

Spinning The Yarn: Interweaving Myth And Narrative in *The Palace of Illusions*

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Abstract: This paper intends to focus on the use of narrative techniques in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *The Palace of Illusions*, both from a feminist and a general perspective. In the course of discussing narrative techniques, it also proposes to analyse the use of mythopoeia in the narrative discourse and what Draupadi and the master narrator Divakaruni wish to achieve through their mythopoeic narrative.

Keywords: Mythopoeia, Feminist narratology, Mahabharata, Draupadi.

“...a story gains power with retelling.”

- The Palace of Illusions (p. 20)

*“All the world loves a story and wants to know how it ends”
(Garvie 25).*

Edie Garvie is undoubtedly right in saying so. But it would be worthwhile to modify this further by saying all the world loves a story and want to know how it is narrated because its success largely depends on the dexterity of the narrator. This paper emphasises the same and intends to explore narrative patterns in Divakaruni's novel, *The Palace of Illusions*. Generally, a study of narrative would largely conform to the structuralist approach as a number of concepts pertaining to narratology were generated by the structuralists. But this paper wishes to widen its scope and analyze *The Palace of Illusions* from the view point of feminist narratology. The very success of mythopoeia or myth-making in the novel is mainly due to the powerful narrator, the Pandava queen Draupadi. Since feminists affirm that there is a wide difference between a male narrative voice and a female narrative voice, this paper intends to focus on the use of narrative techniques both from a feminist and a general perspective. In the course of discussing narrative techniques, it also proposes to analyse the use of mythopoeia in the narrative discourse and what Draupadi and the master narrator Divakaruni wish to achieve through their mythopoeic narrative. Mythopoeia does not necessarily mean designing or creating a new myth. It also refers to the modification of existing myths in order to highlight a particular perspective. As Diane Purkiss aptly remarks,

For feminists, the rewriting of myths denotes ... the struggle to alter gender asymmetries agreed upon for centuries by myth's disseminators. When feminists envisage that struggle, they often think of the rewriting or the reinterpretation of individual stories: for example, by changing the focus of the narrative from a male character to a female character. (441)

Before exploring Divakaruni's novel from a general narratological perspective, it is necessary to understand the significance of the narratological approach propagated by the structuralists. Generally, literary theory, as we all know, focuses mainly on any of these four aspects: the text or artefact, the writer or the artisan, the cosmos or the universe, and the narratee or the reader. The artefact or the text per se was the pivotal point of structuralist criticism and structuralist critics attempted to explore the text with utmost objectivity with a view to render unbiased views. The best way to illustrate this would be to cite Gerald Prince:

Narratology examines what narratives have in common – narratively speaking – and what allows them to be narratively different. It is therefore so much concerned with the history of particular novels or tales, or with their meaning, or with their esthetic value, but rather with the traits which distinguish narrative from other signifying systems and with the modalities of these traits. (4-5)

Feminists however disagreed with this purely objective stance of the structuralists. Susan Lanser's seminal article, "Toward a Feminist Narratology" (1986) clearly indicates this. "It would be safe, I think, to say that no contemporary theory, whether Anglo-American or continental, has exerted so little influence on feminist literary criticism or has been so summarily dismissed as formalist-structuralist narratology" (Lanser 675). She further says that while narratology is objective and semiotic, feminist literary criticism is subjective and mimetic. Therefore, feminist narratology must evolve by reconciling the mimetic and the semiotic. Here again, there hardly seems to be any dividing line between feminist narratology and feminist literary criticism because any literary criticism seeks to explore the contextual and the linguistic aspects of a text. This idea is also reflected in Ruth E. Page's book, *Literary and Linguistic Approaches to Feminist Narratology*. Page clearly affirms that feminist narratology is not a radically different genre or paradigm. Instead, it only makes the whole concept flexible by adding contextual and gender analysis to the already existing universal concepts of the structuralists (174-175). Therefore, to make things simpler, this

