

**Concept of Individuality in V.S.Khandekar's *YAYATI* and Chitra**

**Banerjee Divakaruni's *The PALACE of ILLUSIONS***

Switha.A

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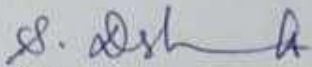
## **DECLARATION**

I do hereby declare that the dissertation entitled **Concept of Individuality in V.S.Khandekar's *YAYATI* and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *The PALACE of ILLUSIONS*** submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **Master of Arts (M.A.)** is carried out by me **SWITHA A** during the period from **JANUARY 2024 - MAY 2024** under the guidance of **Dr. S.Devashanthi**, Assistant Professor and Head of the Department (i/c), Department of English, Avinashilingam Institute for Home Science and Higher Education for Women (SF), Coimbatore, and, has not formed the basis for the award of any Degree, Diploma, Associateship, Fellowship or similar Titles in this University or any other University or other similar Institutions of Higher Learning.

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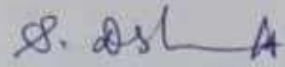
This is to certify that the dissertation entitled **Concept of Individuality in V.S. Khandekar's YAYATI and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's The PALACE of ILLUSIONS** submitted to in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **Master of Arts (M.A.)**, is carried out by **SWITHA A** during the period from **JANUARY 2024 - MAY 2024** under the guidance of **DR.S. Devashanthi** Assistant Professor, Head of the Department of English (i/c), Avinashilingam Institute for Home Science and Higher Education for Women (SF), Coimbatore, and, has not formed the basis for the award of any Degree, Diploma, Associateship, Fellowship, or similar Titles in this University or any other University or other similar Institutions of Higher Learning.



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## **ABSTRACT**

This paper explores about the women characters in a brave and their determination to fight against the men dominant society. Now, the reason for choosing these two particular strategies is that the perception between these concepts is in two different women traditional characters. The play *YAYATI* by V.S. Khandekar and the novel *The PALACE of ILLUSIONS* by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni- through these plays outline about the two women characters.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's work *The Palace of Illusion* is a revisitation of the Mahabharata. She wrote from a feminine point of view and gave Draupadi a fresh voice in this book. The masculine perspective and the voice of Draupadi have been overlooked in the classic Indian epic Mahabharata. However, she has attempted to defend Panchaali's or Draupadi's character. Every previous version of mythology created put women in the background and focused on male heroes. The author shows how Draupadi's character needs to be at the centre here. This essay focuses on Draupadi's voice as a contemporary woman in the book.

V.S. Khandekar's *Yayati*, his play, was written initially in Marathi in 1959. Khandekar was not a simple entertainer. His plays serve to instruct, entertain and enlighten, but there is also a purpose. Through his plays he tries to give his audience an exalted sense of duty with happiness, peace of mind and upliftment of moral values. In Khandekar's view, only then can a human being be relieved of the sorrow and pain that he is subjected to in his endless run for pleasures. To achieve it, Khandekar draws from the rich store of Indian mythological stories and the collective wealth of inherited culture and recreates the characters and old stories in a new way. He presents them as they originally are and also changes them completely. His genius for fusion of the mythology and modernity is unparalleled. The *Yayati* of Karnad is the best example of his creative concern, purpose and dramatic art. The human heart is never satiated; its endless craving for more and more pleasure leads it to tragedy. One fine example of this predicament is the story of king Yayati. The present paper would endeavour to study some important aspects of Khandekar's *Yayati* in comparison with the brave women characters.

The conclusion deals with the comparative analysis of these characters, they are difference in their lead own live, and answering of the obstacles in the men dominant society.

## NOTES

In the text, abbreviation is used for the name of the primary text in the parenthetical references which are as follows:

- Yayati Y
- The Palace of Illusions PI

## **CHAPTER-I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

“Great Literature is simply language charged with meaning to the utmost possible degree”  
-Ezra Pound.

Writings from a particular culture, subculture, religion, philosophy, or the study of such written material like poetry or prose are referred to as literature (from the Latin *Littera*, meaning 'letters' and suggesting an acquaintance with the written word). The term "literature" refers to spoken or written material. The phrase most frequently describes imaginative poetry, drama, fiction, and non-fiction works. The art of written works is called literature. It is the corpus of written works from a particular language or culture. Literature is released as written works on specific subjects or in specific styles. Literature is a mirror of life and an interpretation of human and social expression that helps people understand how to live. Literature mirrors the society in which it is generated.

Study of Literature is used to describe written works of artistic or intellectual worth frequently examined and valued for their literary qualities, referred to as study literature. It covers various genres, including non-fiction, theatre, poetry, fiction, and more. Since the beginning of human civilization, literature has played a significant role in human society by giving people a platform to express their identities, exchange ideas and stories, and engage in introspective thought.

Literature has served as a means of cultural exchange. It has been a powerful tool for shaping humans' collective understanding of the world and about to know the real struggle of life. Fiction and non-fiction are the two genres into which literature is separated. However, they are frequently arbitrary choices made today since pre-literate

people could not understand ancient literature in the same manner as modern readers do, nor did those who recorded the stories understand it as they were told.

Historical treatment of various kinds of literature within geographical regions, are referred through African Literature, African theatre, Oceanic Literature, Western Literature, Central Asian arts, South Asian arts, and Southeast Asian arts. Some Literature is treated separately by language, nation, or particular subject, such as Arabic, Celtic, Latin, French, Japanese, and Biblical Literature. The notion that literature is multifaceted is not a novel one. For most of its existence, written has been used to describe any writing composed of letters. Poets were the only genuine creators of creative work until the eighteenth century, and poetry was what they aspired to, not literature. Literary works are often studied for their artistic and intellectual merit and historical and cultural significance. They provide a window into different periods, cultures, and perspectives and challenge people's assumptions and broaden their understanding of experiences in life.

Mythology is the customary story of purportedly historical events that show a part of a people's worldview or explain a behaviour, belief, or natural phenomenon. The events, moods, and deeds of gods or other supernatural beings that are essential to but apart from ordinary human existence are described in myths. Myths describe the happenings, states, and actions of gods or superhuman creatures that are fundamental to but distinct from everyday human existence. These events typically occur at the beginning of creation or in the early prehistoric era and occur at a time wholly different from historical. A culture's mythology is usually closely linked to its theological beliefs and practices. The contemporary field of mythology originated with the early Romanticism of the 19th century, which gave rise to the current study of myth. Wilhelm Mannhardt, James George Frazer, and others employed a comparative approach.

India has a centuries-old literary legacy rich in vivid culture and customs. Indian literature, which includes works written in the ancient Sanskrit language, the ageless stories found in classical epics, and contemporary works by contemporary authors, is a rich tapestry woven with mythological threads. Mythology plays a significant role in Indian literature, serving as the basis for numerous literary works. Indian literature seamlessly incorporates mythological characters, themes, and symbolism, enhancing the stories and captivating readers. Indian mythology, which originates in the epics of antiquity, continues to have a significant impact on modern writing and serves as a link between the two eras. Moreover, mythology is a lively and essential component of Indian literature since it is central to the country's folklore, poetry, theatre, and performing arts.

Mythological characters serve as archetypes, embodying cultural ideals and values within Indian literature. These characters, with their extraordinary abilities and moral dilemmas, capture the imagination of readers and bring timeless wisdom to the forefront. Whether it is the virtuous Lord Rama from the Ramayana or the complex deity Lord Krishna from the Mahabharata, these characters offer valuable insights into concepts such as duty, righteousness, and the eternal battle between good and evil. By personifying such ideals, mythology provides a moral compass for individuals, guiding them in navigating the complexities of life.

Mythology is a popular starting point for writers to create gripping books and short stories. Although these works are inspired by old mythology, they also have a modern sensibility that makes them readable by a broad audience. Writers such as Amish Tripathi, Anand Neelakantan, and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni have won praise for their retellings of myths, giving ancient stories a fresh perspective and making them relevant to contemporary readers.

The main themes of Mahabharata and Ramayana are well known. Readers' preference for mythical literature based on these tales is not surprising. Retellings of well-known epics have long been common in local tongues. Written in Marathi in the 1970s and then translated into English, Irawati Karve's *Yuganta - End Of An Epoch* is an intriguing study of the characters in the Mahabharata. Samhita Arni's *Mahabharata - A Child's View* was released in English by Tara Books in the 1990s. A twelve-year-old's interpretation of the epic was, before its time, a very original idea. The trend began in the early 2000s when a particular fantasy book published as a children's book began gaining popularity in the West. Both adults and children enjoyed the tale of a young child who attends a wizardry school and battles the malevolent, warped Voldemort. Given its popularity, India, with its profusion of mythical tales, was also rediscovering its fantasy stories.

In modern writing, the adaptation and retelling of mythological tales has gained popularity. By redefining characters and investigating alternate viewpoints, authors exercise their creative license and provide readers with new takes on well-known stories. These retellings turn mythology into a means of reflection, upending conventional wisdom and providing provocative new perspectives on ageless subjects.

The myths of the Ramayana and Mahabharata are heavily focused on men, but when Indian women gained more freedom, legendary fiction also needed to represent this development. These epics' female protagonists, who had previously just been silent bystanders, suddenly had the opportunity to express their opinions and tell their own stories.

Indian Marathi writer Vishnu Sakharam Khandekar was born in Maharashtra on January 11, 1898, and died on September 2, 1976. He was the first writer from Marathi to receive the esteemed Jnanpith Award. V.S. Khandekar is a novelist, essayist, literary critic, and writer of short stories. He has been a prominent figure in Marathi literature since the

mid-1920s and has been for more than 40 years. He prolific writer with fourteen novels, many short stories, and critical and personal essays. His novel *Yayati* won the Sahitya Akademi Award for Marathi Literature in 1960. Many regard him as the most well-known representative of the progressive humanist school of Marathi literature, which arose after World War I and used fiction to promote social equality.

The annual Marathi Sahitya Sammelan (Marathi Literary Conference) in Solapur elected Khande Kar as its president in 1941. In 1968, the Indian government gave him the Padma Bhushan award to acknowledge his literary achievements. Two years later, he was also granted the Indian Sahitya Akademi Fellowship. The top literary award in the country, the 1974 Jnanpith Award, went to him for his novel *Yayati*. Shivaji University awarded him an honorary D.Litt. degree in Kolhapur, Maharashtra. In his honour, the Indian government released a commemorative postage stamp in 1998.

Three major honours were given to Khandekar's novel *Yayati*: the Maharashtra State Award (1960), the Sahitya Akademi Award (1960), and the Jnanpith Award (1974). These are the other novels written by Khandekar, *Don Dhruwa* (1934), *Ulka* (1934), *Ashru*, *Yayati*, *Hrudayachi Hak* (1930), *Eka Panachi Kahani* (Autobiography).

Born in 1956 as Chitralekha Banerjee, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is an American author and poet of Indian descent who holds the esteemed position of Betty and Gene McDavid Professor of Writing at the University of Houston Creative Writing Program. Chitra Divakaruni is an award-winning writer, activist, professor, speaker, and author of 21 books, including *Mistress of Spices*, *Sister of My Heart*, *Before We Visit the Goddess*, *The Palace of Illusions*, *The Forest of Enchantments*, and *The Last Queen*. Her most recent book, *Independence*, tells the story of three sisters' experiences in a Calcutta torn apart by civil unrest as India breaks free from British rule. She writes for both kids and adults. Divakaruni was listed as one of the 20 Most Influential Indian Women Worldwide

in 2015 by the Economic Times. She has served as a judge for numerous esteemed awards, including the PEN Faulkner and National Book Award. *Arranged Marriage* (her collection of short stories) was honored with an American Book Award in 1996. Film adaptations were made of two of her books, *The Mistress of Spices* and *Sister of My Heart*, and a short tale, *The Word Love*.

Most of Divakaruni's writings are set in India and the US and frequently centre on the lives of South Asian immigrants. She has written books in various genres, including historical fiction, magical realism, myth, fantasy, and realistic fiction. She works for both adults and children. She is a member of the advisory boards for two groups that support victims of domestic abuse and human trafficking: Daya in Houston and Maitri in the San Francisco Bay Area. She was one of Maitri's co-founders. She is a member of the Emeritus Board of Pratham, a literacy organization that helps impoverished children and gives Indian women start-up capital for small businesses and employment training. She advocates for the Houston Food Bank and Akshaya Patra, which provides food to Indian schools. She and her spouse, Murthy, reside in Houston, Texas.

As an activist in the areas of education and domestic abuse, Divakaruni has maintained close ties to the following non-profits: Daya and Maitri, which helps victims of domestic abuse start over; Akshaya Patra, which provides food for Indian schoolchildren, and Pratham, which educates impoverished children in India. She backs the Houston Food Bank as well.

The relationship and connection between the myth and the novel's portrayal of it is one of the core and significant themes in modern tale fiction. The significance of this matter is brought to light by the fact that a propensity for myths has strengths and weaknesses, each of which has its historical context and motivations. Like historical

books, writing mythological novels is done for various reasons, including life's necessities and nostalgia.

The fact that authors have included mythological stories in their works raises a question that could lead to analyses of numerous modern novel writing tendencies and reflections on the social and cultural contexts of various historical times. As a result, the trend toward a fresh and widespread reflection of mythological stories in the novels from the era above encourages us to trace the roots of this kind of story development, which is undoubtedly a result of how modern humans differ from those of earlier eras and yet bear striking similarities.

Indian author V. S. Khandekar wrote *Yayati*, a historical novel, in Marathi in 1959. Retelling the tale of the actual Hindu king Yayati from the Hindu epic Mahabharata is one of Khandekar's most well-known creations. The book asks various concerns about the nature of morality and features multiple narrators. Its protagonist, Yayati, has been analyzed by academics as a metaphor for contemporary man. *Yayati*, regarded as a masterpiece of Marathi literature, has received numerous honors, including the Jnanapith Award in 1974 and the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1960.

Khandekar writes in his introduction to *Yayati* that he was captivated by the Mahabharata's original tale on several levels and for various reasons. The resultant book is a contemporary retelling of the tale of the Hindu monarch who, after a millennium of revealing the pleasures of the flesh, realized that his quest for desire was meaningless.

The story is drawn from the *Yayatopakhyan*, also known as *The Story of Yayati*, a subplot found in the Mahabharata's *Adi Parva*. Khandekar develops the story as a morality-driven love story while adding multiple new episodes to make the primary material into a full-length novel. By doing this, Khandekar gives the narrative fresh significance and purpose in the framework of contemporary society. According to

Khandekar, this book represents the average person, who “is blindly running after new pleasures and is always discontented and restless, despite varied happiness.” Women's characters in this book demonstrate their vitality and power. In contrast to their generally submissive and meek behaviour, they all ultimately give in to the constraints imposed by the patriarchal system.

Draupadi's gregarious nature and steadfast character are emphasized in *The Palace of Illusions*. In addition to the central characters, the genre aided in developing supporting characters depicted as significant characters or protagonists. Through this novel she portrays the structure of gender inequality between Men and Women.

*The Palace of Illusions* tells the story of the Hindu epic Mahabharata from the perspective of Draupadi (Panchaali), a woman living in a patriarchal society. The plot is outlined by Booklist as follows: “Smart, resilient, and courageous Panchaali, born of fire, marries all five of the famously heroic Pandava brothers, harbors a secret love, endures a long exile in the wilderness, instigates a catastrophic war, and slowly learns the truth about Krishna, her mysterious friend.”

