather for her husbands. The life at Khandav was miserable. But with great idea and plans of constructing the great Indraprasth -- The Palace of Illusions -- overthrew all the pains of her marriage life. She was very much satisfied with her unconventional domestic situation. She feared as a daughter-in-law that the arrival of Kunti to Palace would lead to lose her power. Visit of Duryodhan to Indraprasth made situation worse when she laughed at him

when he was falsified by the illusion of the palace. She as a woman full of sentiments expected Karna to Indraprasth, so she can put right everything which happened between them.

Marriage of Arjuna with Subhadra again broke her into pieces. It was only Krishna who consoled her with the reasons and purpose behind the marriage. Whatever may be the purpose, sharing the husband she loved is not a conventional one. But the life as a queen for various reasons, offered her a chance to cherish the kingdom. The act of marriage was an undeniable fact. Dehumanisation was always there in the life of Draupadi even though she was wife of Pandavas. She loved Arjuna. But he never recognised her and was following the rules of marriage with her. Personally she had a thought that there is special place for her in his heart. The destruction during the yagna shows clearly the love and care of her on Krishna and the care of Karna on Draupadi which melted her heart.

“Desire is a powerful magnet” (p.176)

The visit to Hastinapur disturbed her a lot. She felt that she was perfect mistress of Pandavas and she bothered only about Karna, the wrong things done to him. When she saw Bhanumathi, wife of Karna, she automatically felt jealous. The man she admired most is the husband of some other woman, but immediately she realized the thought was not good being a wife of Pandavas. She wished for a genuineness in her relationship even though she was objectified and dehumanized in several ways.

“The wife is the property of the husband, no less so than a cow or a slave.” (p.190)

This was proved when Yudhisthir lost her in gambling like an object with other properties. He never thought a woman was also a living being with flesh and soul. How a lost man had rights to use his wife in gambling. Draupadi faced intolerable and vicious treatment when she is dragged to court by her hair and disrobed. What is the use of Nyaya shastra, which always paves ways only for men? The laws did not save her, her husbands did not save her, Beeshma, the protector of the kingdom, did not save her, all Kings and Queens including Karna, man who is against all wrong deeds of Duryodhan, did not save her. She was made to stand as a show piece rather than a woman with life, a pathetic state. It was only Krishna again saved her.

“No one can shame you, he said, if you don’t allow it” (p.193)

This statement of Krishna gave her courage to endure the situation. She understood the reality. The defeated heart which believed her husbands, Beeshma, Blind King, Kunti, Gandhari, and Karna realized the truth. A woman will not think in the way as man, she will throw herself

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 20:1 January 2020

Dr. S. Sharmila

Draupadi as an objectified and dehumanized woman in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni’s
The Palace of Illusions

forward to save her family at any cost. The devotion towards her husbands and as a dutiful queen continued to live with them after cursing and taking oath as an object of revenge. The betrayal left to shame dehumanizing a woman merely as a just possession. The irony of a woman with many husbands is better to be without any.

Draupadi felt strongly that she was abandoned by her husbands. She realized the heart is beyond control. One can't force oneself to love or withhold it. During the period of completing the exile it was in Matsya's Kingdom she was abused by Keechak. Due to the plans, her husbands and Matsya King's hands were tied to protect Draupadi. Men are always Men, this world is for them. She is the woman only to bring glory to her husbands. Women are pleasure giving object, if they don't agree to the wish of men, they will be dehumanized.

After completing the exile, the victory in Kurukshetra caused great destruction. What Draupadi's faced was immeasurable. Lost sons, brother, father, soldiers, and the loyal subjects. She saw the emptiness in her life. Again the implacable law drawn for Draupadi's and her husbands' final journey could not stop her when she fell. Maybe the promises, curses, blessings and the consequences are all part of the law – Karma, but the reality is that it started when a woman was not considered as a woman, a living being. Draupadi is merely an objectified and dehumanized female or a transaction between males in a patriarchal world. This world had no space for even an exceptional woman like her. Though she is celebrated, worshipped as an exemplified woman, she is part of the strong reminisces of objectified and dehumanized women in mythology.

Citations

Divakaruni, Chitra Banerjee. *The Palace of Illusions*. London: Pan Macmillan, 2008.

Online

<http://dx.doi.org/10.17570/stj.2017.v3n2.a22>

<http://www.languageinindia.com/march2018/prasantaviolencepalaceofillusions.pdf>

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 20:1 January 2020

Dr. S. Sharmila

Draupadi as an objectified and dehumanized woman in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's
The Palace of Illusions