

Theme And Technique In The Chitra Banerjee's Novel The Palace Of Illusions

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Abstract:

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is one of the most representative voices on women issues. Her novel exhibits the intersection of female subjectivity and their identities in the society. As a diasporic writer she also locates her concentration on the lives of immigrant's women. Her major work that concerns with the women empowerment and struggles for their aim are *The Mistress of Spices*, *Queen of Dreams*, *Arranged Marriage*, *Sister of My Heart* and *The Vine of Desire*.

The Palace of Illusions was novel published in 2008. This novel is based on epic Mahabharata which includes great hero. But Chitra Banerjee presents the novel by women perspective. These women characters were remain over-showed. This novel includes several themes which raises women identity. She uses poetic and simple language. The technique of the novel creates Paradoxical and Ironical situations.

Key words- Education, Marriage, Family, Gender identity.

Introduction:-

Techniques- Simile Metaphor, Personification, Paradoxical and Ironical situation.

The novel, *The Palace of Illusion* was penned by Chitra Banerjee Diwakaruni and published in 2008. The novel is based on the epic, *Mahabhart*a. In the novel, the novelist explores Draupadi's point of view. Draupadi is the strong woman character and the novelist also throws light on the other women characters of the novel.

Draupadi was the daughter of king Drupad, ruler of Panchal. Draupadi and her brother were born from the fire. She feels that her father gave special attention to her brother, and don't love her as much as she wants. She finds her father's nature to be biased for her. she felt that her father gave more importance to her brother because he was a boy and the future king of Panchal.

Chitra Banerjee's heroines are usually unsatisfied with their birth land, and this time again Draupadi is unsatisfied with her father's love. Draupadi promises herself that her palace will not be like her father's palace. Her father's palace is like a shawl of iron in her shoulders. Here are the lines which shows that Draupadi don't like her father's nature of partiality towards her and her palace.

My years in my father house would have been unbearable had I not had my brother. I never forget feel of his hand clutching mine, his refusal to abandon me. Perhaps he and I would have been close even otherwise; segregated as we were in the palace wing our father had set asides for us. Divakaruni page 07

The second theme that Chitra Banerjee raises in her works is the problem of dark skin. In this novel, her character, Draupadi raises this problem fiercely. For her

glowing skin, she has to spend hours on the skin whitening process. Her skin is scrubbed by numerous exfoliates. Krishna also had dark skin, but he never chose to go for such follies situations.

Then the character Draupadi raises another factor of the problems faced by woman in men's world. They had to follow rules driven by men. A women's interest and inclinations were never considered. Here, the same thing happens even in the case of Draupadi. She has been given lessons in singing, playing, dancing and music. Also, other types of lessons like drawing, painting, sewing, decorating the ground with age old auspicious design for different festivals were also given to her. But, Draupadi's mind and heart were concerned for something else. She was better in solving riddles, answering witty question and writing beautiful poetry as her brother Dhristadyumna. The education that Dhristadyumna was given, Draupadi wanted it for herself. For her, her education was not as Dhristadyumna got. She felt that the world of women tightening its noose around her. Learning sixty four arts that noble women should know, that were painful for Draupadi. For Draupadi her father king Draupad neglected her education. Draupadi begged for equal education for Dhristadyumna her brother and for her. Theme of education is one of vital problem of now in twentieth century also.

The other theme of the novel is the problem of women identity. Dhai Ma teaches Draupadi how to walk, talk properly, the rules of communication with others, how to sit in the company of men, to do the same things when other women are present, to

show respect to other important queens of kings. She is also taught how to intimate with other wives of her own husband. Draupadi disagrees with this statement; she had argument with Dhai Ma. Dhai Ma present real picture of king and queens lives. She presents the reality that king have many wives and the truth that men always break the promises they make before marriage. She also said that if Draupadi had to marry off like Panchal's other princess, she won't even get a chance to talk to her husband before he beds her. Draupadi had sharp contradiction to Dhai Ma's words.

Chitra Banerjee here presents the separations of power in the society. This trendition continues even today. The theme of gender equality in education, marriage evoke by the novelist. Draupadi, a woman born from fire her way to draw her life. She never thinks normally. But in other words Draupadi thinks simple and normal just like other men and women.

