

Fossil Psyche of Amba and Draupadi in Chitra Banerjee's *The Palace of****Illusion***

Mini.G
Reg.No. 19223154012021
S.T.Hindu College, Nagercoil.
Affiliated to Manonmaniam
Sundaranar University,

Dr.S.Ambika,
Assistant Professor,
S.T.Hindu College, Nagercoil,
Affiliated to Manonmaniam
Sundaranar University, Tirunelveli.

Tirunelveli.

Email ID: gminichris 2015@gmail.com,

Abstract

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is an Indo-American writer whose main concern is to write novels in a mixture of cultural and mythical traditional ways. She presents her works with mysterious narration in a world that engages the human's curious mind to discover the unknown world of myth. The psychological myth teaches, shapes, and guides human life. Like many women writers, Chitra Banerjee creates memorable characters in her novels, and through the character's narration, women can understand how they are enacted in their difficult situations.

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Women have different organizing principles around which their psyches are structured. In Greek mythology, Psyche is a beautiful girl loved by Cupid, who has become the personification of the soul. In psychology, the psyche is the centre of thought, feeling, and motivation, consciously and unconsciously directing the body's reactions to its social and physical environment. Psychology is the sum or characteristics of the mental states and processes of a person in a field of activity. Psyche comes from the Greek word 'psyche', which means "the soul, mind, spirit, or invisible animating entity that occupies the physical beauty". People have their psyches in their behaviour.

The past plays tricks and conditions of present responses. Floating around in the psyche of each one is all the fossil identities. By entering into a fruitful dialogue with the past one becomes able to revive the fossils that are buried within oneself and are part of one's ancestors. Awareness of the ambivalence of fossils enables one to visualize new possibilities and construct a new scale along which one can attempt to progress. To illustrate this, Chitra Banerjee uses mythical characters in her novels. Amba, Ambika, and Ambalika are the three princesses of Kasi. Their father arranged a swayamvar and invited all the kings of the land so that they could choose their husbands. Amba wishes to marry King Salva, who has wooed her for a year. Amba is waiting to put her garland around the neck of King Salva. Bheeshma intervenes in the Swayamvar hall like a plague. He forced the three princesses into his chariot and took them to Hastiapur, to marry them to his youngest brother Vichitravirya. When Amba recovers with breath and courage she tells Bheeshma that she is in love with King Salva and is not willing to marry Bheeshma's brother. Vichitravirya says, "A woman who has embraced another in her heart is not chaste. I do not wish to marry (48). In Patriarchal society, a woman's chaste is considered not only the body but also the inner mind. Vichitravirya tries to prove that he wishes to marry a pure girl with a pure soul.

Amba is happy to join King Salva but he also rejects her. Amba questions "If someone grasps my hand against my will, how does that make me his? I'm the one who decides to whom I belong" (48). Amba is rebelled against the wishes of others who wants to live her own choice. After hearing the words of Amba, Salva forced Amba to return to Bheeshma. Amba returns to Hastinapur and insists Bheeshma marry her and says that her happiness is crumbled into dust because of him, "Marry me so that at least my honour can be saved" (48). Bheeshma replies to her that in his youth he promised his father and his stepmother Satyavati's father he would never marry, who has remained celibate all through his life. He cannot go back on his word. Wilson

Harris suggests that the institutions and models of the body begin to conceal from the body politic itself a growth of catastrophe to which there has ceased to be a 'creative' or 'digestive response'. Then there seems to be no possibility of change except through familiar violence or revenge patterns of self-sufficient feedback. Amba turns to violence after listening to the words of Bheeshma.

Psyche is a beautiful maiden enamoured of Cupid, the God of love who visits her every night but departs before sunrise, not having let her see him. But the curiosity gets the better of her, and one night she lifts her lamp to catch a glimpse of her lover: a drop of hot oil falls on his shoulder and he awakes and flees. The abandoned Psyche wanders far and wide in search of Cupid. Psyche's state of mind is equal to Princess Amba, who was once deeply loved by King Salva but he abandons her without her mistake. Abandoned and shamed, Amba has gone from court to court, seeking a champion who would battle Bheeshma, but all are afraid of him. Amba's heart is full of vengeance towards Bheeshma who is the reason for her miserable situation.

Psychoanalysts are hearing and retelling histories. The patient comes with a story of his or her own life. As any society changes its social structure, and changes in economic base, artefacts are re-created within it. Literary forms arise as one of how changing subjects create themselves as subjects within a new social context. The novel *The Palace of Illusions* is a prime example of the way women start to create themselves as a category: women. This tradition has been attacked by critics such as Julia Kristeva as "the discourse of the hysteric". Hysteria is the women's simultaneous acceptance and refusal of the organization of sexuality under patriarchal capitalism. It is simultaneously what a woman can do both to be feminine and to refuse femininity, within patriarchal discourse.