paper aims at analysing the novel from a structuralist and a feminist perspective. The novel is homodiegetic or is narrated in the first person. Genette and other structuralists strongly affirmed that the homodiegetic narrative is more powerful than its heterodiegetic (third person narrative) counterpart. This is true as far as *The Palace of Illusions* is concerned. Draupadi's narrative voice is so powerful that the other characters merely serve as a foil to her. It is not surprising that the narrative is homodiegetic or narrated in the first person since it is narrated by one of the most powerful characters for whom the Great War is fought – the Queen of the Pandavas, Draupadi. *The Mahabharata* extols her as one of the *pativratas* or chaste women and emphasises the fact that her curse came true mainly due to her chaste and religious nature. According to the myths, she was “a devoted wife, chaste, religious minded and adhering to duty” (Bhawalkar 142). But a reader with such a mindset towards Draupadi is in for a shock if h/she comes across Divakaruni's novel for here we have no meek or docile *pativrata* ready to serve her husbands and remain a faithful servant. We are faced with a powerful woman as dynamic and volatile as the fire she emanated from with a vengeance as destructive as the element itself. “The sacrificial altar is my mother. Yajnasena is my father. So I am Yajnaseni. Yajnaseni! Panchal princess, Panchali! Drupad's daughter, Draupadi!” (Yajnaseni 5) Through Draupadi's eyes, we see the Pandavas and the Kauravas shorn of their heroic image. They are depicted more as ordinary human beings with their usual thirst for power, glory, and reputation. Here Divakaruni weaves her mythopoeic version so subtly that one is able to perceive the difference between the androcentric myths and the gynocentric narrative of Draupadi. Yudhisthir, whom the world extols as the paragon of truth and virtuousness, is seen as an individual with his weakness for gambling. Yet, Draupadi, towards the end, does acknowledge the fact that poets and writers who sang his praise weren't lying after all. “Righteousness was his nature. He couldn't give it up any more than a tiger can give up its stripes” (*The Palace of Illusions* 349). Like his brothers, he never expresses his feelings directly. Draupadi understands him only towards the end when, in spite of knowing that Draupadi loved Karna more than the Pandavas, he tells Bheem that she loved Arjun more than the others. Arjun, in spite of wanting to have Draupadi all for himself, is forced to share her with her other brothers because, to him, a woman's feelings hardly matter. It is adherence to his mother's word and the political motive behind her moves that matter the most. Nakul and Sahadev are soft-spoken and gentle, no doubt, but are guarded in their actions and do not disclose any of their matters even to Draupadi because, to them, she is still an outsider. The only person who

makes her feel at ease is Bheem because he treats her as his equal and loves her more than the others do. He helps her with all her chores when they are in the forest and is ready to do anything to ease her pain and to bring happiness to her face. But, in an androcentric world, he too is helpless and is bound by *Kshatriya dharma* and is forced to do what his mother and society expect of him. But, of all the Pandavas, his love for Draupadi is selfless and is not governed by any ego. Even when Yudhisthir tells him that she loved Arjuna the most, he dismisses it saying Arjuna was handsome and valorous and therefore it wasn't surprising on her part. Draupadi's relationship with Krishna is strange yet unique. Her love for him is unlike the one she harbours in her heart for Karna or the one she learns to foster for Arjuna or Bheem. Neither is it the sisterly love that she fosters for Dhri throughout the novel. It is a feeling of oneness that she experiences in the company of Krishna. That is why she feels comforted when he calls her *sakhi*. "He called me by a special name, the female form of his own: Krishnaa. It had two meanings: *the dark one, or the one whose attraction cannot be resisted*. Even after he returned to Dwaraka, the notes of his flue lingered in the walls of our cheerless quarters – my only comfort..." (The Palace of Illusions 12).