The Puranic narratives portray Yayati as a valiant monarch who had to relinquish his morality and self-respect to fate. Despite being the tale's protagonist, Yayati is not a true hero; instead, he becomes a villain due to circumstances. The true protagonist of this tale is Kach, the son of Dev Guru Brihaspati. The four primary characters in Yayati's story are him, his wives, Devyani and Sharmishtha, and his friend and philosopher, Kach.

Having conquered Indra, the monarch of paradise, monarch Nahusha of Hastinapur, the father of Yayati, was cursed by a guru for his desire for Indra's wife, Indrani. A sage curses Nahush, telling him never to see his sons happy. Yati, Yayati's older brother, escapes the palace, heads into the bush, and takes on the monastic lifestyle after

learning of the curse. As Yayati approaches puberty, he develops feelings for Alaka, an enslaved person. He has a sexual relationship with her as well. Alaka is killed by Yayati's mother as soon as she finds out. Yayati is shocked by this and begins to despise his mother.

Concurrently, the struggle between gods and demons becomes uneven due to Shukracharya, the demon instructor, learning the practice of Sanjivani Vidya, which involves resurrecting dead bodies. Shukracharya begins to raise every demon that the gods have destroyed. The conflict is going to be won by the demons. Kach, the gods' teacher's son, visits Shukracharya at his ashram and begins obediently serving him. He gains his trust. Devyani, Shukracharya's daughter, develops feelings for Kach. Kach acts as if he loves her, too. At one point, Devyani forces Shukracharya to utilize Sanjivani Vidya to save Kach's life; as a result, Kach learns about Sanjivani Vidya. He then departs from Devyani and Shukracharya. Devyani is shocked by this and swears at Kach. The Princess of the demon king is named Sharmishtha.

In the dramatic scenes, Sharmishtha and Devyani grow enmity against one another. After Sharmishtha marries Yayati, Devyani makes her become her slave and brings her to Hastinapur, where she repeatedly taunts her. Yayati gets angry with Devyani for her actions, and she falls in love with the kind Sharmishtha. He bears Sharmishtha a son, but Devyani is oblivious to all this. Devyani also gives birth to a boy in the interim. She decides to murder Sharmishtha and his son as soon as she learns about Yayati and Sharmishtha. Yayati saves them, but she has to be sent far away, into the unknown. After this, Yayati takes to drinking heavily.

Subsequently, one evening, Devyani requests that Yayati to refrain from touching her going forward. Yayati loses her equilibrium and departs from her. He moves to a

different location, where he begins to drink excessively and form relationships with other women. He wants a different woman every single day. He is usually so inebriated that he cannot discern which woman approaches him. He also has sex with his fiancée and the sister of his deceased friend during that flow. Following this, his friend's fiancée kills herself, and his sister spirals into madness and passes herself. Yayati is still interacting with additional women. This is how eighteen years go by. His two sons mature in the meanwhile. The son of Devyani is apprehended while attempting to put down Dasyu's rebellion. The son of Sharmishtha steps in and keeps him alive.

Following this, Yayati is cursed by Devyani's father, who makes him an older man but promises that if his sons accept their aging, he will regain his youth. While the son of Sharmishtha acknowledges his advanced age, the son of Devyani refuses to do so. Yayati so regains her youth. Kach steps in and breaks Shukracharya's curse. Yayati realizes the actual purpose of existence and decides to go into Vanprasthashram and head into the bush. After this, Devyani's personality shifts, and she, Sharmishtha, and Yayati head into the woods. Yayati is succeeded as king of Hastinapur by Sharmishtha's son.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *The Palace of Illusions* is an adaptation of the Mahabharata, a famous Indian epic, told from the viewpoint of Draupadi, the title character. The narrative takes readers to ancient India and chronicles Draupadi's trip, delving into her feelings, ideas, and encounters. Born of fire, Draupadi grows into a stunning and formidable princess. The Mahabharata's protagonists, the five Pandava brothers, get married to her. Draupadi's complicated marriages with her husbands, her love for Arjuna, and her battles with social standards are all depicted in great detail in the novel.

Draupadi finds herself in a massive conflict between the Pandavas and the Kauravas, their relatives, as the narrative progresses. Following this is the famous

Kurukshetra fight, in which Draupadi plays a crucial role. She sees the horrors of war, the heroes' moral quandaries, and the eventual devastation it causes.

The author examines issues of love, loyalty, responsibility, and women's status in traditional Indian society via the story of Draupadi. In the story, Draupadi is portrayed as a strong, tough woman who battles for justice, confronts patriarchy, and defies social standards. Her inner turmoil and the sacrifices she makes for her family and the larger good are all explored in depth. *The Palace of Illusions* masterfully conveys the spirit of the Mahabharata while giving Draupadi's persona more nuance and complexity. Divakaruni has skilfully fused mythology, history, and feminist viewpoints, gives readers a new perspective on an age-old subject.

*The Palace of Illusions* is an engrossing and moving Mahabharata narrative told from Draupadi's perspective. It transports readers to heroic conflicts, interpersonal dynamics, and the unwavering spirit of a woman who profoundly influences Indian mythology.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's 2008 book *The Palace of Illusions* is told from Panchaali's perspective, a princess born out of fire. Her sibling Dhri was also born similarly. They inhabit a world where magic and otherworldly beings are commonplace. Panchaali's father, King Drupad, raises her in the palace while pursuing revenge on his adversary, Drona.

Vyasa, the wise man, predicted that Panchaali would become a powerful and famous queen who would marry five men. On the other hand, Vyasa also claims that Panchaali will cause significant harm to her realm. Throughout her existence, Panchaali is guided and shielded by the god Krishna. King Drupad arranges a contest for Panchaali to find a husband as soon as she is old enough to marry. Strong fighter Karna first wins the competition by himself in the archery test, but Panchaali humiliates him by asking about

his parentage. Moreover, even though he cannot answer her query, she still feels something for him. Shocked, Karna walks out. Arjun, a different Pandava prince, steps in and wins the tournament. Panchaali travels to Arjun's family house. As per Kunti, Panchaali's mother, he had to marry the other four Pandavas. Following their cousin Duryodhan's attempt to kill them with a fire, the Pandavas hid away.

The prosperous city of Indra Prastha is built by the Pandavas, who settle in the splendid Palace of Illusions, which Panchaali eventually grows to love. When Duryodhan trips over a pool while on a visit, and everyone around Panchaali laughs at him, he feels embarrassed. King Bheeshma divides the Pandavas and Kauravas empires, whom Duryodhan rules. The next time the Pandavas visit Duryodhan, Yudhisthir, the eldest Pandava, stakes their palace and liberties in a dice game. Consequently, Duryodhan takes over the Palace of Illusions, and Panchaali and her husband are exiled to the wilderness for twelve years. Panchaali's primary objective in exile is vengeance.

The Pandavas being exiled for twelve years, took refuge in a nearby palace. Under the guise of a maid, Panchaali declined Prince Keechak's approaches and his threats to rape her. Panchaali and her husband Bheem murdered Keechak. The great conflict between the Pandavas and the Kauravas began with this bloodshed. Many people close to Panchaali lost their lives in the conflict, including Dhri, Drupad, and Karna. Soon after the battle, Panchaali's husbands hear of Krishna's death and determine to pass away and enter the afterlife. In paradise, Karna and Panchaali are reunited.



## CHAPTER-II

### CONCEPT OF INDIVIDUALITY IN V.S.KHANDEKAR'S *YAYATI* AND CHITRA BANERJEE DIVAKARUNI'S *A PALACE OF ILLUSIONS*

#### INDIVIDUALITY IN THE CHARACTER DEVAYANI AND DRAUPADI

V.S. Khandekar's *Yayati* and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *The Palace of Illusions* examine the idea of uniqueness through the protagonists' conflicts between their aspirations and those of society. Yayati, in Khandekar's novel, grapples with the constraints of his role as a king and the pursuit of personal fulfilment. At the same time, Draupadi, in *The Palace of Illusions* navigates the complexities of her identity as a woman in a patriarchal society and her aspirations. Both characters undergo journeys of self-discovery, challenging traditional norms and asserting their individuality amidst societal pressures and responsibilities.

Totalitarianism, collectivism, and other corporate social formations are frequently used to characterize individualism. The term "individualism" has been used to refer to the unique trait of being an individual; individuality is associated with having a peculiarity. Individualism is also linked to artistic and bohemian pursuits and ways of living, where people are more likely to experiment and create for themselves rather than following conventions or the views and practices of the general public. It is also connected to ethical and philosophical stances held by humanists. Individualism is a political and social philosophy that emphasizes the person's moral values. Even if the idea of an individual might appear simple, there are numerous theoretical and practical interpretations. Individualism and its translations into other languages date back to the 19th century.

The theoretical concept of individualism encompasses a social and political ideology that places a premium on an individual's autonomy, rights, and self-determination relative to the group's interests. It highlights the individual worth of every person and advances the notion that people need to be allowed to follow their paths and make decisions free from excessive intervention. Individualism, which has its roots in concepts of personal accountability and self-reliance, contrasts with collectivist philosophies that put the group's needs ahead of those of the individual.

Identity and belonging are fundamental to our lives, as well as our sense of self and interpersonal relationships. Historically, these themes have been explored in literature, reflecting the inherent human drive to define and comprehend oneself about the outside world. In literary works, identity pertains to the intricate process of constructing a person's sense of self, which involves various factors like personal encounters, cultural background, societal positions, and inward thoughts. It entails investigating one's ideals, convictions, and aspirations and creating a distinct identity within the framework of more established social systems. In contrast, the human desire for acceptance, affiliation, and connection with others and the outside world is associated with belonging. It entails discovering a sense of belonging, a community, and shared experiences that affirm one's identity and offer security and inclusion.

In literary works, identity refers to the various facets that go into forming a person's sense of self and position in the world. It examines various elements that define and shape a person's identity, including personal experiences, cultural background, social roles, gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and individual traits. Identity is frequently portrayed in literary contexts using characters' self-acceptance, self-definition, and self-discovery journeys. Writers explore the intricacies of identity construction and expression using various storytelling strategies, including character development, introspection, and

interaction with outside situations. Literature provides a forum for examining the malleability and development of identity. Characters in literary works frequently battle competing identities, internal strife, and the difficulties of reconciling their true selves with societal expectations. This statement recognizes that identity is not a fixed entity but a dynamic and ever-changing facet of human existence.

The desire for real connections, alienation, and displacement are common themes in literature that highlight the complexity of interpersonal relationships and the need to fit in. These themes examine the psychological and emotional effects of feeling removed, uprooted, or alone from one's environment and the intense yearning for real connections. Feeling distant, alienated, or alone in social situations is a condition of being called alienation. Literary characters feel alienated when they fail to fit in or gain acceptance in their social or cultural environments. They could feel alienated and find it challenging to fit in or relate to others around them. Prejudices in society, incapacity to follow social standards, and disparities in ideas, values, or experiences are just a few causes of alienation. This feeling of isolation sparks an intense yearning for real connections and a place where they may genuinely belong.

The societal ramifications of identification and belonging are frequently explored in contemporary English literature, illuminating the larger social structures, power relationships, and cultural standards that influence people's lives. These literary works explore the connections between social hierarchy, prejudice, inequality, identity, and belonging. The influence of identity on people's prospects and lived experiences is one significant social implication studied in the literature. Poems, plays, and novels frequently show how societal factors like sexual orientation, gender, color, and class affect some people's prospects and privileges while marginalizing others. Literature exposes the structural injustices, systematic biases, and prejudices that mould society by examining

characters' lives. Literature encourages readers to critically consider how identity and belonging affect people's access to resources, social mobility, and general well-being by shedding light on the societal consequences of these concepts. Additionally, the literature emphasizes the adverse effects of exclusion and the fight for acceptance in modern society.

Alienated or ostracized characters shed light on the psychological effects and emotional costs of living on the periphery of society. These literary works show how emotions of loneliness, low self-worth, and a lack of agency can result from not feeling like you belong. Literature challenges readers to question and criticize societal conventions that uphold exclusionary behaviours and to work toward creating more compassionate and inclusive communities by shedding light on the adverse effects of exclusion.

The study of identity in English literature is frequently entwined with the impact of social constructions, cultural history, and individual experiences. These components are crucial in forming and characterizing a person's personality, offering a colourful canvas for literary interpretation and emphasizing the intricacies of life. Identity formation is significantly impacted by cultural heritage. Literary characters are frequently depicted as struggling with the impact of their cultural upbringings, customs, and beliefs. Their worldview, behaviours, and beliefs are shaped by their cultural heritage, which also affects how people regard themselves and their place in society. For example, a character's cultural background may influence how they perceive themselves, their place in the family, or how they interpret social norms. Social categories like race, gender, and class significantly impact how identities are formed. Based on these conceptions, characters in literature may experience expectations, biases, and social pressures. They might run across prejudice, preconceptions, or internalized ideas about how they fit into society. The difficulties characters have in navigating these social constructs, such as questioning and reinventing their identities in the face of cultural norms, can be explored through literature.

Literature frequently shows people negotiating overlapping identities in incredibly complicated and nuanced ways. Race, gender, sexual orientation, cultural heritage, social class, and other factors can all overlap identities in this context. Analyzing how these intersections are portrayed in literature helps us understand the difficulties, tensions, and self-discovery people face when negotiating the complexity of their identities. Characters navigating overlapping identities in literature struggle with the expectations and prejudices attached to each identity. Due to rigid categorization and demands for conformity imposed by societal norms and expectations, these personalities may undergo internal conflicts. They might experience pressure to prefer one identity over others, which could cause their sense of self to become fragmented.

These internal conflicts portrayed provide insights into people's difficulties, while forming an identity and their internal problems when juggling various pieces of their identity simultaneously. The literature often highlights the external dynamics and cultural constraints people must face while navigating overlapping identities. Characters that have several identities may experience prejudice, discrimination, or marginalization. They could need help locating areas where they are entirely acknowledged and welcomed. Examining these outside obstacles sheds light on the power relationships and societal institutions that shape the lives of people with many identities. A forum for promoting empathy and increasing knowledge of the varied experiences of people navigating numerous identity crossings is provided by literature. Through literature, the theme of individuality in the mythological novel helps readers understand the situation of women in terms of traditional and cultural identity through the braved character.

Khandekar's play, *Yayati*, changed the portrayal of women in theatre. He has challenged the stereotypical view of women that the prevailing patriarchal ideology has propagated. Even if the female characters in *Yayati* exhibit a strength and vitality that

contrasts with the expected meekness and docility, they all ultimately give in to the constraints imposed by the patriarchal system. Despite their strong disobedience to patriarchal conventions, the female characters were only partially successful in projecting a picture of an emancipated woman. The female characters in the play are revealed to be thinking outside the constraints imposed by the prevailing ideology, even while the male characters do not openly oppose the social structure and male dominance. The bravery to deviate from prevailing misogynistic ideologies is a significant step in the emancipation of women. The essay tries to illustrate how Khandekar's female characters struggle to free themselves from patriarchal constraints but finally fail and give in to the patriarchal social structure.

In the past, female characters in dramas mirrored patriarchal codes of desire rather than showing women as they were. *Yayati* by V.S. Khandekar started challenging patriarchal perceptions about women. It was a departure from the custom of female characters that were developed in line with the sexist perceptions of women that predominate in society. With the increased focus on female roles and the resulting sexual liberation on stage, women are becoming more free of patriarchal ideas about what it means to be a woman.