Patriarchy is a social system that gives power and control to men rather than women. Divakaruni narrates a lot of patriarchal oppression to the female character in the novel *The Palace of Illusions*. Amba goes to the Himalayas in her despair and performs austerities so that the Gods would help her. Years pass, and her youth falls away. The Gods are reluctant to help her because Bheeshma is the son of the sacred river. Finally, the child – God Kartikeya has taken pity and appears before her with a garland and says to Amba that if she could find someone to wear the garland can defeat Bheeshma.

Amba's hopes are rekindled, and she goes to the kings with the everlasting garland. But the kings prove that they are cowards, and despite God's assurance, they are still afraid. Even King Drupad known as the champion of the day dares to accept it. In disgust, Amba has flung the garland on Drupad's palace gate and decides to die. The humour of the Gods is cruel; Amba is reborn as Drupad's daughter. The moment she sets eyes on the garland- that never fades her past returns to her. Amba is determined to do on her own what no man dares to do for her. As Michelle Rosaldo states, '...woman's place in human social life is not in any direct sense a product of the things she does but the meaning her activities acquire through concrete social interactions' (400). Male violence is theorized and interpreted within specific societies, Sisterhood cannot be assumed on the basis based on gender; it must be formed in concrete, historical and political practice and analysis. Draupadi was also born as a daughter of Drupad because of the yagna performed by him. She is married to the five Pandavas and lives happily as a queen, but her psyche is wounded by the trial of disrobing the court of Duryodhana.

In defining female culture, historians distinguish between the roles, activities, tastes, and behaviours prescribed and considered appropriate for women and those activities, behaviours, and functions gendered out of women's lives. Through the character of Amba, Divakaruni presents the female roles behaviours and functions garnered out of her life. Amba says to

Panchali, “little sister: wait for a man to avenge your honor, and you’ll wait forever” (49). Amba advises Panchali that, take steps to revenge on the Kauravas for their cruel activities. Fulfilment is a ceaseless task of the psyche; identity is part of an infinite movement with the past and the future.

Panchali is the daughter of Drupad born from the fire ceremony. She has come with Dhristadyumna, Druapad welcomes Dhristadyumna with happiness but does not show such enthusiasm for the birth of Panchali. She accompanies Dhristadyumna in his studies and archery but the tutor of Dhristadyumna does not like Draupadi accompanying him. The tutor tries to discourage Draupadi from attending Driti’s lessons. King Drupad has hesitated at the thought of Draupadi studying with her brother but Krishna, the well-wisher of Panchal insists that the prophesy of Draupadi’s birth requires to get an education beyond what women are usually given and the king has to provide education to Draupadi. The tutor declares that women are the root of all the world’s troubles. A Kshatriya woman’s highest purpose in life is to support the warriors in life; her father, brother, husband, and sons.

Levi-Strauss says in *Raw and the Cooked*, “The study of myths raises a methodological problem, in that it cannot be carried out according to the Cartesian principle of breaking down the difficulty in to as many parts as may be necessary finding the solution”(8). Amba is a mythical character who has a difficult psyche to make her own decisions. Panchali who has heard her prophesy that she is going to change the course of history and confused psyche how she is. MacKinnon says, “Feminism affirms woman’s point of view by revealing, criticizing and examining its impossibility”. The mythical characters Amba and Panchali in Divakaruni’s novel *The Palace of Illusions* show their braveness in their activities to the other characters in the novel. Their mind is shattered by the harsh critical words of their father, tutors, and even the

well-wishers. Paradigm, perfection and possibility are three terms to bear in mind when approaching myth. Jean-Pierre Vernant explains:

The concept of myth that we have inherited from the Greeks belongs, by reason of its origins and history, to tradition of thought peculiar to Western civilization in which myth is defined in terms of what is not myth, being opposed to reality (myth is fiction) and, secondly, to what is rational (myth is absurd). If the development of the study of myth in modern times is to be understood it must be considered in the context of this line of thought and tradition. (86)

Divakaruni presents the mythical characters of Amba and Panchali with careful narrative technique. Many studies of myth show mythical narratives are effective changes created for the people. The narrator also vividly resents psychic changes while they have suffered from others especially Amba from Bheeshma and Drupad. Panchali is suffered from Drupad, her father, Duryodhana and Keechak. The psychic change of Amba and Draupadi gives them the ability to respond to their life with their own independent decision.

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