It is this oneness that makes Draupadi or Krishnaa look up to Krishna whenever there is a problem be it to save her self-respect or to save her husbands from the curse of an angry sage like Durvasa. It is only towards the end that Draupadi reserves the answer to the question that plagues the reader: What is the relationship between Krishna and Krishnaa? Although the narrative is primarily homodiegetic with Draupadi taking the lead as the narrator, the narrator behind the scenes Divakaruni intersperses the homodiegetic narrative of Draupadi with the heterodiegetic or third person narratives of Dhristadhyumna and Dhai Ma. But unlike Draupadi, the two of them turn out to be unreliable narrators. Wayne Booth, who coined the term *unreliable narrator*, discusses characteristics of such narrators at length in *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (211-243). As Dan Shen opines, "As a significant feature of homodiegetic narration, unreliability has gradually become a key concept in narratological investigations" (Par. 8). Since, unreliability is a concept that forms the object of active research in narratology, it is necessary to discuss this at length. James Phelan identifies six types of unreliability that are grouped into two classes – misinterpreting, misreporting, misevaluating come under the first; underinterpreting, underreporting, and underevaluating come under the second. According to Phelan, the contrast between the "mis" group and the "under" group is the contrast between being wrong and being insufficient (34-37; 49-53). In the case of Dhri, he does not lack

knowledge. He only wants to deliberately narrate the Drona episode in such a way that Drupad's point is justified. "‘You're too partial,’ I complained. ‘You're always trying to make him look good, pretending he wasn't at fault.’ He shrugged. ‘He is our father, after all. He deserves some partiality!’ ‘I'm taking back the story,’ I said” (The Palace of Illusions 16). Dhai Ma's knowledge of the world is limited and this is seen in her narration, which is characterised by her views and opinions that are steeped in the androcentric tradition although at a personal level, she willingly changes her attitude for the sake of Draupadi. For a very short while, one gets to see Sikhandi as a homodiegetic narrator with a certain sense of reliability.

Per Krogh Hansen discusses four types of unreliability in his article, 'Reconsidering the Unreliable Narrator.' They are intranarrational, internarrational, intertextual, and extratextual (241-244). *Intranarrational unreliability* occurs when the narrative or discourse has only one narrator and when that narrator displays unreliability. *Internarrational unreliability* is when a narrator's unreliable discourse is set in contrast against the discourse of the other narrator/s. *Intertextual unreliability* occurs when the narrator is naïve or mad and when this is revealed through the words of the narrator himself/herself. *Extratextual unreliability* is largely dependent on the knowledge that the narratee or reader brings to the text. In many narratives, the reader's knowledge of the story world enables him/her to label a narrator unreliable. Dhri and Dhai Ma clearly exhibit Internarrational unreliability. Draupadi, on the other hand, is absolutely candid in expressing her jealousy, anger, prejudice, and her other follies. For instance, she admits trying to have an upper hand over Subhadra, one of Arjuna's wives and Krishna's sister. "‘Surprisingly, Subhadra became my favourite. On her visits, she put up with my petty tyrannies without complaint – bringing me water, combing my hair, even fanning me on hot afternoons – until I was shamed into desisting” (The Palace of Illusions 153). Similarly, in the case of Hidimba, she accepts that she was envious of her individuality although she came from the *rakshasa* tribe and didn't own any of the riches that Draupadi possessed. But during the war when Hidimba sends her only son Ghatotkacha to fight alongside his father, Draupadi realizes how mistaken she has been in judging Hidimba. "‘I admired her and felt humbled by her sacrifice” (The Palace of Illusions 247). The *swayamvar* episode swings between homodiegesis and heterodiegesis (the narration of writers and poets about the incident in future) thereby bringing out the stark contrast between the omniscient narrator and the unreliable narrator, between myth and mythopoeia. Myth extols the beauty of Draupadi and the archery of the disguised Arjuna, but in Divakaruni's