Khandekar's attempt to celebrate and give voice to the other is called *Yayati*. The play mainly reflects the cultural construct that the patriarchal system produced. It is implied that all of the female characters have reached a point of mental emancipation where they are inclined to question the unfair events that occur in their lives. The patriarchal structure of thought cannot capture the mentality of his characters. Because of their long history of oppression, women have only ever been heard when speaking via the patriarchal voice, but the women in *Yayati* are those who fight for their rights and aspirations.

The struggle between Devayani and Sharmishta highlights differences in women's social class. While Sharmishta is an asura princess destined to be Devayani's slave, Devayani is a Brahmin woman married to Yayati, the Kshatriya king. The two are at odds with one another because of social hierarchy. It is a mirror image of the problem of class inequality in the modern world. Devayani's cultural supremacy grows when she weds King Yayati. Conversely, Sharmishta loses her position as a royal and is forced to work as an enslaved person for Devayani.

In the novel *Yayati*, Devayani is a very distinct character. She does not have difficulty; Sharmishta is the only issue she has. Despite their numerous arguments, her persistence demonstrates that she decided to keep Sharmishta as her maid. She is unable to accept Sharmishta replacing her. Her power comes from her father. At first, she has a calm, gentle demeanor, but as the play continues, she develops a strong, angry side. She is not a hypocrite; instead, she is a character who behaves by her emotions. This is seen in the scene where she is expected to welcome Puru and Chitrlekhe by royal etiquette, but she declines to do so since she does not feel like it. She acts nothing like a queen, even though that is what she is. Her maid, Sharmishta, controls and directs every thought and action she takes. The play's events reverse because she resents Yayati rather than Sharmishta. She can accept Sharmishta for who she is but finds it challenging to accept Yayati's explanation of his relationship with Sharmishta. She is a self-centered character because, after becoming enraged over learning of Yayati and Sharmishta's connection, she departs the palace without giving any thought to the new couple, the empire's future, or her family. She made a brave decision by ripping and discarding her marital thread, acting ahead of her time. It is an obvious way for her to leave the Marriage and reject Yayati as her husband.

Yayati's wife, Devayani, is Shukracharya's daughter. She is known more for the parts she plays in her husband and father's lives than for who she is because her identity relies on them. Being in the shadow of males is not just Devayani's dilemma. Except for the male family members, women had no distinct identities. A woman's strength and skill must be kept inside the house; without her father and husband, she would not exist in the outside world. She has been socialized to feel that her existence has no intrinsic worth and that it is her responsibility to give up her aspirations to ensure her family's happiness. When Devayani exhibits the bravery to leave her husband after he is found to have an extramarital affair, she demonstrates the qualities of a self-reliant, sensible woman. Both Hindu tradition and the patriarchal worldview reject this as an acceptable or expected behaviour from a married lady. Women are forced to be faithful in order to keep themselves subservient to men's dominance. Contrarily, males could afford to date as many women as they pleased, and their adultery was not punishable by law. The entire idea of fidelity is designed to restrict women's sexual agency and keep them under the authority of men.

The double standard is always present, rendering an act heinous for a girl and insignificant for a guy. Even though Devayani fights her husband's unfair behaviour, it is clear that she is giving up patriarchal control when she offers to forgive him in exchange for sending Sharmishta the lady he was caught cheating on away. Although her choice to leave her cruel spouse was undoubtedly a brave one, it should not be overlooked that she is only choosing between her father's and her husband's authority. She runs away from her husband in order to be with her father, which serves as simply more evidence for the patriarchal notion that a woman must always be taken care of and supported. It is always possible to employ the justification of blaming the state of society for one's actions, but this cannot be seen as an act of emancipation. The female fatale archetype of women that

the patriarchal culture has created is reflected in Sharmishta's character. This stereotype embodies the seductive and yet unsettling power that women have over males in terms of sexuality.

Using a dramatic framework to articulate myth, Khandekar examines a few minor points. Through character portrayal, he has delved into the depths of the human soul. Yayati has examined his thoughts of elevating ideology in carrying out his duties and accepting his responsibilities throughout his life; he is the victim of his existentialist and miserable consciousness. He behaves by the aphorism “Existence precedes essence” said Sartre. Yayati is alone because of his dread of dying and desire to live forever. Existentialists all hold that because of the unlimited variability of human nature, each person is in charge of shaping his fate.

Devayani approaches Yayati to get revenge on Kacha, and she eventually succeeds in marrying her. Originally a princess, Sharmishtha currently resides with Devayani, her maidservant. This is the moment when Sharmishtha meets Yayati. Sharmishtha achieves physical and mental connection with Yayati, whereas Devayani cannot build rapport with him. Yayati is delighted for a while after giving birth to a boy. However, Sharmishtha flees Hastinapur one stormy night. Yayati is currently dealing with losing Sharmishtha and being estranged from Devayani. His life then becomes empty, which speeds up his descent into moral decay. Sharmishtha embodies pure, undemanding love, while Devayani displays excessive pride and a craving for power.

Although Yayati's goal in the play is to dominate his country by living forever, his true motivation is a desire for sensuality. He is experiencing intense sexual pleasure. He is conflicted about the meaning of life and the problem of duty as a self-aware existentialist. Khandekar gives other characters' existential circumstances enormous force. Devayani and Sharmishtha both serve as a warning to Yayati's younger generation. The protagonists

engage in psychological struggles, and each one relishes their place in an existential quandary to experience youth's joys. Khandekar explains how “everyone is only possible because of the other.” (PI,10 )

The stereotypical female is a mysterious, enigmatic, and exotic woman who is icy, haughty, and unapproachable but alluring and subversive of social convention. She is endearing but nasty. She is a woman who piques men's interest without meeting them. This stereotype, in which Sharmishta uses her attractiveness to entice Yayati, fits the character nicely. Karnad provides us with a more profound understanding of Sharmishta's personality. It is revealed that Sharmishta is a courageous woman. It is made clear that Sharmishta is a rebel who refuses to submit to authority. Rather than moaning about her circumstances, she rises above them and leads a confident life. This is made very evident throughout the play by her chat with Yayati.

Sharmishta: You see yourself as excellent and powerful, a figure towering over your vast possessions, a demi-god if not god himself. You are busy visualizing the grand design of life. You have no sense of the traps and snares waiting in the grass. You have no sense of how illogical suffering can be and, therefore, how terrible. you do not know what a disaster you could be.

Yayati: “No one has dared to say that to me” (Y, 25)

The conversation sarcastically explains Sharmishta's rebellious personality since she dares to speak out against the king. Sharmishta gives the audience a glimpse of her liberated femininity, but subsequently, a more vulnerable part of her personality comes to light. She is quickly taken advantage of by Yayati for her erotic pleasure. When Yayati accuses her later in the play of being the reason for the curse that has befallen him, she stands there and

takes his derogatory charge in silence. The other main female character, Chitrlekha, demonstrates the qualities of a strong lady but cannot maintain her strength throughout. Puru's wife, Chitrlekha, is Yayati's daughter-in-law. In the play, she is a metaphor for a contemporary woman who uses reason to solve problems. Even if she cannot alter the unfair events in her life, she dares to voice her desires and ask questions about them. She is not a weak person who submits to male dominance without challenging it. Chitrlekha charges Yayati in this way:

“I did not push him into the edge of the pyre, sir. You did. You continue for toper my wifely duties. And your responsibilities to your son? Did you give it more thought before dumping your problems on a dutiful son?” (Y,62)

Yayati had stolen Puru's youth and, with it, Chitrlekha's inalienable right to marital pleasure. She rejects Yayati's chauvinistic outlook and is unable to stand up to the king's oppression and domination. She tells Yayati that she has now had equal rights over Anathpur, the castle of queens since she married Puru. Chitrlekha believes she had broken the law by asking her husband to go, but Puru had traded his youth for his father's depravity without telling his recently wed wife. All that this concept of sin is a social construct. Even though she considers herself to be enlightened, she is nonetheless subject to patriarchal social conditioning, leading her to believe that leaving her spouse is an irreparable transgression. Even though she displays a great deal of bravery, she eventually concedes that she will never be rewarded and ends her life.

Her husband dumped the maid Swarnalatha because he thought she was unfaithful. The idea of her adultery was consuming him. He had so many sexual relationships with women that he could not even begin to comprehend her having sexual freedom. Ultimately, she was made to lie about her previous relationship with her tutor. To give her

husband some peace of mind, she made up the story that she had a relationship with her instructor before Marriage. The incident illustrates the extent to which patriarchal notions such as faithfulness are imprinted in our minds. Swarnaltha loses her mind at the play's conclusion because she cannot maintain her composure while harboring her depressing desire for a husband who had abandoned her in the past.

V.S.Khandekar's *Yayati* depicts parallelism and celebrates the other. It unites caste, class, and gender disparities in a single stage. Khandekar's *Yayati* is a drama that makes one reflect more deeply on the issues of gender, caste, and class in society rather than glorifying Puru's sacrifice. Although all of Khandekar's female characters in *Yayati* are powerful, they cannot maintain their strengths despite significant setbacks. No matter how powerful they are, they all tend to be weak in times of crisis. Through *Yayati*, Khandekar's characters only partially show an emancipated femininity.

Although *Yayati* is the father of five boys from two women, married to the alluringly gorgeous Devyani and in love with her maid Sharmishtha, he openly admits, "My lust for pleasure is unsatisfied." He persisted in his pursuit of the carnal, sparing not even his youngest son and sacrificing his advanced age for that of his kid. Through this novel, the readers can understand the women's situation in the patriarchal society.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, an Indian-American, highlights the peculiarities of both cultures by contrasting and contrasting them. Her characters discuss the contrasts and demonstrate the results, even if she does not use examples like Jhumpa Lahiri to highlight the apparent distinctions and their effects. The stories of Indians, who primarily reside in America but occasionally or partially also in India, are written by both. The majority of Indian immigrants to America, according to Bharati Mukherjee, have a new outlook. One of the most brilliant storytellers is Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, who imbues her characters with vividness, attractiveness, logic, and personality. She touches on the edge of gossip

while adding a dash of style that fits the Adda among the friends to make the stories told in the drawing room attractive.

Divakaruni explores the plight of Indian women who are married off at a young age in her novels and short stories. She delves into the sad tales of their adjustment to the in-laws' home, their conflicts, and occasional rise to revolt for some humanist issue, if not for the torture inflicted upon them, their dashed hopes of a mutually loving relationship, their difficult battle for financial independence, and ultimately, their assertion of individuality through a convoluted process of self-analysis. Most of Divakaruni's characters, who frequently seek fame and fortune in the utopian world of their dreams, travel back and forth between India and America in the backdrop of her works of fiction. However, their illusion vanishes, and the writer conveys the anguish and disappointment associated with it when they face the harsh reality of life in America—apart from the challenge of adjusting to a new culture, the newcomers are harassed for obtaining green cards and even manhandled as foreign usurpers. In contrast, the second generation faces an identity crisis.

Divakaruni's fictional works are intriguing more for their subtly placed allusions to fantasy inside the realistic story than for their depiction of the pain meted out to women, the immigrants' identity crises, and their disillusionment. Divakaruni's fictional works are intriguing more for their subtly placed allusions to fantasy inside the realistic story than for their depiction of the pain meted out to women, the immigrants' identity crises, and their disillusionment.

Divakaruni's writing is captivating and provides a strong illustration of the strength and resiliency of women. The challenges, happiness, and victories of female characters who have been mainly overlooked or marginalized in conventional Indian mythology are brought to life in her works. She promotes diversity of viewpoints and emphasizes the

value of representation in literature by doing this. The books written by Divakaruni are necessary for anyone who wants to investigate and comprehend the various facets of Indian mythology. Her novels are an invaluable addition to the literary world because of their perceptive examination of women's experiences and captivating writing style.

The story of Princess Panchaali is told in the play *The Palace of Illusions*, starting with her fiery birth and ending with her daring acrobatics as a woman betrayed out of her father's kingdom five times by five different husbands. Panchaali joins them in their fight to restore their birth right and sticks with them during years of exile and bloody civil war, including all of India's notable monarchs. We never lose sight of her calculated battles with her mother-in-law, her complex friendship with the mysterious Krishna, or her covert attraction to the enigmatic man who poses the greatest threat to her husband. A universe of warriors, gods, and the ever-changing hands of fate is redefined for us by the fiery female character Panchaali.

Roles for men and women are well-defined in *The Palace of Illusions*. Women are confined to the home arts, while men are glorified as statesmen and warriors. Intellectual respect is not given to women. As Dhai Ma puts it, Panchaali's destined to have a limited memory since she is a girl. Women are likewise viewed as their husbands' property and are obligated to submit to them without question. Panchaali has nothing to say about her Marriage when the time comes. Instead, she must accept the result of the swayamvar, which her father arranges to select her husband. When Panchaali learns she will marry five different men, she says, "Like a communal drinking cup, I would be passed from hand to hand whether I wanted it or not." (PI 120). She serves as a male's comfort and pleasure object here. As a result, her community continuously denies women autonomy and upholds their status as second-class citizens. The story takes place in the sumptuous surroundings of several palaces, including Panchaali's birth and upbringing in the

magnificent Palace of Hastinapur. The Play takes place across multiple kingdoms, providing diverse environments and societies, from the verdant regions of Panchaali to the battleground of Kurukshetra. The book examines the restrictions imposed on women in ancient India and Panchaali's fight for autonomy in a culture where men predominated.

*The Palace of Illusions* invites readers to reevaluate the ageless Mahabharata story from a novel and engrossing angle by combining history, mythology, and human drama engagingly. This book is a moving examination of love, grief, and the eternal tenacity of the human spirit, thanks to Divakaruni's poetic style and moving storytelling. A new viewpoint is provided by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *The Palace of Illusions*, which reads the epic tale through the gendered eyes of Draupadi. While staying within the parameters of the epic story, Draupadi aspires to control her fate. Other authors have also depicted Draupadi's tragic situation. *Kurukshetra*, a poem by Amreeta Syam, is one such. Although Draupadi has five husbands, she is single. Despite having five sons, she never became a mother.

“The Pandavas bestowed onto Draupadi...

Not happiness, not victory, Not worthy of being a wife

Lack of regard for a mother

The Queen's status alone."

In order to highlight Draupadi's multifaceted and multi-layered “self,” Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni dismantles earlier narratives and storytelling techniques. Her self-representation becomes a source of empowerment that ultimately results in her liberation. Valuing the material itself is the first step in the empowering process. That is a woman's life and experiences. Here, Draupadi celebrates her femininity and first defies the masculine rule.

There is a lot of worship and reverence for the epic tale of Krishna and Draupadi. On the other hand, Draupadi, in Divakaruni's tale, sees Krishna not as a saviour but as a friend who genuinely gets the intricacy of her convoluted thinking. His visits lessen her hatred of the alone existence in her father's palace. She also questions whether they share their likeness in having dark skin. During the yagna, Draupadi comes to understand Krishna's significance in her existence. "I wanted to die too because I thought you had died" (166). During her last voyage, she realizes once more that the men in her life are more valuable. Her love for Krishna is the only love in the world. Krishna provides her with salvation by dispelling her ignorance and confusion.