The problem of gender inequality is the major theme of the novelist. Either the woman is passive or she doesn't exist. Novelist here forcefully raises the issues that in our philosophy or culture, woman are always on the side of passivity.

In the chapter Scar Chitra Banerjee raises the problem of caste system. Karna, a great warrior but because he belongs to lower caste, he had to face humiliation from all the kings of Bharat. Apart from kings he was hurt by Draupadi. Draupadi also gave pain to Karna, when she stopped him and asked him who were his parents, Though Karna walks away.

But her inner heart was fascinated by Karna. She likes Karna. She always noticed him. But as a powerful princess of her kingdom, she can't express her thoughts in front of anyone. She also has to follow the rules of society. So here novelist raises another factor in the novel, Freedom of marriage. Draupadi even had no power to marry a person she likes most. When her marriage took place she thoughts for Karna. Karna image was in her mind. But she has to give up her desire pursue the duty of princess.

Whenever she was in pain she remembers Karna portrait the picture of inner heart. When inside me a voice whispered, Karna would never have you down like this, I did not lust it. Divakaruni . 109

In twentieth century it may be crime. Many crimes take place because of cast difference. Many cases of honor killing step out. The demon of honor killing not gone or society doesn't accept outer caste marriage. Even today society thought it as illegal marriage. This social evil was still present in many. Page 109

Here Chitra Banerjee presents another aspect of the novel. The novel presents relation of woman towards another woman. As in our twentieth century we expect man to respect women, her feelings and wants honor and respect but what about the woman relationship towards other woman? If we go through the novel we find humiliated nature of women's also. In the beginning the novel we are first introduced to the character of Draupadi and Dhai Ma. Dhai Ma was an important

character of the novel. She cares about Draupadi. She has the responsibility of teaching Draupadi, how to present herself as a princess and act or live her life accordingly. According to Dhairya Ma woman have no power to do any argument to her father or her husband, it was bad nature. . Every time Dhairya Ma has strong argument with Draupadi. The other woman character of the novel was Sulochna, she was the favorite wife of her father. Draupadi had keen desire to meet Sulochna. But after meeting her, Draupadi changed her mind set towards Sulochna. Now for Draupadi, Sulochna was lady who has nothing to do for own conscious. She strictly follows the social evil rules of queen just like a common woman and follows all rules which are included upon them. Then she meets another powerful woman, who was known for her dignified and powerful lifestyle. Kunti was one of the icon characters of the novel. There were thoughts about Kunti in Draupadi's mind.

From the stories I'd heard about Kunti, I'd admired her. I'd imagined that if she did indeed become my mother-in-law, she would love me as a daughter. Now I saw how naïve I'd been. A woman like her would never tolerate anyone who might lure her sons away. (Divakaruni.108)

After interacting with Kunti, Draupadi's illusions about Kunti's identity were disillusioned. At bed time all the brothers' sleep one besides the other. Kunti placed her mat at their head. Whereas, Draupadi had to place her mat near the feet of brothers. It feels Draupadi uncomfortable. It's a question to her honor.'Kunti also insist

Draupadi to marry rest of four brothers. This was an extremely heavy load for on Panchali shoulder, to live as a wife of five men.

From her birth to last day of life Draupadi was not satisfy by anyone of decision taken for her. She was a strong character who raises question in every shades of life. She doesn't follow easily. Chitra Banerjee here raises lot more thoughts and feelings of women which she dreamed in her parents' house, but in his husband house she thought more than that. Chitra Banerjee presents wonderfully. So it should not be say that only particularly take place in lower class, lower caste. It present in elite class also.

Talking about novel its technique were precedence over compulsion. She uses simple and poetic languages which arrange each word carefully. Her novels every word unfolds the different layers of her heroine life. She uses paradox in her epoch. There are numbers of figure of speeches uses by novelist. Talking about figure of speech novelist also uses lots of paradoxical and ironical situation.

The simile has used in every part of novel. With the help of this figure of speech she create real situation of her character.