mythopoeia, Draupadi's heart skips a beat when she sees Karna. But however powerful a woman she wishes to be, she proves a mere puppet in the hands of Fate when it comes to macro issues. Much against her will, she questions his lineage and Karna, whose parenthood is unknown, withdraws shamefacedly leaving Draupadi to suffer the pangs of guilt. But here and there, Draupadi also displays signs of unreliability especially while referring to Karna. Although he was the one who ordered Duryodhana to have her clothes removed, Draupadi is unable to foster the same kind of hatred against him. "... (I couldn't bear to imagine Karna's corpse. Instead, I pictured him kneeling at my feet, head bent in humiliation. When I tried to decide on a suitable punishment for him, however, my imagination failed me again)" (The Palace of Illusions 199-200). The sentences within parenthesis clearly describe the innermost feelings of Draupadi, which she even hesitates to narrate. Since the very term *narratology* was coined by Todorov, it would be worthwhile to consider his analysis of narrative. In *The Poetics of Prose* Todorov rightly states, "An 'ideal' narrative begins with a stable situation which is disturbed by some power or force. There results a state of disequilibrium; by the action of a force directed in the opposite direction, the equilibrium is re-established; the second equilibrium is similar to the first, but the two are never identical" (213). But one ought to bear in mind the fact that the whole process of equilibrium-disruption-restoration is a cyclic and never-ending process.

The Palace of Illusions illustrates this cyclic process. The narrative begins with the restoration of equilibrium the *yajna* and the appearance of Dhristadhyumna and Draupadi from the sacrificial fire), which was disrupted by Drona's defeat of Drupad prior to which the latter ruled contentedly. From the time of Draupadi's birth, it is a different kind of equilibrium that prevails – an atmosphere that seems quiet and congenial to a general onlooker, but one that is pervaded by tension and apprehension to those related to Draupadi. The very first opinion one forms about Draupadi is a talkative young woman whose arrival was 'unwanted' and therefore, 'unwelcome.' Her maid Dhairya Ma's narrative clearly testifies this. But stronger than that is the voice of the omniscient narrator Draupadi who recalls what really happened when she stepped from the fire.

A gaunt, glittering man walked toward my brother and me as we stood hand in hand. He held out his arms – but for my brother alone. It was only my brother he meant to raise up to show to his people. Only my brother he wanted. Dhairya wouldn't let go of me, however, nor I of him. We clung together so stubbornly that my father

was forced to pick us both up together. (The Palace of Illusions 6)

This is in contrast to the description in *The Mahabharata* where Drupad and his people rejoice at the birth of the Dhristadyumna and Draupadi. Even Pratibha Ray's *Yajnaseni* adheres to Vyasa's version. The narrator here draws our attention to the gender discrimination that has always pervaded society, more so the ancient society of India. It is worthwhile to recall the views of Toril Moi regarding female, feminine, and feminist (Feminist, Female, Feminine 117-124). According to her, the concept of female is biological, that of feminine and feminist, sociological and political. If we apply these concepts to the novel, we are sure to gain more insights into the workings of Draupadi's narrative. The very fact that Draupadi is female and not male makes her unwelcome and unsought for, in the sacrificial gathering. Drupad thinks that only men are born to alter history and not women. That is why he welcomes Dhristadhyumna openly. He puts up with Draupadi only when he hears the voice of prophesy that she will change history and be instrumental in the destruction of the Kurus. But, as mentioned earlier, the other women in the palace are scandalised by this and decide to ostracize her subtly and at times, openly. For instance, when Draupadi wishes to socialise with the other queens of Drupad and their children, she is in for a shock. When the king's youngest queen Sulochana's little daughter touches Draupadi, her mother slaps the child so hard that Draupadi feels the pain. But being more sensible than the others, she understands the situation.