She learns from her Marriage that a woman in a polygamous marriage has neither independence nor choice. Her curse was her independence. Draupadi was not wedded to Arjun. She opted to marry him because he passed the challenging exam. However, Arjun humiliated her and said nothing when Kunthi requested his brothers share her. By fulfilling their mother's demand and treating her like an item won in a competition, Yudhishtira further offends her.

Her Marriage calls for a lot of adjustment and extreme self-control. With a calm demeanour, she was required to fulfil the duties of a wife to five outstanding heroes. Virginity is the ultimate manifestation of the feminine mystery, either feared, desired, or even demanded by the male. In both the epic and the novel, Draupadi's nobility is maintained by the virginity boon she receives. However, she feels that being polyandrous has damaged her self-worth. She believes that her spouses get more from her virginity than she does; thus, she longs for the gift of forgetting. "I would have asked for the ability to forget if the sage had asked." (Y 18)

Draupadi defies gender conventions through her admiration for her husband's archenemy, Karna. She feels sympathy for Karna, the archetypal tragic hero who has

endured rejection throughout his life. Draupadi has also experienced rejection before—her unwelcome birth, Arjuna's heeding of his mother's irrational sharing advice, her brave husband's indifference to her humiliation, and so on. Her and Karna's covert relationship is no longer illegal. Long before she meets Karna, she already harbours an ambiguous attraction to him. However, she had no choice but to insult and reject Karna at her swayamvar to preserve her beloved brother's life. Her thoughts are drawn to him by the stunned Karna's calm and collected response to her insult. He progressively turns into an unsatisfied longing as a means of her getting even for her polygamous Marriage. She detests being treated like a “communal cup” by men, which makes her long to be married to a single man. Karna is a more fantastical person. He serves as a channel for her to calm her racing thoughts.

Beauvoir says, “Man is only made productive in his ideal endeavours by a negative relation to her.” (7) A negative response from a woman might make us limitless. He becomes closer to Draupadi as a result of her accidental injuries and erroneous reaction to her shame. Despite his anger towards her remarks, Karna still loves her. Her evolutionary psychology interpretations are based on a logical analysis of Draupadi's connection with males.

The scene in *The Palace of Illusions* where Draupadi is seen undressing is an excellent illustration of how womanhood is objectified and how she responds to it with pugilism. She becomes an inanimate object when she is made to reveal her body to the guys in her immediate vicinity. Rather than being hurt by the lustful gaze of males around her, she is hurt by her husband's indifference. “Let them gaze at my nude appearance. Why is it that I should care? I should feel guilty for pushing the boundaries of propriety, not them.” (116)

She even questioned the transaction's legality when she was promised a chattel in the dice game. Her concern about whether Yudhistir has the right to lose her after losing himself is unanswered. In order to regain her diminished dignity, she decides to give up her typical femininity.

The famous humiliation of Draupadi at the Kuru court has come to symbolize the suffering of women. *The Palace of Illusions* and the original *Mahabharat* both have the emotionally compelling scenario of pulling Draupadi, a menstruation woman with just one piece of fabric covering her body. This is because it represents the ultimate humiliation and shame a woman can experience under patriarchy. The way she saw Krishna, "the worst shame a woman could imagine was about to befall. "He seemed to be saying, "No one can shame you if you do not let it"(PI 193). Despite thinking of Him, Divakaruni did not make her Draupadi pray for benevolent intervention to preserve her honour.

Divakaruni's novel's methodological framework goes beyond individual experience to create an ongoing social engagement with history. It unites innumerable Draupadis' from the past and present and intensifies, on a collective level, women's awareness of their oppression as gender and their consciousness of unhappiness.

The conflict between her passion and loyalty permeates every page of *The Palace of Illusions*. Despite being a lovely wife, she acknowledged that she did not love Bheem or any of her husbands in the same way because none of them could make her feel the way the memory of Karna could. When Divakaruni throws off the patriarchal confines and makes Draupadi think of Karna instead of her husband in the final moments of her life, she does not hesitate to reveal the secrets of a woman's heart.

Even Draupadi questioned whether she had made the incorrect decision at the swayamvar (PI 351). She closes her story on a strong note:

"I feel expansive, buoyant, and uncontainable—but I was always like

this; I just did not realize it! I am not limited by my name, gender, or the ego's confining habits. However, I feel like I am Panchaali for the first time. I extend my second hand to grab Karna; such a substantial grip! Our palace, the only one I have ever needed, sits above us. Its floor is the sky, its sides are space, and its center is everywhere. The shapes gather around us as we stand up, creating, dissipating, and re-forming like summertime fireflies.” (360)

Draupadi's education and her metamorphosis from an aspirational princess to a queen seeking retribution are depicted in subjective detail in Divakaruni's work. She receives many instructions on her own and from her husband, brother, and other wise people (such as a sage, a sorceress, and Lord Vishnu's avatar, Krishna). In many aspects, Divakaruni's story is an exact reproduction of the original. However, it takes a different tack by giving the reader a glimpse inside the thoughts of the listening Draupadi, presenting womanhood in all its facets.

Draupadi's preoccupation with her ancestry is introduced in the first several chapters. She struggles to be a self-constructed feminine, and they present her rebellious side. True enough, hearing about her birth story and destiny predictions is the only meaningful activity for her. The palace of her father seems to tighten its hold around her until she is unable to breathe, and she longs to escape from the patriarchal society. Her nurse describes the girl, whose twin brother is the eagerly anticipated successor

“Our jaws dropped when you emerged from the fire. You might have heard a housefly fart because it was so silent.” (PI 2)

She was born the daughter of one of India's wealthiest rulers but unexpectedly escaped from the flames, clinging to her brother. She is given the name “Draupadi,

Daughter of Drupad” (5), which she feels invalidates the heavenly prophecy given to her at birth that “she will change the course of history” and affirms patriarchal dependency. Her brother is named “Dhristadyumna, Destroyer of Enemies” (5).

The story establishes a significant connection between identity, gender, and names right away. Specifically, Draupadi envies her brother's strength and agency derived from his name and the suggested life aim of killing Drona, the archenemy. In contrast, hers only serves as a symbol of patriarchy. Feeling self-conscious about her outward appearance, which significantly differs from the ideal of the “fair” woman, she asks Krishna “if he thought that a princess afflicted with a skin so dark that people termed it blue was capable of changing history” (8). This query reflects a sense of the heroine's perceived double marginality her ethnicity and gender, if not, presumably, her class or caste.

When the novel progresses, however, it becomes clear that the consequences of her resolve not to allow herself to be a victim of circumstance and her desire to have "a more heroic name" is highly complex, combining guilt, conceit, and cruelty with legitimate claims of equality and emancipation. Her destiny, according to a sage she consults, is as follows: she will wed the five greatest heroes of her era, be adored like a goddess, become the mistress of the most magical castle, lose it, ignite the most significant conflict that would claim millions of lives, be loved, and die alone.

“You will be known for starting the most significant conflict of your era.

Evil monarchs will perish, and so will you, your siblings, and your offspring. You will cause a million

women to become widows.

You will make a lasting impression on history.

You will be loved even if you do not always know who loves you.

You will ultimately die alone and abandoned despite having had five marriages, but this will not happen (39)".

She will also have three opportunities during her lifetime to lessen the impending disaster; the wise woman advises her to control her emotions and refrain from speaking during these opportunities ("hold back your curse," "hold back your laughter," and "hold back your question"). She is excited by the name the sage gave her "Panchaali, spirit of this land" (41); it is "a name that knew how to endure" (42). Beginning with her life tale, Draupadi, also called Panchaali, shares her aspirations of owning her castle. She, therefore, asserts her narrative agency and sense of self, attempting to define her identity through her physical location and mastery over how she lives and presents herself to other.

"a riot of color and sound, birds singing in mango and custard apple orchards, butterflies flit-ting among jasmines, and in the midst of it," expressing a desire for dramatic importance and the "brilliant theatricality of her life"(7). Moreover, reflecting on her "deepest being" (7), a claim that raises questions about the "brilliant theatricality of her life" and the yearning for dramatic importance.

Panchaali protests against an education that emphasizes traditionally feminine abilities (poetry, weaving, and painting), which she views as inferior to the knowledge her brother is receiving (classes about power, justice, and royal control). Once more, she compares the life ahead to being suffocated by it, saying, "With each lesson, I felt the world of women tightening its noose around me" (29). However, she begins to observe how these sessions further modify her and deepen the difference to what she has been educated to view as feminine after her father grudgingly agrees to allow her to participate in Dhri's classes. She says it is "making me too hard-headed and argumentative, too

manlike in my speech" (23), and she is having difficulty accepting that she is a royal lady with restrictions.

When Panchaali hears her professor say that a woman's best duty in life is to support the warriors in her life (26), she becomes aware that her goals have made her an outsider in her sex: "Each day I thought less and less like the women around me. Each day I moved further from them into a dusky solitude." (26). The story mentions her knowledge of her distinctions and her view, "For better or worse, I was a woman. I would have to find a woman's way to force him to notice me". (139) for several times. As she learns to deliberately use her femininity to dazzle and manage through her appearance, she pushes acceptance on men and women around her, saying, "I who had been shunned for my strangeness became a celebrated beauty!" (10).

Shortly after, a sorceress convinces Panchaali of her fundamental weakness, her conceit, and the strength of women, telling her that, despite their complete reliance on males, "you are wrong in thinking of a woman as an innocent species" (66). She reminds Panchaali that she does not "have the luxury of behaving like an ordinary star-struck girl." However, the most important lesson she attempts to impart to her is the control over her passion and her destructive power. We could all be destroyed by the fallout from your deed (88). Divakaruni's heroine muses on fate's inevitable course and the disparity between how she sees herself and others throughout the story. Her constant run-ins with gender disparities heighten the central tension between her need for independence and her attempts to please and comply. After getting married and seeing her spouse for the first time, she remarks, "I was a woman. I had to use my power differently" (99). The acknowledgment of her disparity in terms of freedom and reputation comes next. Although she receives independence from her father and the title of Queen, her unusual polyandrous union runs the risk of being perceived as that of an infatuated whore (118).

Additionally, as per the unique marital arrangements, Panchaali is divided between her husbands and spends a year with each, regaining her virginity each time she gets into a new husband's bed. She acknowledges that she “had no say in who or when I slept with. Unlike her husband's, it would be handed hand to hand like a community drinking cup, whether she wanted it or not (120). Another area of interest is narrative. The narrative is typically told in Draupadi's first person.

Nonetheless, Vyas seems to remind both the narrator and the readers of the text's predetermined conclusion at specific points in the book. Perceptual shifts emphasize perception's significance and narrative transmission's deceptive nature. Just as there is always another way to tell the story, there is always a chance of deceit.

The novel begins with three narrators (Panchaali, her brother, and her nurse) offering a different account of Panchaali's birth and destiny. As Panchaali struggles to take control of the narrative, her reflections and dialogic engagement with her presumed listeners also contain meta-narrative observations about the nature of truth and narration, such as the statement, “A story is a slippery thing at the best of times”(15). Two opposing viewpoints are expressed throughout the story: one is that stories are strong and “true,” while the other is that they are subjective, ephemeral, and likely to alter with each telling. Drawing a comparison between identity and storytelling, the narrative scenario considers the procedure from an intertextual and metatextual perspective. Divakaruni's first-person narration effectively conveys the importance of dialogic negotiation, another outstanding aspect of the original epic. Laurel Patton analyses the Mahabharata's naturally dialogic form and makes a case for a connection between the emphasis on the plurality of identity and the various points of view.

She describes “the dialogical, gendered self as a multiple self, with various momentary roles to choose from.” The formation of characters and narrative structure in the ancient epic reveal the operation of a discursive and performative notion of gender, which is central to Divakaruni's novel and may be considered a theoretical given in modern times. A strong declaration of female strength and agency may be seen in the courtroom scene as Draupadi is humiliated. She understands the boundaries of her men's feelings for her when they remain silent. They have greater affection for other things. They valued honor, fidelity to one another, and reputation more than my pain (195). She also notes that she had been overcome with intense rage. At the same time, her husbands had stoically endured the humiliation, subduing their retaliatory instincts by following the prescribed course of action and waiting for events to unfold in their favor.

Furthermore, her resentment and unhappiness are increased to such an extent that she expresses her emotional condition as follows when Duryodhan takes over her beloved palace:

“She is dead. Half of her died the day when everyone she had loved and counted on to save her sat without protest and watched her being shamed. The other half perished with her beloved home. But never fear. The woman who has taken her place will gouge a deeper mark into history than that naïve girl ever imagined (206).”

The fact that she characterizes herself as seen from the outside for the first time is noteworthy. The quotation emphasizes how crucial her humiliation and the loss of her palace which had become such an essential part of who she was triggered the impending tragedy. She now has a clear sense of purpose from the focus on retaliation and compensation, but she lacks a sense of secure selfhood:

"Sometimes, just before I fell into the blankness of sleep, it seemed that everything I had lived."

The Princess who longed for acceptance, the guilty girl whose heart would not listen, the wife who balanced her fivefold role precariously, the rebellious daughter-in-law, the Queen who ruled in the most magical of palaces, the distracted mother, the beloved companion of Krishna, who refused to learn the lessons he offered, the woman obsessed with vengeance—none of them were the true Panchaali.

Throughout the story, the primary characteristic that transcends and affirms gender boundaries is the desire for and execution of vengeance. Panchaali spends her life trying to control her fiery temper, and her thirst for revenge culminates in the deaths of thousands of people. However, her husbands are portrayed as her counter-images in terms of patience and stoic obedience to rule and custom all while enjoying the freedom of action that comes with being men. Although Panchaali's desire and speech started the war, she did not participate actively rather than serve as an eyewitness. The idea that a woman's body cannot carry out a vengeful task is made several times throughout the narrative. Panchaali dreams one night during a war of killing her brother, who is wearing a Kaurava prince's disguise. Her dream conveys her dejection at witnessing the deaths of all those close to her, as well as her sense of helplessness and guilt. After changing into a man in the dream, she feels similar to males in that she still craves vengeance and has the same hatred, but she can now actively kill people. This is akin to gender empathy.

Panchaali's half-sister Sikhandi experiences a temporary gender transition. However, to participate in the battle, she must permanently shift into a "great and dangerous warrior" (44) in contrast to this momentary imagined gender switch. She says of her new identity, "When I awoke, I was a man," even though her appearance and behavior have changed significantly. However, it is only partially accurate since even if my shape

was altered, I retained an internal memory of how women felt and what they desired (46). She still feels unclear about her gender. Panchaali observes that even when fighting, she still appears to be "male from one angle, female from another" (256). Shikhandi, like Panchaali, is motivated by revenge and a rebellion against the greater freedom of action enjoyed by men. Early in the story, she mentions having a similar realization to Panchaali's during her embarrassing courtroom undressing: freedom is inevitable.

When women "wait for a man to avenge your honor, you will wait forever ." she contends, they must stand up for themselves to regain their dignity (49). Panchaali is conscious from the beginning that "I, too, would cross the bounds of what was allowed to women?" having been inspired by Shikhandi's sex change as the ultimate release from the constraints of womanhood (51). Her actions regularly go against the expectations of traditional femininity, as demonstrated above by her outspokenness, education, and polyandrous Marriage. She also does not show much affection for her kids because she values her freedom more than being a mother. She leaves her sons behind and hardly recognizes them years later in order to stay by her husband's side. Draupadi questions conventional notions of what a wife and woman ought to be. One of the key threads in viewing this epic via feminist lenses is her movement away from traditional femininity toward retribution, even if she does not alter genders as Shikhandi does. The story takes on a new depth in the last section. The women around Panchaali, overcome with their suffering, only look in fear at "the witch who might, with a wave of her hand, transform them into widows." During the battle, Panchaali is shocked to learn that her perception of herself—the courageous woman wronged and admired for persevering through hardships—is entirely at odds with their beliefs. (258).