Example, *"He was thin as the point of a sword, and hard like it, too.* (Divakaruni 02)

Here Dhairya detailed about the condition of king Draupad at the time of the Draupadi's birth. Draupadi's father was so much busy in his prayer that he was as

thin as the point of sword. When Draupadi's brother evoke from fire Dhairya Ma define the elegance of her brother face. Example- His face shone like god gold. Here Dhristadyumna face was compare to gold. There are lots of similes in the novel. The other beautiful example of simile was when Draupadi ordered Dhairya Ma for wonderful dress. "Dress me in a sea blue silk light as foam".

He stood as a flame, his head held high and his eyes shining like agates. A submerged memory half rose in the king's mind, and sank again. (Divakaruni10)

Elaborating the Drona personality Chitralekha Banerjee uses simile to define extraordinary personality. Drona standing situation is compares to flames. His eyes were like agates. Chitra Banerjee novel have rhythmic words. The novel is in poetic tone. There lucid tone shows Chitra Banerjee adequate writing of novel. Each word of the novel considered as unfolds thoughts of heroine, in different layers of the Mahabharat through her thoughts ideas conversation and night dreams. Here in chapter milk there is fine example of Chitra Banerjee playful poetic words: - "The lamp flickered, threatening to abandon us to darkness, from time to time, a moth dived into a flame with a sizzling sound, a brief burning smell." (Divakaruni.14)

There is repetition of phrases many times in the novel. This repetition makes the novel poetic and lucid. Here is the example of the repetition.

Each went his way, the prince to learn the ways of the court, the Brahmin study further with Parasuram. (Divakaruni.15)

Chitra Banerjee has personified of non-living things. It was full-fledged in her novel. “One in an innocent time.” Here time is defined as innocent person. Again the word time have different shades in the novel.

Time is the great eraser, both of sorrow and of joy” (Divakaruni. 17)

In chapter four cosmology, Chitra Banerjee at the beginning of lines uses hyperbolic words which define the kingdom of lord Vishnu.

There in the center of the seven world people by celestial begins, lines the milky ocean on which Vishnu sleeps walking only when the earth grows overburdened with unrighteousness. Below it stretches our earth, which would tumble into the great void if it were not supported upon the hoods of Sesha, the thousand heads serpent. (Page 22)

In this paragraph novelist create the image of lord Vishnu kingdom. The kingdom of lord Vishnu located in the middle of seven worlds. The other image of Sesha, a snake that has thousand heads.

The novel was filled with paradoxical situation. Talking about the character Dronacharya a great teacher of his period, chitra Banerjee describes the situations when learned man was unable to fulfill his family needs.

Drona was rich in his arts of war, he married to virtuous lady and a beautiful son. But all his learning does not fulfill her son hunger, one day when his little son asks for milk. Instead of milk her wife she starts weeping.

Another periodical essence in the novel is Draupadi condition. She was the princess of Panchal. But she never understands why she not prefaces to her father or other family member. She has to live with her Dhairya Ma. No other royal member came to meet her except her brother Dhritadyumna. She never got love as daughter of her father. None ever her father ever wants to meet and share their love to this princess. She always feels lonely. This was paradox that being princess, she not knows everything about her family member, or her people.

Then novelist uses ironical situation to create real image of situation. Before marriage Draupadi thought she would marry to Arjun and have good life, but all the circumstances changes. After marriage Draupadi has to live in forest for some days. Secondly she has not only live as Arjun wife. But also has to manage as the wife of rest Pandavas. It is greatest ironical situation of the novel.

The second ironical situation of the novel was Drona condition. For Drona his friendship with king Panchal was precious. These words show how much he respects his friendship.

Dear Drupad your friendship means more to me than all riches in treasury of the gods. I will hold your words in my heart forever. (Divakaruni. 15)

But things changed when Drona was in front of Drupad. Drupad says “how can a learned man such as you claim to be speaking such folly? Do you know that friendship is possible only between equal? Go to the treasury door and gatekeeper will see to it that you get enough alms to live a comfortable life. (Page 17). These words change the whole feeling of Drona. The friendship changes in enemy. No doubt one belongs to which age, but money has important role in society.

Chitra Banerjee novel *the palace of Illusions* exhibits several themes related to the Third Age of Man and Woman. She emerges the importance of women characters in the myth or philosophy of epic Mahabharata. The techniques she uses in the novel makes novel poetic but sometimes it feels the festival of figure of speeches. The paragraph she present uses to makes novel paradoxical.

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