Already, the world I knew was splitting in two. The larger part, by far, consisted of people like Sulochana who couldn't see beyond their little lives of mundane joys and sorrows. They suspected anything that fell outside the boundaries of custom. They could, perhaps, accept men like Dhri who were divinely born, to fulfil a destiny shaped by the gods. But women? Especially women who might bring change, the way a storm brings the destruction of lightning? All my life, they would shun me. (The Palace of Illusions 32)

Draupadi however is not the first to be shunned this way. When Sikhandi, Drupad's daughter, wears the garland and is reminded of her past life as Amba, he sends her away to the forest because if a woman wishes to take revenge, it is an ill omen and may affect the family. But an entirely different set of rules operate for men in society. Drupad wastes himself away to skin and bones to have the sacrifice done so that he can avenge Drona's insult to him. The novel is yet another illustration of the fact that the 'female' in society is always the subservient and the underprivileged one in contrast to the privileged male. Draupadi's brother whom she

fondly refers to as Dhri, does allow her some freedom in private and is extremely fond of her. But, in public, he makes sure that she confines to socio-cultural mores and behaves in a lady-like manner. Here again, the conflict is between sex and gender. As Eckert and Ginot rightly point out, "Sex is a biological categorization based primarily on reproductive potential, whereas gender is the social elaboration of biological sex. Gender builds on biological sex, it exaggerates biological difference and, indeed, it carries biological difference into domains in which it is completely irrelevant" (10). As far as the feminine is concerned, it pertains to beauty and to qualities. The narrator mentions how it is more a matter of the mind than that of the body. According to the Chaitrata Parva states that when she emerged from the fire, Draupadi's body "... gave out fragrance like that of a blue lotus, perceivable from a distance of full two miles. Her beauty was such that she had no equal on earth" (http://www.bharatadesam.com/spiritual/mahabharata/mahabharata_01170.php). But, the narrator chooses to do away with the far-fetched hyperboles of myths and accepts that she was very ordinary looking and always remained unrecognised due to her dark complexion. However, Krishna's words that "...others see you as you see yourself" (The Palace of Illusions 9) makes a deep impact in her mind and she strongly believes that she is indeed beautiful as Sulochana, the youngest and prettiest of Drupad's wives. Her feeling is so strong that it does make her 'look beautiful' and everybody compliments her for her good looks. "Overnight, I who had been shunned for my strangeness became a celebrated beauty" (The Palace of Illusions 10). The narrator/protagonist is not interested in what is 'dictated' as feminine virtues for women and as a result, shows no interest in learning any of the arts like painting, embroidery and the like. Instead, she wishes to learn diplomacy and other arts that men are expected to learn. As far as Draupadi is concerned, the 'feminine' nature is merely a mask that she is forced to adorn for the sake of society. Beneath the mask, she is every inch a strong woman who waits for her chance to assert herself.

Dhri's tutor was of the opinion that virtuous women were sent directly into their next birth, where, if they were lucky, they reincarnated as men. But I thought that if *lokas* existed at all, good women would surely go to one where men were not allowed so that they could be finally free of male demands. (The Palace of Illusions 155)

As far as *The Palace of Illusions* is concerned, the concept of the feminine and the feminist are interlinked since the social and the political always go hand in hand. Draupadi's feminine nature is merely a social mask that conceals her volatile and dynamic inner self. When Kunti first asks her to

make brinjal curry, Draupadi sees this as her first test that her mother-in-law has set for her. Language, in the novel, becomes a powerful tool of subversion in bringing out the powerful and affirmative nature of feminine and feminist expression. Beneath Kunti's seemingly sense of concern, Draupadi discovers her sarcasm and anger towards her for trying to take her sons away from her. Draupadi uses the very same language as her tool to win her way through.