Divakaruni depicts the battle of Kurukshetra and its aftermath is the most drastic way in which she has altered the original epic's narrative. Draupadi receives extraordinary

abilities to watch the Titanic struggle. Once more, this puts her at the center of things rather than reducing her to a passive observer of everyday happenings. In order to highlight what is missing from the earlier text, the focus on the subjective female consciousness is widened here:

“However, Vyasa omitted this detail from his Mahabharata: after leaving the field, the radiance moved to a nearby hill and briefly stopped above a sobbing woman. It developed into a brilliant radiance surrounding me before taking off into the sky and vanishing.” (298).

By emphasizing the women's sorrow, the story offers an alternative perspective on the morale of the family feud. It completely obfuscates the lines separating kin from foes and winners from losers. Following the conflict, bereaved widows attempt to leap onto funeral pyres. A mass sati will increase the anguish of the fight to an unfathomable degree, leaving King Yudhishthir helpless:

“If it had been a battle, he would have known what kind of command to give his men. However, he was at a loss here, paralyzed by guilt, compassion, and the ancient and terrible tradition the women had invoked. I could see on his face a further concern: the tragic death of so many women at the very beginning of his reign would be a stain on his kingship, a devastating karma for him to bear. However, neither he nor my other husbands knew how to prevent it.” (312).

This circumstance eventually compels Panchaali to put sisterhood ahead of her desires and feelings. As she moves to speak to the assembly, she stops more deaths by expressing her anguish as a mother and a woman (314). A second transformation of Panchaali is brought about by the damage of the war, which had rendered Hastinapur “largely a city of women (322). She acts, but her motivations these days seem more political and communal than personal: “It was time I got over my self-pity and did

something.” I decided to establish a separate court so that ladies might confide in one another about their grief (323).

Divakaruni's feminist agenda highlights this almost utopian picture of a rebuilt city emerging from the ashes, where women are treated equally and are safe havens:

“And even in the later years of Parikshit's reign, when the world had passed into the Fourth Age of Man and Kali, the dark spirit had gripped the world in his claws; Hastinapur remained one of the few cities where women could go about their daily lives without harassment.” (325).

Another shift in the plot maintains this. In contrast to the ancient Pandava line, where a son was the sole heir to survive, Divakaruni transforms Parikshit into a daughter who adopts Panchaali's lineage and achieves peaceful feminine supremacy. The investigation has demonstrated that Draupadi, who is always divided between being a loving wife and an independent, vocally critical woman, is far from a clear-cut embodiment of the ideal Indian woman. “She is a throwback; her stories come from when women were more highly respected than in the days of the meek and submissive wifely models.” Divakaruni's story emphasizes this view of femininity.

Furthermore, Draupadi's character changes and contradictions can be explained by the story's multiple roles (wife, mother, Queen, etc.). Divakaruni shows Panchaali's anguish and sorrow brought on by the disintegration of her many identities, making this tension one of her main areas of emphasis. Another example is Panchaali's choice to accompany her husbands on their farewell tour. Once more, she is a defiant and devoted wife because no one else has ever tried to climb the Himalayan Mountains before her. As her strength begins to fail her, she considers:

Maybe my issue has always been my resistance to the restrictions society places on women. However, what was the other option? To wait for death while sitting among hunched grandmothers, chatting and moaning, and munching on mashed betel leaves with gums devoid of teeth? Unacceptable! I would rather die on the mountainside. She was the only consort who dared to go with the Pandavas on this last terrifying trip so that it would be abrupt and clean, a conclusion worthy of a bard's song and my last win over the other women. Rather than cry when she fell, she held a courageous hand in farewell.

How could I not give in to it?"(343,344)

The quotation illustrates the nuanced, confusing evaluation of Panchaali's character in the book and the complicated range of emotions. Though it pokes fun at her conceit and need for attention, it also presents her as an example of female empowerment and bravery. In this sense, even the staging of her death is equivocal. Her final, agonizing thoughts are about which men in her life would have turned around to save her, so when she jumps off the pathway, it seems both a brave admission that she has reached the limit of her abilities and a desperate plea for help.

When Panchaali finally reaches heaven, she notices that

“the air is full of men - but not men exactly, nor women, for their bodies are sleek and sexless and glowing," which gives her a slight relief. Their expressions, devoid of the emotions that defined them in life, are calm and unlined (358).

The gods are portrayed as androgynous, peacefully balanced individuals who are beyond passion and have no sex. Ultimately, emotions are identified as distinguishing between character and gender variations, surpassing all other disguises. Given the contradictions in her identity, Panchaali's passing appears to signify her liberation and resolution: “I am above name and gender and the ego's shackling patterns. And yet, I am

Panchaali for the first time. I extend my other hand to grasp Karna; his grip is substantial." (360).

The reader must determine whether this conclusion strikes them as spiritually comforting or depressing since she is deprived of the opportunity to find earthly peace with her conflicted female identity and acceptance of her "self." Divakaruni's novel successfully conveys the "great psychological depth" of the Mahabharata, which also explores the characters' different self-deceptions of romantic love, bravery, war, and retribution. Suppose Draupadi is "viewed as a victim of patriarchy in most constructions of her, in both literary and non-literary texts." In that case, Divakaruni challenges this interpretation and adds nuance to the discussion of female agency. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni skillfully reimagines the ancient Mahabharata in "The Palace of Illusions," giving it a feminist perspective, depth, and emotion. Readers are taken to a realm of grandeur, mystery, and profound human experiences through Panchaali's captivating narration. This captivating retelling proves the lasting value of old epics and the enduring power of storytelling. Through the many women characters, both mythological novels portray women suffering in society and having specific individuality carries in various situations.



## CHAPTER-III

### CONFLIT OF GENDER ROLE AND DEVAYANI

Epics are based on well-established traditions that recount the exploits of the hero. In India, we have two great epics: the Mahabharata, penned by Vedvyasa, and the Ramayana, penned by Valmiki. Both were originally written in Sanskrit and tell the story of Lord Ram, exiled for 14 years, along with his younger brother Laxman and wife Sita. The Ramayan teaches us many fundamental principles that should be instilled in every child. On the other hand, the Mahabharata is the longest epic. It challenges the political system to teach us the value of fulfilling our responsibilities and the true significance of relationships.

A great epic is not just a tale to be told and passed down from generation to generation; it is also an intriguing and motivating source of study that portrays the customs, culture, and way of life of long-forgotten times. Indian culture is rich and varied, and the ageless epic tales of the Ramayana and Mahabharata occupy a special place of veneration in Indian culture and society. Countless poets, writers, and artists worldwide have drawn inspiration from these thousands of years old tales. Despite the extensive research on the great epics, their scope, significance, and perceptive observations about life make them relevant even in the modern era. It has been demonstrated in the postmodern retelling of the great timeless Mahabharata epic in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *The Palace of Illusion*. "Mahabharata is one of the defining cultural narratives in the construction of masculine and feminine gender roles in ancient India, and its numerous telling and retellings have helped to shape Indian gender and social norms ever since." Even though countless studies have been conducted on the text, much remains to be discovered and explored.

Indian-American poet and author Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni teaches writing at the University of Houston. She writes about women, the difficulties faced by immigrants, myths, history, family, and the struggles of adjusting to life in a heterogeneous society. Her book *The Palace of Illusion* is a poignant Mahabharata story told from Draupadi's perspective. The author has done everything possible to fill the gap between tradition and modernity. In our lives, we have all encountered epic stories from the viewpoint of humanity. The novel's front page identified it as Panchaali's Mahabharata. Here, the author provides insight into the life of Panchaali, a woman who has had difficulties since infancy.

Draupadi's voice resonates widely in a patriarchal society. Draupadi is the most enigmatic and magnificent lady of all time because of her fire and passion, the spirit of resistance to injustice, and complexity. It describes her friendship with the Pandavas, their mother, Kunti, her twin brother, and her closest friend, Lord Krishna. It clarifies the place of women in a world where men predominate. It does a fantastic job of illuminating the circumstances in which she was forced to make a moral decision. The women were portrayed as the supporting cast members who were obedient to their male counterparts despite being central to the epic.

It inspires women to face all obstacles head-on, independent of others, and without weakness. The story is unique because a female witnesses this environment and its limitations on her. It thus emphasizes a woman's aspirational quest to discover her gender identity. The primary relationship and duty between womanhood and vengeance is the subject of the text.

Divakaruni presents a novel viewpoint rather than altering the plot or offering a different resolution. Draupadi, her nurse Dhai Maa, and his brother narrate the events of the novel's opening chapters. The narrative starts with her first introduction to the outside

world at King Drupad's residence and alternates between flashbacks and the present, revealing historical details and developing the characters.

She states, “Through the long, lonely years of my childhood when my father's palace seemed to tighten its grip around me until I could not breathe” (PI,1), after realizing that her father's palace is smothering her at the novel's opening. The nurse puts it best in her description of “the Girl Who Was not Invited” (PI 1).

Panchali is presented in this book as a young rebel who is bold and gorgeous and yearns for her father's affection. She is also motivated to make her imprint on the world. The princess who emerged from the flames is tasked with altering history, ascending to the throne, and constructing the most gorgeous home on Earth, *The Palace of Illusions*, using magic and marble. Her pride, her desire for retribution, and her spiritual shortcomings coexist with her achievements in this world. The one thing that has never changed in her life is her best buddy Krishna's loving presence. Thus, the book paints a timeless and modern picture of an intimate feminine portrait. Divakaruni's depiction of Draupadi as a subject advances our awareness of feminine issues in the modern era while also transporting us back to the mythological concept.

The palace that Maya, the architect of the Asuras, magically constructed for Panchaali and her five husbands just after their marriage is referred to as *The Palace of Illusions*. It is primarily in this palace that Draupadi's personality and self are developing. It has a big part in giving her room to grow and determine her path. Thus, it is appropriate to refer to it as *The Palace of Illusions*. Beginning with Panchaali's birth from the sacred pyre of the sacrifice, the story follows her journey through life and ends with her final departure in search of salvation.

Her grandmother Dhai Maa told her the birth tale and other events in the palace. Her father did not receive her well when she emerged from the fire. King Drupad was informed of the prophecy that she would alter the path of history. As a result of Draupadi's thirst for vengeance against Drona, his boyhood friend turned enemy, Draupadi.

Along with Panchaali's arrival on Earth comes the heavenly prophecy that she will alter the course of history. She was named Draupadi, which means daughter of Drupad, and her brother was named Drishtadyumna, which means destroyer of enemies. Both of them were born from the sacred fire. This name, in her opinion, is an endorsement of patriarchal dependence. Rejecting this moniker, she goes by Panchali, which translates as "from the kingdom of Panchal." This is seen as her first action in refusing to let men determine the course of her life.

The novel thus maintains the gender and identity debate. When she went to a sage to find out about her destiny, she was told that she would marry the five greatest heroes of her era, be treated like a goddess, become the empress of the most amazing magical palace, lose it later, be the cause of a bloody war that claimed millions of lives, triumph but die alone.

Draupadi laments that her twin brother was given priority over her and that she was denied the opportunity to receive an education. She rebels against the traditional training given to women; the knowledge imparted to her brother about royal rite, justice, and power, and the crafts of painting, sewing, and ceramics. "A Kshatriya woman's highest purpose in life is to support the warriors in her life," according to her tutor. (PI,26)

Her father was the one who valued her schooling the least. It demonstrates how little emphasis was placed on women's education and how women were only needed to perform the tasks men required. Since women were responsible for taking care of their

spouses and praying for them to die bravely in the fighting zone, they were not trained on men. In Indian civilization, women are confined to domestic duties. In contrast, men are presumed to have access to vast experiences such as hunting, warfare, exploration, unrestricted opportunity, and liberty. She was in trouble because of this rigid societal structure of male authority.

During Draupadi's Swayamvar, the dominant male-centric force is demonstrated. Even though she benefited from selecting her life mate in Swayamvar, it was pivotal. The third Pandava, Arjun, defeats Drupadi in an arrow-based archery contest to present his lovely daughter. He knows that Arjun is the best archer of all time; thus, he keeps this challenge to persuade Arjun to attend the swayamwara. So he got what he wanted. However, their mother, Kunti, declared, "You five have to wed this woman" (P.i 108).

Polygamy was common among Kshatriya men, while polyandry was uncommon. Women should be faithful, chaste, and committed to only one man over their lifetime. However, Panchali's mother-in-law had her practice polyandry. It has been determined that she should be divided among the five Pandavas without considering her wishes. Draupadi was devoted to her husband and showed respect for her mother-in-law despite all the challenges. Even if she was born into a holy family, she still has to be mistreated because of her gender. Her spouse took advantage of her while the game was being played. Duryodhana's despotic act humiliated her and disrobed her in front of all the court elders. "I found myself in court, a hundred male eyes burning through me" (PI,191). Panchali claims that pulling my tattered saree around myself made me call for assistance. They looked at me in agony, but they sat motionless.

Even though she was married to five courageous men, nobody rushed to her aid throughout her ordeal. When she calls Krishna during a period of intense grief, he

responds, “No one can shame you...if you do not allow it” (193). She gained control after hearing these strong words, and when she opened her eyes, she saw that a miracle had occurred. She “was on the floor in a swoon, and Dussasan was still clothed.” (194).

Divakaruni bestows upon her even more strength by cursing the Kauravas,

“All of you will die in a battle spawned from this day's work. Your mothers and wives will weep far more piteously than I have wept. This entire kingdom will become a charnel house. Not one Kaurava heir will be left to offer prayers for the dead. All that will remain is the shameful memory of today, what you tried to do to a defenseless woman.” (194).

Draupadi discovers that her husband has avenged her for her honor by making her swear in public that “I lifted my long hair for all to see.” Now that I knew all I had spoken would come to fruition, I could speak calmly. I will not comb it until I bathe it in Kaurava blood (194). Here, she establishes a new code of honor based on her gender identity. She was resolved to exact retribution on herself rather than her spouses. “Their notions of honor, loyalty towards each other, of reputation, were more important to them than my suffering,” as she puts it, is full knowledge (195). She defiantly ensures retribution by using her femininity as a weapon.

She decides to go on her husband's spiritual journey at the book's conclusion. “No woman had ever attempted,” the speaker claims (343). She has evolved into the lady the bards acknowledge: “She was the only consort that dared accompany the raised her hand in brave farewell” (344). By the story's conclusion, the limited social gender disparities are eliminated.

The novel reexamines women's lives and conditions in this way. It also examines current problems in the male-dominated society, such as women's identity crises,

discrimination, exploitation, and marginalization. It demonstrates Draupadi's fearless resolve to forge her path and alter the course of history. As a result, it dismantled patriarchal dichotomies to present the woman as a strong, independent figure. Males have ruled human civilization throughout its history. Draupadi has defied all difficulties and proven herself despite being ruled and enslaved. Consequently, the novel is also a well-known text on gender identity.