“Respected mother,” I said bowing, “being so much younger, I know my culinary skills can't replace yours. But it's my duty to relive you of your burdens whenever possible. Please let me do so. If your sons are displeased with the food, I'll gladly accept the blame.” I turned to the pot and covered it with a battered dish and focused on what the sorceress had taught me...I closed my eyes and imagined a rich paste of poppy seed and cinnamon coating the pieces. I didn't open them until the aroma filled my nostrils. When at meal time the brothers praised the brinjal for its distinctive taste and asked for more, I remained in the kitchen and let Kunti serve her sons. I kept my face carefully impassive, my eyes on the ground. But she and I both knew that I'd won the first round. (The Palace of Illusions 110-111)

This is the beginning of the war between two strong and hard-willed women. These women, who are like poles, repel throughout the novel but here and there the unbiased Draupadi does give her mother-in-law her due when she praises her iron-will and determination and sympathises with her pitiable condition in the case of Karna. The initial disruption of the Todorovian equilibrium where Draupadi marries the five Pandavas is restored when they move to their palace of illusions Indra Prastha. Draupadi is at home in her palace of illusions because that is where she is respected as a woman and can exert her will over her husbands whenever necessary. Kunti also realizes this when she pays a visit to the palace.

Kunti was a wise woman, wiser than me, if the truth were told. In those first days, her shrewd eyes examined much more than the curiosities in the palace. She saw that in this place, I was mistress. Where my husbands once relied on her, they now depended on me...the Palace of Illusions was my domain, and she accepted this....(The Palace of Illusions 150)

Draupadi, like the Aristotelian hero, has her own hamartia – pride. It is this pride that prevents her from apologising to Duryodhan when he falls into the lake and one of her maids teases him. This very pride prevents her from seeing reason in Kunti's words when she asks her not to go to Hastinapur. But more than pride, it is her infatuation for Karna that

spurs her on to undertake the journey to Hastinapur with her husbands and that leads to her humiliation in the royal court. Through the central narrator Draupadi, Divakaruni questions the whole concept of Dharma when Yudhisthir pawns his kingdom, his brothers, and even his wife in the game of dice. How can a person who does so be considered an epitome of virtuousness? Are the Puranas right when they state that the wife is the property of the husband? The gamble becomes a powerful issue that questions the rights of women and which attacks the double standards prevalent in society. A.S. Altekar raises these issues in *The Position of Women in Hindu Civilization*,

Did husbands...carry out their conjugal duties as devotedly as their spouses? Did they live up to the high ideal laid down for them? Did they make a serious effort to carry out the obligations laid down in marriage vows? It is not easy to answer these questions...But it has to be admitted that the percentage of those who honoured the marriage vows more by breach than by the observance was much greater in the case of husbands... (103)

When Dussasan makes an attempt to disrobe her, she focuses on Krishna who conveys the message that no one can shame us unless we allow them to. The revelation works wonders for Draupadi. "Let them stare at my nakedness, I thought. Why should I care? They and not I should be ashamed for shattering the bounds of decency. Was that not miracle enough?" (The Palace of Illusions 193)

The incident at the Hastinapur court marks a turning point in Draupadi's life. When she realizes that she has lost her palace of illusions that symbolises her individuality as a woman and when her self-respect is challenged, she curses the Kaurava race to be destroyed in the great war that would take place. But along with the curse and the frustration comes the *anagnorisis* or revelation about her husbands.

Their notions of honor, of loyalty toward each other, of reputation were more important to them than my suffering...A woman doesn't think that way. I would have thrown myself forward to save them if it had been in my power that day... The choice they made in the moment of my need changed something in our relationship. I no longer depended on them so completely in the future. (The Palace of Illusions 195)

The feminist in Draupadi gets the better of the masked feminine in her. She manoeuvres every political move from then onwards, prodding her husbands towards war and vengeance and reminding them of the insults that the Kurus had heaped on them, subtly leaving Karna out of the whole picture. During the war, she goes to a secluded place from where she is able to behold the various events. She then realizes how the rivalry

between women is shallow and meaningless during such a crisis and that there is a common bonding of love and concern that they all share in common. She begins to view Kunti in a new light, empathising with her condition of being entangled between her love and affection for Karna and her sense of commitment and duty towards her other sons.