The Play ends on a spiritual note, suggesting that patriarchy and gender discrimination are merely a part of our physical, material world and are transient. Our anatomy and the social settings in which we live impose rigid limitations on both male and female behaviour. However, these limitations and constraints have no significance in the afterlife. Thus, the text suggests that gender identities and the social hierarchy are limited to this material reality.

The dramatic themes of V.S. Khandekar centre on fundamental questions about the existential dilemmas that face each person in postcolonial, contemporary India. Two significant social constructs that continuously alter a person's existential space are gender and culture. On the surface, this idea of the "other" appears to be a part of the class structures that are primarily shaped by ideas about gender and culture. We may see and comprehend how gender and culture oppress the person and make them the "other" by dissecting the class structures. This allows us to locate the margin within the center and create subclasses within the class. The play *Yayati* by Khandekar focuses on gender narratives and how they are presented from cultural viewpoints that aim to place the individual as a marginalized other inside the framework of class narratives.

Khandekar has subtly blended gender and culture in his play to depict the individual's individuality. According to *Yayati*, class orientation plays a significant role in

the way that gender and cultural discourses work together to marginalize an individual. The class seems to be a hybrid of gender and cultural constructions that end up serving as the tools of oppression that society uses to regulate and alter the existential space of the person in question. Gender is a societal construct that establishes standards for men and women to adhere to based on their respective sexes. Gender norms are culturally embedded and frequently attempt to oppress and control women in order to benefit men. Most people agree that gender is a cultural construct that is heavily shaped by patriarchal stereotypes.

Gender is another product of culture that permeates every class, redefining the individual's existential space. On the other hand, culture refers to knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, religion, and various other concepts and ideas acquired by a group of people through generations by experiences of an individual or a class.

The play *Yayati* tells the story of two women, Sharmishtha and Devayani, who battle for their rights by opposing cultural conventions and gender discourse, confronting patriarchy and society's bloodshot eyes. This play illustrates how nature and culture collide.

Sharmishtha fights to assert their inherent rights and wants by challenging cultural and gender constraints. This brings up the issue of feminine speech and how it goes against patriarchal cultural and gender norms. Simply put, their class is the source of their conflict. The female character shifts back and forth between the centre and the periphery. People are frequently given an “other” identity due to this interaction between the edge and the centre. The class significantly impacts identifying a person's proper place in society and bringing attention to how they clash with gender stereotypes and other cultural constructs.

Class differences and cultural orientation are at the core of *Yayati*'s conflict, which begins with the princess Sharmishtha's revenge against her friend Devayani, a Brahmin

and King Yayati's queen. Sharmishtha seduces King Yayati and forces him to have a sexual relationship with her; this act on Yayati's part is undoubtedly a violation of marital norms and an act of treachery and discrimination against his Queen Devayani. The conflict stems from class and gender discrimination, with Yayati serving as a man and representing the male narrative. In the modified Indian cultural scenario, gender structures portray the male as superior to the female, grant the former the unlawful and unholy authority to have several sexual partners, and deny the female access to her fundamental rights as a married woman. Patriarchal gender constructions portray women as miserable souls who give up their lives to support men, making them targets for abuse. Sharmishtha uses these gender stereotypes to contest the prejudice against her class as a princess of Rakshasha, a lower social class. However, by doing so, she unintentionally turns Devayani into a victim of the patriarchal gender and cultural norms that Sharmishtha is trying to challenge.

Sharmishtha, while a lower caste member, likewise asserts her right to become queen in the same manner as Devayani does through Dharma. As a result, she unseats Devayani, questions the supremacy of Devayani's class, and opposes patriarchy. Indulging in multiple extramarital affairs is acceptable for Yayati. Thus, Sharmishtha's behaviour of wooing a married guy is also justified. Sharmishtha engages in prohibited romantic relationships and opposes gender norms and patriarchal conventions in order to achieve her social rights. She responds from the periphery and advances toward the centre, taking on the role of Queen Yayati of King Yayati.

However, despite belonging to the affluent class and being Queen of King Yayati Devayani, she suffers from patriarchal gender norms, and her existential space is reduced to a peripheral position within the centre. However, we are unable to hold Sharmishtha accountable for Devayani's misery. Sharmishtha is driven to realize her rights as a woman in a society controlled by men by the network of power. By rejecting the expectations of

chastity and morality placed on women by the structures of Indian culture, Sharmishtha creates her own space as a woman. Women's existential circumstances are linked to class and culture, which supports masculine rhetoric. This act of Sharmishtha is against Indian Hindu tradition; however, if we consider the point of individual right, then Sharmishtha's act stands justified, and King Yayati seems to be doing no wrong in rendering her with her womanly right. Sharmishtha uses the Indian culture, which is primarily dictated by and meant for the male, as an instrument to displace the phallic centre. In that sense, Sharmishtha has achieved her rights as a woman and has obliterated class differences.

“Devyani thought Yayati had violated his Dharma when he married Sharmishtha. She was right in her way. However, if a man is bogged by a woman for Dharma's sake to pour in the seed, he must do so, as a king, a Kshatriya Yayati followed his Dharma in doing so.... Sharmishtha asks from Yayati her ritu right, Ritu embraces, so that her ritu may not be in vain, and in such circumstances, Yayati rightly follows his Dharma and grants her an offspring by practicing the world's highest holy law of their union.” (51-52)

Class is composed of a variety of stereotyped ideas and practices that are closely related to and significantly impacted by the ideas of gender and culture. In Yayati, the class orientations of Sharmishtha and Devayani, which are shaped by ideas of gender and culture, dictate the nature of their struggle. We can comprehend the interaction between gender and culture that pushes the affected person from the centre to the periphery by breaking down the class. Sharmishtha and Devayani have distinct socioeconomic and cultural inclinations in addition to their feminine identities. However, Devayani becomes marginalized within the centre while Sharmishtha moves from the periphery to the centre.

Sharmishtha is shown as a strong woman who challenges patriarchal society's conventions by having a sexual relationship and an unmarried one with Devayani's

husband, King Yayati, in order to assert her rights, while Devayani becomes the victimized woman. Escapists omit Sharmishtha. She is prepared to endure any consequences of her actions as she fights for her rights. In an interview with Meenakshi Raykar regarding his play *Yayati*, Khandekar states,

"Every character in the play tries to seek escape from the consequences of their actions. Even Puru does that. Yayati, Devayani, and Puru all try to avoid facing the consequences. Sharmishtha is the only character who accepts the consequences of her action." (340)

Women were not supposed to walk outside or read back in those days. All she had to do was her housework. Her spouse, kids, and parents were why she had to survive. She gives up all for her loved ones. She was not entitled to the same rights as men. When feminist theory was applied to linguistic and liberty issues in the late 1970s, feminist criticism emerged as a dominating influence in Western literature studies. Feminist literary criticism has evolved and expanded since the early 1980s in various ways, and a worldwide viewpoint currently distinguishes it.

"One group engages in feminist critique, analyzing the portrayal of women characters, revealing the patriarchal ideology concealed in the canon of literature and proving that attitudes and customs upholding systematic masculine dominance are ingrained in it." (Criticism in Indian English Literature,7)

The emergence of feminist criticism was akin to a revolt against conventional literary criticism. The belief that women's writing was subpar was male-centric. Criticism promotes women's equality in political, economic, social, psychological, emotional, and artistic spheres. The feminist reader should identify with female characters and their issues on a thematic level. Elaine Showalter states at the outset of her essay on feminist texts that there are two types of feminist criticism. The first kind focuses on women who read

literature written by men. She refers to the initial form of feminist critique as feminist critique.

The second school of feminist critique focuses on women as authors of texts or women's literature. She has taken up the phrase “gynocritique,” which is French. The portrayals of middle-class women by Kamala Marakandaya, Shashi Deshpande, Bharati Mukherjee, and Anita Nair offer a hazy portrait of Indianness in Indian women. Numerous Indian female writers, like Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Kiran Desai, and Jhumpa Lahiri, have examined female subjectivity and the idea of new women and their fight for identity. Divakaruni is not a feminist in the sense that she only had humanitarian concerns.

Males are superior to females by nature; one dominates while the other is subjugated. It is in their best interests to live under a master's authority. The first obstacle feminists have had to overcome determinism.

Indian-American writer Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni teaches English at the University of Houston. In addition, she co-founded and served as president of a hotline for women of South Asian descent. She enthusiastically engages in volunteer work at Berkeley's Women's Centre, supporting women who have experienced abuse via the organization. Maitri started the organization with the assistance of other friends. She examines the treatment of women by men in *The Palace of Illusions*.

Women should not be treated like slaves in the world; they have equal rights. She is not a toy or something to be used up and then discarded. She has all the emotions and passions that come with being a person, including fear and wrath, joy and sorrow, laughing and tears. In her latest novel, *The Palace of Illusions*, Divakaruni retells the epic tale of the Mahabharata, entwining these teachings. She retells the tale of Draupadi's anguish during Love, marriage, retaliation, and death in *The Palace of Illusions*.

Divakaruni forces Panchaali to describe her triumphs, heartbreaks, hardships, and her distinct feminine perspective on the world and her place in it.

Another type of marriage ritual when women choose their husbands is called swayamvar. Heaven is where marriages are made.

In her essays, Divakaruni has recounted the study of feminism. Feminism is the emotional separation of women from one another that gave rise to the world of women. She highlights a variety of feminism's tenets, such as the fight for sexual autonomy, equal opportunity, and the freedom to choose. Divakaruni's themes revolve around Draupadi's love and her marriage. The illusionist palace. Until her death, Draupadi kept her love for Karnataka a secret, and her brother Dhri did not support her. The sole explanation for Dhri's failure to counsel his sister Draupadi is Karna's low caste. Following her brother's advice, Draupadi conceals her affection and declines to propose to Karna, yet she remains self-sufficient. She is, therefore, entitled to choose her life spouse in Swayamvar. In Swayamvar, she is asked by Lord Krishna and others to marry Arjun. Her name changes to Panchaali after marriage. "All five of you must marry this woman," declares Kunti. (PI,108) Draupadi becomes upset when she hears the term "this woman," and she responds as if I were an anonymous servant. It pained me as much as it enraged me. (PI, 108) Can a lady have five husbands and a married life simultaneously? However, this had occurred in ancient days.

A woman's passion remains unfulfilled, and she must adapt to the circumstances. She occasionally controls her cravings. It illustrates the mindset of an Indian woman willing to follow her mother's legal orders.

The woman emerges as a conquered person. A woman must make it through her life while there are issues in her family. Wives are regarded as movable assets. The

character draws attention to this idea *The Palace of Illusion's* Draupadi. The author talks about honourable women in *The Palace of Illusions*. Virtuous women were transferred directly onto their next birth, when, with any luck, they would reincarnate as males.

However, I reasoned that if lokas existed, respectable women would undoubtedly go to one where men were prohibited to be free of demands from men finally. (PI 155)

Today's women are starting to acknowledge their reliance correctly and are on the verge of overthrowing the concept of femininity, yet they struggle to embody human existence fully. Draupadi's name was changed to Panchaali after her marriage, which means the spirit of the land and a peacemaker.

Draupadi's name was changed to Panchaali after her marriage, which means the spirit of the land and a peacemaker. Panchaali plays five different roles: she is the obstinate daughter-in-law, the regal queen who ruled in a most magnificent castle, the preoccupied mother, Krishna's favourite companion, and the vengeance-obsessed woman. (PI,229)

When Duryodhan goes to see the Palace of Illusions in Indraprastha and carelessly falls, Draupadi laughs at him. She observes him while her buddies loudly make fun of him. She made a grave error. "Let her suffer the consequences of her folly," Kunti reprimands her. (PI, 174). A sense of vengeance is instilled in Duryodhan by loud laughter, caustic remarks, and Duryodhan himself. "It appears that the king's son is also blind," a younger woman exclaimed, uplifted by my grin. (PI,173)

In general, men mistreat women all over the world as enslaved people. Wherever the kauravas succeed with Sakuni's assistance, there is a dice game challenge between the Pandavas and the kauravas. She lets her emotions run wild when she learns of the Pandavas' downfall.

“The wife is the husband's property, no less than a cow or a slave,” (PI 190). The novelist portrays the post-marriage status of an Indian woman, highlighting that she is more than a male's object of desire to be exploited whenever it suits him.

The novelist in *The Palace of Illusions* presents a feminist viewpoint. In front of all the elders, Duryodhan's act of tyranny in court humiliated Draupadi. “I found myself in court, with the gazes of a hundred men piercing my soul. I pulled my tattered saree about me and asked my husband for assistance.” (PI 191) She cries out for help, but nobody comes to her aid. She fervently begs Lord Krishna to deliver her from the awkward situation. Lord Krishna comforts her, demonstrating her virtue and chastity: “If the court represents society, which is insensitive to the shame and humiliation experienced by women, then none can shame you,” he added. Maybe Lord Krishna or the masculine feminist is the one who recognizes women's repression.

Indian women are often calm, silent, and docile by nature, but when injustice occurs in the world, they lose their patience, get enraged as fire, and become as emotional as the goddess Kali. In *Silappadikaran*, Draupadi damns the Kauravas as Kannaki. “I let everyone see my long hair up. I spoke until the day, but now that I understood everything, my voice was calm. I give it a Kauravas blood bath.” (PI 194)

All around the world, women suffer in societies that men rule. In *The Palace of Illusions*, Draupadi is suited for this point. In King Virat's Palace, Draupadi serves as Queen Sudheshna's maid while they are disguised. Yudhisthir is dressed like a Brahmin in a white dhoti, while she is dressed as a maidservant. Nakul and Sahadev are at work in the King's barns. Arjun works as a dancer in the barns owned by the King. Arjun tutors Princess Uttara in dance, while Bheem serves as a cook. Draupadi has completed the tasks assigned by Queen Sudheshna. Keechack, Sudheshna's brother, teases her frequently and

irritates her due to his infatuation with her charm. Draupadi tells Yudhisthir about his torture, saying, “If Keechack touches me again, and I swallow poison” (PI 231). This represents her suffering at the hands of Keechack. Bheem promises to execute him first thing the following day. In this way, her husband, Bheem, solves her problem.

In the world of men, women are viewed as powerful, intoxicating substances. Keechack treats Draupadi as a drunken object in the Palace of Illusion. Whether or not she makes mistakes, the modern-day equivalent of the Draupadi Indian woman suffers. The author presents Draupadi as an Indian woman who is morally upright despite her customary bowing and defers to her husband and mother-in-law. Nevertheless, she can select her spouse and defame the Kauravas for their injustice. The Palace of Illusions sheds light on the female characters and their place in family life, much like the epic Mahabharat. Not only do they tend to their household, but they also serve as messengers of impending conflict. This book describes and intricately weaves women's roles - those of daughter, sister, friend, wife, and mother. The idea of Nal's gambling addiction, which ends both Nal and Yudhisthir's happy lives, serves as an example of how a woman is victimized by a man through Damayanthi's character. Draupadi tells Damayanthi to warn Yudhisthir to be cautious in his life.

The lovely princess Damayanthi, who also chose Nal for her Swayamvar, was adored by Nal, the Nishad King. Goddess Kali was irritated by this development and was tricked by her to give up his dominion. He was forced to give up his property and name in the dice game. Being skilled in the dice game, King Rituparna had Damayanthi and his son Nal riding in his chariot. The King taught Nal all there was to know about the game. In the past, Damayanthi looked after her spouse, Nal, and his daughter. He got the opportunity to meet her husband on this occasion. Nal took back his realm. The story's lesson is that one

should face challenges head-on in life. Yudhisthir said that Damayanthi was not a perfect wife.

But in Draupadi's words, "she was a better woman than I." (PI 201) Women typically never relinquish their self-image, but Draupadi utters this truth. The central topic of the Nal-Damayanthi narrative is jealousy since the goddess Kali is jealous of the amicable bond between her husband and wife, Nal Damayanthi. This event establishes the story-within-a-story nature of *The Palace of Illusion*.

*The Palace of Illusions* by Divakaruni is a broad metaphor for life. Maya is an illusion, and human beings must endure hardships, cruelties, and humiliation to survive. The book is presented in the first person, presenting Panchaali's reflections on her life.

A universe of warriors, gods, and the ever-changing hands of fate is redefined for us by the fiery female character Panchaali. She is drawn into their fight to restore their birthright and stays by their side during years of exile and bloody civil war, including all of India's notable kings. Women now enjoy the same rights as males. She is a modern woman who succeeds in life and is defiant.

In both Indian and Western postcolonial literature and social strata, women have emerged as the central topic of discussion. The patriarchy has controlled women's lives throughout history and culture, albeit in a variety of ways, by imposing standards, beliefs, gender roles, and morality in order to maintain male dominance.

As a postmodern dramatist, he captivates us with the fantastical worlds he creates. He critically examines the thoughts and actions of his female protagonists from a group viewpoint, examining the effects of patriarchy, women's attempts to fulfil their desires, their final crises, and their eventual disappearance from the world. He is a playwright, but

he is also a thinker, an artist, an actor, a poet, and a producer. As a true culture-smith, he wants to shake off cultural amnesia and awaken the modern Indian intelligentsia.

Gender concerns appear to permeate the majority of Khandekar's plays. Khandekar depicts the predicament of a typical Indian woman, constrained by custom and subject to a patriarchal system, in his plays with remarkable dexterity. However, her spirit remains boundless. Khandekar's plays deal extensively with the topic of gender bias in society and the oppression of women by the patriarchal system. Khandekar also shows women who are passionate about feminism and resist the patriarchal society's unfair conventions. Furthermore, direct contact with patriarchy almost always results in the women's demise.

Khandekar appropriated the tale of *Yayati* from the Mahabharata's "Adiparva". *Yayati* retells the old tale of the monarch who, desiring to live forever, does not think twice about stealing his son's youth and energy. Using the myth, Khandekar incorporates intricate details into the Mahabharata storyline. He creates new characters and changes the plot of the mythical tale of *Yayati* in order to enhance its richness of connotations and give it a modern appeal.

In Khandekar's *Yayati*, King Yayati is wed to Devyani, a princess considered "Aryan." Throughout the play, he begins an extramarital affair with Sharmishtha, another princess considered "Anarya," and publicly declares his wish to wed her. Puru is portrayed as the son of another king's spouse in this instance, and like Sharmishtha, he hails from the "Anarya" or "Rakshasa" clan. Khandekar presents two new characters to the storyline: Swarnalata, the maid, and Puru's wife, Chitrlekha. By examining the King's motivations, Khandekar gives modern life and reality new meaning and purpose. *Yayati* learns about the nature of desire in the Mahabharata and concludes that fulfilling one's want does not make it go away. In the play, *Yayati* faces the terrible results of her inability to let go of her passion, Khandekar.

English-language Indian dramatists have gradually gained popularity on a national and worldwide scale. In the 1960s and 1970s, regional drama was transformed into national drama by avant-garde playwrights such as Mohan Rakesh, Vijay Tendulkar, Badal Sircar, and Girish Karnad, V.S. Khandekar in the Hindi, Marathi, Bengali, and Kannada theatres, respectively. Khandekar's debut play, *Yayati*, was released in 1961. Khandekar has tried to connect the ancient epic of the Mahabharata with the contemporary Indian setting and populace. *Yayati*, the monarch doomed to suffer in old age, is the drama's main character. It is solely because of the selfless sacrifice made by his son Pooru that he has been freed from the curse. The Kannada-written play has drawn criticism that is both optimistic and negative. There are four outstanding female characters in the play. With these four traits, Khandekar has outlined women's different temperaments and characteristics. The four female characters are Swarnalatha, Devayani, Sharmistha, and Chitraleka. Devayani is the daughter of Shukracharya, the Rakshasha guru and King Yayati's wife. She was born a Brahmin. Sharmistha, a childhood friend of Devayani and the princess of the Rakshasha clan, later became her slave and a villain in Devayani's life. In Yayati's palace, Swarnalatha is a waggish enslaved person and female servant who works to provide for her basic needs of clothing, food, and shelter.

Devayani is a straightforward woman who aspires to live on her terms. Because Devayani is laid back, she and Sharmistha have a close friendship. Sharmistha's lack of concern for prejudice based on class makes her feel content and appreciative of Devayani. Devayani treats Sharmistha with reciprocal fondness and friendliness. When they reach adulthood, Devayani expresses her pride in being a higher-class woman and her awareness of class in a duel. It is clear:

DEVAYANI: we have exchanged our blouses

SHARMISTHA: I was on the brink of a beautiful dream. You have ruined it.

DEVAYANI: You poor people. You only have to get into a piece of Arya attire. Moreover, you start fantasizing.

Devayani is an introspective woman. She prioritizes her needs and wants. She wants him or her to be in constant anxiety rather than delighted if they are unable to achieve what they have always wanted. Devayani has always liked her father's student, Kuch. She curses him by making him forget the Sanjeevani mantra when she realizes he does not love her. As Devayani rejects him by tossing the wedding chain, she realizes that Yayati has surrendered to Sharmistha's manipulative tactics.

Additionally, she cursed her father's old age of suffering. Devayani is a woman who, at all costs, refuses to let anybody else enjoy her belongings. After defying or betraying her, she does not want that individual to be happy. Devayani never wants to experience problems; she only wants to live a refined, carefree life.

Sharmistha, a member of the Rakshashas clan, is Devayani's faithful buddy. She is significantly wounded and insulted by Devayani's display of class pride. She even attempted to force Devayani into the well in an attempt to kill her. After saving her, Yayati married her to teach her father the Sanjeevani mantra. Sharmistha brags and makes fun of Devayani, saying that Yayati married the latter for selfish reasons rather than because of her supposed beauty. She does this in an attempt to humiliate and abuse Yayati whenever she gets the chance, as she wants to exact revenge on Devayani for the humiliation that will never be forgotten and the punishment of being forced to serve as her slave while holding the title of princess. Even though Sharmi uses derogatory words to belittle and chastise everyone around her, Devayani, being a queen, can comprehend Sharmi's stress and melancholy and does not become enraged with her. By seducing Devayani's husband, Yayati, Sharmi challenges and wins her over. In this way, the former has control of the latter's esteemed life. Sharmi is a vengeful woman who will not be content unless she

strikes her opponent hard and in one manner or another. By harming, demeaning, and dehumanizing Devayani, Sharmi achieves her goal of making her opponent feel the same anguish and suffering that she has. A woman could not bear it if someone took her life. Sharmi caused Devayani pain by committing it against her.

Unlike Devayani, Sharmi shows to be a deserving wife of Yayati despite being a Rakshasha woman. She is adamant about staying at the cursed Yayati's side to help and support him always. Despite the harsh way Sharmi exacts her revenge on Devayani, she is unwavering and unambiguous in all that she does. She treats the older Yayati with kindness. However, following their argument, Devayani, an intelligent woman, feels great sympathy for Sharmi, a childhood friend. She is aware of her emotions and situation. She demonstrates that she is a wonderful friend but cannot comprehend or evaluate the many years of marriage or her son Pooru's existence. She has only given her feelings precedence and has only been thinking about her feelings. She is so angry with Yayati that she forgets about her son, who will visit the palace after marriage.

Swarnalatha is a charming character. In Yayati's palace, she is a wage-less enslaved person. Her skeptical husband, who left her after ten years of marriage, forces her into this situation. It is accurate to define Swarnalatha as a typical Indian woman, one who does not even want her husband to experience mental distress as a result of mistrusting her. Swarna has come to terms with the fact that she is pretending to be adulterous in order to spare her husband from suffering. However, he abandoned her because he could not see past her nobility. Therefore, Swarnalatha's impoverished and shackled life can only be attributed to her husband. Despite being a slave, Swarna can have private conversations with Devayani.

Swarnalatha is highly shocked by Sharmistha's severe actions and her obscene language. To preserve her esteemed life as a queen, Swarnalatha makes every effort to prevent Devayani from leaving the palace. Devayani cautions Swarna against going over her bounds. Despite being abandoned, Swarnalatha possesses the confidence and fortitude to take charge of her life in any circumstance. She, therefore, hopes and expects her queen to share those qualities. Khandekar has demonstrated women's selfless attitude and bravery to confront and survive any problematic circumstance that arises in life in the millennium era via the character of Swarnalatha.

Pooru's recently married wife, Chitraleka, arrived at the palace full of youthful hopes and desires. She is sensible, funny, bold, fearless, and practical. She does not feel sorry for her husband Pooru, the prince, when she discovers he lost the archery match. Instead, she embraces him. She desires to conduct herself in the palace as a Kshatriya bride, abiding by the customs and laws of the community. Chitraleka seemed to have bonded intimately with Swarnalatha from the first day she was in the palace. Because Chitraleka loves tales so much, she asks Swarna to tell her some stories about herself. After that, Chitraleka asks Swarna to tell a story about herself so that she can learn a lot about herself from the viewpoint of a third party. Because it will be beneficial for her to blend in with the Kshatriya household and avoid any mistakes or faults on her part.

Chitraleka is a youthful, stunning woman who exudes perfection. According to Pooru, he enjoys his wife. "That is what I liked about her," he remarks. She is wise, kind, and energetic but also sincere and grounded. Chitraleka is horrified to find Queen Devayani's marriage chain lying there. She does not want to respond or demonstrate that she knows of Devayani's wrath or the curse of Shukracharya. Chitraleka is reluctant to respond as she ought to act courageously, like a Bharata family woman. However, she is

secretly terrified and wants to forget about it, so she begs Swarna to narrate a story. Swarna tells the tale of Pooru, who wholly and valiantly gave up his youth to his father, an elderly and crumbling man who was cursed and now has aged himself. The revelation shocked Chitraleka as she stood there still. She should not suppress her tears, says Swarnalatha, as it will harm her health. The young lady, Chitra, makes an effort to appear fearless and prepared to welcome her spouse in any situation.

She makes every effort to maintain her composure. She scrambled in disbelief when she saw Pooru's pale face in the arati light and ordered him to stay out of her way and out of the bedroom. "Please do not come near me," she screams. "Leave. Please refrain from touching me."

Chitraleka's bold talk with Yayati demonstrates her ability to be a logical, sensual, and rebellious woman. Chitraleka has become very irritated when she considers the disregard shown to her. Because neither Yayati nor Pooru cared to talk to or counsel Chitraleka before sacrificing Pooru's youth to the aged and cursed Yayati. Therefore, Chitraleka's disdain shows how little value women place on them and how indifferent and callous they are—stifled by the energy of patriarchal assessments of the decision-class belief system, according to Jaganamohana Chari. Whatever the case, she is better capable of removing herself from the hegemonic environments and generally more free. Although she may feel comfortable accepting the dominant circumstances, she prefers the more devious approach of facing reality.

There are two distinct perceptions of womanhood in society. She is compared to Kali, the goddess Durga, and "Shakthi." However, she is viewed as a sexual object or as property that should be owned and passed down from one generation to the next, and she is

compelled to be a dependent under the male-defined and ruled social tradition and culture. These are the conventional representations of women in the community.

When Yayati asks Chitra to continue following Pooru's footsteps by the marital vows, Chitra responds as follows:

YAYATI: ... to walk in the path marked by his footprints whether home or into wildness....

CHITRALEKA: Or into the funeral pyre?... I did not push him to the edge of the pyre, sir. You did.

Yayati advises Chitraleka to overcome all these issues and lead her life with Pooru. He says: "Rise above the trivialities, Chitralekha. Be superhuman." Chitraleka, in her utmost painful situation, expresses:

CHITRALEKA: This morning, I was the mistress of all I yearned for. However, within half a day, within half an hour- half a century, I drove across my bed and crushed the dreams on my pillow.

Chitraleka's incisive, forceful words have gradually caused Yayati to realize his error. After asking Yayati and Pooru all of her questions filled with anguish, wrath, and rage, Chitraleka reveals that the reason she asked these intense and degrading questions is that she is an independent, educated woman who is well aware of the social status quo in today's world.

In any case, Chitraleka realizes that in that dire circumstance, there is nothing else for her to do other than accept Pooru. However, as a young lady, she decides to take her own life rather than live a broken and dull existence with her withered husband by ingesting poison.

Yayati, who was self-centered, acknowledged his error and returned his son's youth to himself after suffering a severe and lasting blow from Chitrlekha's death. He has since left the palace with Sharmistha's unpardonable transgression. Prem Sagar and R. Varshney note: The play continues to be an existentialist dilemma, elucidating in concrete words how an alienated and rootless individual turns vengeful. This turns it into a psychological analysis of people who receive the harshest punishment without any fault of their own.

However, most of the time, men are positioned as dominant masculine entities that women have been attempting to subvert. In this instance, women are the subjects of the analysis, and men are the opposite. The men are things to be altered and refined. Men can, therefore, take action to promote gender equality, according to documented studies on men's support for feminist causes. For the sake of feminism, men can respond by acting to alter the current circumstances. It is a truth that men continue to occupy the majority of positions of authority and are often the ones to commit acts of violence against women and girls in various nations where they are still regarded as inferior to men.

Women's lives and rights have changed since the feminist movement began. Men's traditional roles as the head of the home, powerful, and fearless are beginning to be questioned, negatively affecting their lives. When they told, many male men-husbands, for example, feel that they would turn aggressive like their dads. In this instance, the males had control over the ladies, but they sensed something was off, which did not fill them with happiness. They ought to respond to this situation as a result.

In addition, Jardin and Smith clarify that feminists should reject the idea that men are inherently aggressive, sexist, and oppressive towards women simply because they are biologically male. This viewpoint demonstrates the very point that society makes.

Many authors, feminists, and intellectuals have been drawn to the idea of masculine feminism as a topic for discussion. Nevertheless, even though various writings and articles

on the Internet, particularly on news- and feminist-based websites, make it apparent that male feminism is a problem, the writer was unable to locate any research that specifically addresses this topic.

The writer wants to turn this topic into a scholarly conversation because of its rarity and distinctiveness. Literary works frequently lead the charge in arguing for the oppression of women by male authority. Conversely, the literary work also offers a wealth of information regarding men's participation in the feminist movement for women.

In Chitra Lekha Banerjee Divakaruni's 2008 novel *The Palace of Illusions*, the author observes the well-known Hindu character Krishna as having a strong feminist bent. This is evident in his admiration for women, particularly Panchaali, also known as Draupadi, the main character, and in the novel's innovative interpretation of women's roles in India's patriarchal society. Because of his status as a monarch, a god, an avatar, the husband of multiple wives, and the world's leader who just so happens to be a man Krishna may be portrayed as one of the peaks of patriarchal symbols, which is likely to spark controversy among other feminists. Therefore, using Panchaali as the central character, this study aims to uncover Krishna's male feminism, in which he advocates for gender equality.