The petty resentments I'd felt for Subhadra and Hidimba and the animosity I'd harboured toward Kunti were no longer appropriate. Who we were as individuals was receding to the background. What mattered more was that our dear ones were going into danger to fight beside each other. From now on, we should be united in our anxiety, in being torn between pride and concern, in our prayers for the safety of them all. (The Palace of Illusions 248)

Draupadi, who had thirsted for revenge, sees gory death in its macabre form when she beholds her dear and near die a terrible death. But, what is more ghastly is the situation after death when she sees thousands of widows trying to kill themselves on the funeral pyres or beating their breasts and cursing her husbands. Finally, when Yudhishthir or his brothers are unable to manage the situation, it is Draupadi who speaks to the women and makes them come to terms with reality. Divakaruni weaves another of her mythopoeic spells when Draupadi and the other women of the royal household of Hastinapur join hands together for the welfare of the womenfolk in Hastinapur and Indra Prastha. Draupadi sheds off her pride and seeks the help of Gandhari, Kunti, Subhadra, and Uttara. They all join together in trying to help the destitute women who are harassed socially and sexually by greedy and lusty relatives. Draupadi realizes how she has been led by appearances most of the time when Uttara rises to the occasion and donates her wedding jewellery for the cause of the women and when she is able to perceive the heart of the problem quicker than the others. Draupadi and the other women learn from Uttara and start donating their jewellery and other precious articles letting go of things that are not as important as the sufferings of people.

All this allowed us to set up the destitute in homes of their own and buy merchandise to start businesses for them. In time the women's market became a flourishing centre of trade in the city, for the new proprietors took pride in their goods and were canny but fair in their dealings. We trained those who showed interest in learning to become tutors for girls and young boys. And even in the later years of Pariksit's reign...Hastinapur remained one of the few cities where women could go about their daily lives without harassment. (The Palace of Illusions).

In other words, these women become godmothers to the women of

Hastinapur by relieving them of their miseries. In fact, their actions are more like those of the goddesses in myths and legends. Diesel aptly remarks, “By emulating the behaviour of the Goddesses, women are able to act in a way that brings them a sense of independence, confidence, and worth, which challenges patriarchal control and has the potential to bring healing” (11). The narrative takes a philosophical twist towards the end when the Pandavas decide to go on their final journey and Draupadi is resolute on following them to Mount Meru. Even in this case, Draupadi decides to follow her husbands mainly because she cannot tolerate the idea of old age and gossip in the palace of Hastinapur. She prefers instant death on her journey to a mundane living in the palace. In the course of the journey, she is the first to fall since she loved Karna more. But even as she lies on the snow dying, Krishna comes to her side as ever and teaches her the true mystery of her life and how she was sent to earth with a purpose. Pradip Bhattacharya in “Panchaali’ as she is called when she appears from the altar, is pregnant with double meaning: ‘of Panchala’ and ‘puppet.’” (21). Krishna’s words that he is the instrument and she is the doer echoes the same idea and reminisces Harindranath Chattopadhyay’s poem, “Shaper Shaped”:

In days gone by I used to be
A potter who would feel
His fingers mould the yielding clay
To patterns on his wheel;
But now, through wisdom lately won,
That pride has gone away,
I have ceased to be the potter
And have learned to be the clay (1-8)

So, finally, the narratee understands the relationship between Krishna and Draupadi. In the Heaven that Draupadi enters, the various radiant forms that she sees are sexless and therefore unlike earth, there is no gender discrimination. This, Draupadi, finally realizes, is the home where she actually belongs as she clutches Karna’s hands with love. “Above us our palace waits, the only one I’ve ever needed. Its walls are space, its floor is sky, its center everywhere” (The Palace of Illusions 360). In short, Divakaruni’s mythmaking not only looks at the famous Indian epic from a woman’s perspective but also addresses issues of gender and humanitarianism. Her mythopoeia makes it clear that myths are not mere stories of strange births and miracles. What one needs to do is read between lines to grapple with what has not been mentioned at the social, economic, and the political level. This is precisely what Divakaruni does through Draupadi’s zero focalization as an omniscient homodiegetic narrator.

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