Indian-American feminist author whose works mainly focus on the experiences of Indian women in light of their cultural heritage. Krishna is portrayed in *The Palace of Illusions* as a man of honor and trust. Krishna is revered and favored by Panchaali as a significant character. Furthermore, it is well known that Panchaali, also known as Draupadi, is a feminist discussion source in Indian mythology in the Mahabharata epic saga, wherein she is recognized for practicing polyandry.

Panchaali is still viewed as a victim of men's power despite her polyandrous status because she is no different from a cleaner or prostitute who works for multiple men. Krishna, views Panchaali's role in life as a woman in a different light. Krishna does not minimize or

treat her differently from the male characters in the Mahabharata tale.

Regarding feminism, it is undeniable that the definition of feminist literary theory cannot be generalized. It is reasonable to say that feminism studies how literature supports and contradicts women's social, political, economic, and psychological oppression. Feminism's variations reflect how women see and pursue their interests, particularly political ones.

Though the main focus of feminism or feminism criticism is to struggle against discrimination and equal rights of men and women since the subordinate status of women is defined irrationally by society, it is also because there are significant differences in the standard of living for women in different countries.

It is pretty appropriate from a feminist perspective for a man to be a feminist. The Gender inequality and feminism in these two plays portray the women's situation in the male-dominated society and how they struggle and overcome obstacles. Modern writers imagined facing problems with a brave and bold character.

## CHAPTER-IV

### CONCLUSION

To create a clear view, female authors tackle the holes and aporias in mythological narratives in their works. This essay examines how Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni rewrites the story of Draupadi in her 2008 book *The Palace of Illusions*, revealing more profound and more significant facets of Draupadi's mind that are hidden beneath the sweeping grandeur of the epic Mahabharat. My claim is that by reimagining the Draupadi story and reimagining her in the previously mentioned work, we are forced to question and reframe the traditional and archetypal models of femininity. This allows us to resist the status quo while simultaneously opening the door to the possibility of new models of femininity supported by a resistant consciousness.

It is common knowledge that tradition, which serves as a storehouse of historical memory, is the root cause of women's subjugation and undervaluation. Regardless of their wants and goals, women are required to learn and adhere to specific patriarchal standards as a continuance of history.

A glimpse of myth is mythical in and of itself. With every year that goes by, the phrase itself undergoes a multitude of implications and interpretations across all disciplines. The saying "Life can only be understood backward, but it must be lived forward" adds nuance to the study of mythology because myths can be distorted or factual accounts of actual or intuitive events. However, we have little control over the influence myth has on the human mind. The stories are interwoven with society, so people are prone to follow specific scriptures or even assertions arising from old sayings or stories. The human psyche is a fundamental component of mythic stories. While it can be argued to be a utopian concept, it teaches values, culture, and tradition; occasionally, it torments

dogmatism, stereotypes, and illiberalism; it inspires and sometimes shatters because transformation, dissemination, and infusion produce the ideal blend of myth with life.

This essay focuses on the Mahabharata, a great poetry from ancient India. Many combinations of context, language, social, political, and emotional inspection can be used to delve further into the grand epic. No matter what language a document is translated into, there will always be different ways to understand it. Because the material is suitable for bold reading, recounting, telling, and interpreting. The rewriting of mythical depictions by numerous ancient and contemporary authors in various genres, including literature, dramas, graphic novels, and short tales, illuminate readers, who subsequently become transformed and kindled within.

As a result, the portrayal of women in the Mahabharata offers a stimulating analysis that sheds light on their virtues and shortcomings and influences the path of events. Whether a person identifies as a woman, a man, or a saint, it all comes down to their self-realization as an essential, existing element.

Women's thoughts are intricate, and you must be a woman first to comprehend their minds' complexity fully. I mention this because I frequently heard from my male friends that it was hard for them to comprehend what their female friends were thinking. As a result, I came to the idea that to understand women, one must first be a woman, meaning that men cannot and will never comprehend the intricate workings of a woman's mind. I have already had many people disagree with my first paragraph.

This essay aims to examine how Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's 2008 , *The Palace of Illusions* retells the myth of Draupadi as the woman chapter, of the Mahabharat. An iconic representation of the pain and humiliation a woman experiences in a patriarchal society is Draupadi. Therefore, recounting her experience in an autobiographical style offers women's personal lives and suffering a voice and representation.

In my view, reimagining Draupadi's story and reimagining her in the work above forces us to rethink and challenge conventional and archetypal notions of femininity in order to both demonstrate the possibility of new models of femininity supported by a resistant consciousness and to offer resistance to the society.

The novel's autobiographical narrative style is what initially attracts readers' attention. Divakaruni notes in the play's Author's Note that although the epic Mahabharat had strong, multifaceted female characters, in the end, their positions remained secondary to those of their fathers and husbands, brothers and sons. So, she was hoping for the following:

“If I ever wrote a book . . . I would place the women at the forefront of the action. I would uncover the invisible s t o r y between the lines of the men’s exploits. Better still, I would have one of them tell it herself, with all her joys and doubts, her struggles and triumphs, her heartbreaks, her achievements, the unique female way she sees her world and her place in it. Moreover, who could be better suited for this than Panchaali?” (PI,16)

The play affirms that a woman's story in a patriarchal world is typically one of love and betrayal, oppression and exploitation, humiliation and denial of rights. This section of the essay is appropriately titled "Autobiography of Draupadis."

Thus, autobiography grants the narrator agency in the creative self-representation genre. Divakaruni's book gives voice to the unsaid and taboo aspects of a woman's life, such as Draupadi's secret yearning for Karna, her choice for Arjun over the other four spouses, and her love for Krishna tinged with devotion. Draupadi understands the power of narrative. "A story is a slippery thing," she says. That could be why it was different every time it was told. Or is that the fundamental quality of all tales and the source of their

influence? ( PI,15). She also understands the bias in the stories told by men. From separate points of view, Dhri and Draupadi narrate the narrative of Dronacharya and Drupad. Since the book is Draupadi's autobiography, it would be appropriate to begin with her birth.

The tale opens with an implied depiction of women's servitude as an essential component of the societal structure right after Draupadi and her brother were born, their father extended his arms exclusively to the son. It describes how unloved and unwanted a girl child is even by a monarch. Therefore, the first thing that bothers me is that a woman's status is unaffected by her class. In Draupadi's life, the point receives more support, which I will discuss in the next section of this essay. While playing the roles of a devout wife and dutiful daughter-in-law, Draupadi is in the tradition of the classical feminine as envisioned by Vyasa and other Vedic philosophers. She sacrifices, protects her husbands when necessary, and cares for her family and hundreds of guests, even in their forest retreat. Despite this, Draupadi is sophisticated, knowledgeable, and skilled in the fine arts and warfare, and, like a modern woman, she can protest and demand justice.

The numerous "inauspicious" misfortunes that Draupadi faces hinder her from becoming a revered figure for Hindu girls who grow up hearing about heroic women from the legends, Sita being the most significant example. Irawati Karve thoroughly analyzes the distinctions between Sita and Draupadi, elevating the latter. She claims that while Draupadi was desired, Sita was just found. Rama gained status via Sita's marriage to him, and Rama gained a lovely and loving wife. However, Karve believes Draupadi is more substantial than Sita because she gave the Pandavas a wife, a kingdom, and rank. She was also the source of their togetherness and solidarity because she was the wife of all five brothers.

Even after her complete humiliation at the Kuru court, she asked Dhritarashtra for the blessing of releasing her husbands, saving them from destruction. Sita and Draupadi were forced to endure a protracted period of vanavasa, or dwelling in the jungle. In contrast to Draupadi's exile, Sita's was free from animosity and hardship. Before being taken by Ravana, the demon king, she spent more than twelve years living in a perpetual state of bliss. She experienced no hardships from the outside world, such as remembered slights, longing for missing family members, or large gatherings of guests ( PI 82). Sita's tale was terrific, beautiful, and transcendental, whereas Draupadi's problems were relatable. It makes modern women more like Draupadi than Sita.

Finally, I would go back to the starting point. Similar to Pratibha Ray's Yajnaseni, my goal is to eliminate the difference between "beginning" and "finis," as "finis" suggests another beginning. I have hope for this fresh beginning since it is a preamble to the other Draupadi's story of empowerment and resistance rather than the beginning of their agony. I want to end the essay with the optimistic optimism that one day, women will not be the queens of the palace of illusions, that happiness will not pass by in a flash, and that women will no longer be limited to being men's moms and muses-rather, "we have our work cut out for us" ( PI 25).

I think Draupadi, played by Divakaruni, conveys the same lesson. Her tale fills in the blanks, breaks, silences, portions left out, and forgotten in men's stories and affirms the idea that a woman is the only one who can honestly tell a woman's story and enable her to govern her world.

Notably, Draupadi came to the conclusion that stories mattered. Even as a young child, I knew they needed to be understood and saved for the future to prevent us from repeatedly making the same mistakes (PI 270). For Draupadi and the Divakaruni, storytelling is essential since it not only contributes to preserving the community's

collective memory but also gives the author and her character a voice and helps them overcome their indoctrination to remain silent. Additionally, because “stories are told for the teaching,” it tends to impress and empower the readers.

Many dramatists who wrote in Hindi, English, and other regional languages during the post-independence era helped to form a fresh beginning for Indian play. Among the most prominent playwrights of that era were Girish Karnad, Mohan Rakesh, Badal Sircar, Mahesh Dattani, V.S.Khandekar and Vijay Tendulkar. Writers felt compelled to reconcile the conflicting impulses Indians in the newly independent nation faced in the middle of the 20th century. Playwrights doubted their loyalty to the original culture because the 200 years of British rule had permanently altered the Indian psyche and expressive forms.

At that time, many contemporary dramatists, such as Girish Karnad, were moved to decolonize Indian theatre and take it back to its historical roots in classical and folk theatre. This prompted a search for fresh dramatic tropes and expressive techniques to convey the quandary the playwrights felt as they attempted to reject the influence of literary and cultural traditions from the West and Europe.

Because of his many accomplishments, Khandekar is among the most versatile playwrights of the modern era. His generation of playwrights was a part of a literary and political movement looking for its connections to Indian history and culture, which had been damaged by the British Empire's protracted colonial control. This led to the creation of the historical settings for plays by Khandekar *Yayati*, *Sukhacha Shodh*, and *Rikama Devhara*. These even influenced his debut play, *Yayati*. *The Mahabharata*, according to Rajagopalachari. Khandekar dramas, some of which are based on myths and tales interpreted from a modern viewpoint, illustrate the human quest for perfection. The *Yakshagana* folk plays of Karnataka that he watched as a child and the *Natak Companies* that came to his home hamlet of *Sirsi* had a profound impact on Khandekar. He was also

strongly influenced by the plays and stage performances of plays by Shakespeare, Bertolt Brecht, and Henrik Ibsen.

Many concepts and facets of Khandekar's plays, such as thematic threads, character development, structure, usage of mythology, history, religious and political themes, etc., have been studied by critics and scholars. However, the dramatic style in his plays was a largely untapped element that had yet to receive a thorough analysis.

A thorough analysis of Khandekar's major plays demonstrates the deft and skillful application of various dramatic devices that improve the plays' narrative, performative elements, and character development. The choice and use of suitable dramatic devices disclose the worldview and opinions of the dramatist towards the subject under investigation.

When Draupadi is subjugated to polyandry and becomes the wife of all five Pandava brothers, the situation is considerably different from polygamy—her opinion is not asked, exposing the paradoxes of a patriarchal culture. Draupadi, in Divakaruni, laments, "My situation was very different from that of a man with several wives," as she interprets it. Unlike him, I was at the mercy of who and when I slept. Because Draupadi, a significant figure in the Mahabharata, narrates the whole book, *The Palace of Illusions* lends itself to a feminist interpretation. It is not just a description of her personal life but also offers her perspective on numerous occurrences in which she emerges as a powerful character. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni has posed fresh queries concerning the ancient Mahabharata text. Because she has provided us with a female perspective on the epic's key events, the novel is unique and a significant feminist work that sheds light on Panchali's identity.

Although Divakaruni has not tried anything novel that was not already covered in Vyasa's Mahabharata, the epic has been updated to appeal to readers in the present era. In order to

make this epic effective, no new characters have been added. Draupadi advocates for more than just women's external equality. She rejects the notion that women should pray for their dads, husbands, brothers, or sons who are serving in the armed forces. Because Karna and herself had unusual births, she discovered several similarities. She yearned for him but mistreated Karna in front of the kings when she was under the influence of Krishna's words. Afterward, she felt regret for what she had done. She began her voyage with Arjuna by putting the garland around his neck. As a result, she faced many more difficulties, but she overcame them all with incredible bravery.

Divakaruni breathed new life into the epic Mahabharata by giving Panchali a voice in *The Palace of Illusions*. With stories that have been updated, altered, and retold from a female perspective, the book is feminist literature. This book focuses on the inner lives of women. Draupadi has yet to receive the respect she deserves. She is recognized as Kritiya, the one who brings disaster to her tribe, and many people think that her obstinate deeds ended the Third Age of Man. However, Divakaruni departs from these readings to offer a fresh perspective on Panchali.

A long way has been traveled by feminism, as evidenced by Divakaruni's masterwork *The Palace of Illusions*, which offers fresh perspectives on the events of the Mahabharata. Feminism was well underway by the late 1960s as a theory in literature evaluation. It attempts to describe women's experiences as depicted in various kinds of literature. It questions the subjugation, domination, patriarchal attitudes, and male interpretations in literature. In addition, it challenges traditional and stereotypical male ideas about women and their role in society.

The restrictions based on gender that were placed on Draupadi in her father's palace began with her name, Draupadi, which is a patriarchy-affirmed term meaning Drupad's daughter. The fiery character Panchali provides a figurative perspective on the

world ruled by men. The life of Draupadi, a well-known female heroine from ancient India, is nearly a mirror of the contemporary independent woman who finds her voice. There are notable variations between the versions by Chitra Banerjee and the renowned seer Vyasa. Draupadi is the most enigmatic and magnificent because of her perseverance, fortitude, spirit of resistance to injustice, and diversity. Panchali's life persists in being distinct from any other female she is acquainted with. She falls in love with Karna, who cannot attend Panchali's swayamvar, rather than her future spouse. Panchali faced unique life challenges after being married to the five Pandava brothers. The predictions are the center of her existence. To challenge the patriarchal structure, Divakaruni presents several concerns and attempts to understand them from a female perspective.

As a result, Draupadi's perspective is presented in *The Palace of Illusions*. She expresses her desire to find true love throughout her life, her disgust at her paternal house where she was sacrificed in the name of swayamvara which was, in actuality, nothing more than a political contract, her complete helplessness when she was forced to marry each of the Pandava brothers where nobody questioned her actual desires her jealousy at her husband's taking other wives, her resentment towards Kunti, and her sincere longings of unspoken love towards Karna. She asks questions about the humiliation she went through at Hastinapur when Yudhistir lost everything in a dice game, including Panchali. Panchali begs Krishna to uphold her honor after realizing that none of her husbands stand up for her.

Through this Analysis of the brave characters of women in a patriarchal society. we see how they struggle in a male-dominated society. However, our modern writers like V.S. Khanedkar and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni exposed the characters to a brave exit in a very modern way.



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