

Moral Development: A Study in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *The Palace of Illusions*

Dr. S.M.Nandini

Research Supervisor

PG & Research Department of English
Sourashtra College, Madurai- 4.

Mrs. S.Masimalar

Ph.D. Scholar, Assistant Professor

Department of English, P.M.Thevar College
Usilampatti- 625532.

Abstract

Moral Development is a process of learning to distinguish between right and wrong, proper and improper. Throughout history, the topic of moral development has been taken up by many theologians, scientists, and philosophers. Moral development is described by Lawrence Kohlberg in his theory 'Levels of Moral Reasoning' and Carol Gilligan in his theory, 'Stages of the Ethics of Care'. This paper analyses Carol Gilligan's Moral Development theory to explore Draupadi's process of transformation in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *The Palace of Illusions* (2008). Divakaruni portrays Draupadi as a strong willed and determined character from Mahabharata.

Keywords: Moral Development, Transformation, Determined.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni explores her own world and society through her writings. She creates a universal appeal of togetherness in the course of her novels. By presenting women characters as the protagonist of each novel she has elucidated the dilemma of women and the way they tolerate and adapt themselves in a society. *The Palace of Illusions* (2008) by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is the product of her childhood memories, which is the cause of her love for myths and spiritual writings. A woman with five husbands? is a big issue today also. But in Hindu Mythology, a woman Panchaali with five husbands who are the Hero's of that age, the Pancha Pandavas have been worshiped for many centuries and at present too. Panchaali is considered as the women of 'purity'. Divakaruni presents the story through Panchaali's narration.

The novel traces Panchaali's life, beginning from her magical birth from fire along with her brother, her life as the daughter of a great king, her swayamvar, her balancing act as a wife of five husband, right up to her death. This paper scrutinizes the character of Draupadi in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *The Palace of Illusions* (2008) and evaluates how she develops herself in the course of her life based on Carol Gilligan's moral development theory.

Carol Gilligan is a psychologist best known for her innovative views on the development of women's morality and sense of life, which she detailed in her book *In a Different Voice* (1982).

Gilligan developed her ideas in response to the theory of moral development proposed by Lawrence Kohlberg, which she criticized for ignoring women's perspectives.

. She describes three stages of moral reasoning. In the stage of Pre-conventional morality, the goal is for individual survival. Women are motivated to act by what is best for themselves. For growth to occur there must be a transition from selfishness to responsibility to others. Thus Draupadi in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *The Palace of Illusions* (2008) undergoes a transition.

As a fire-born princess, she is so inquisitive to know about her birth story from Daima. Draupadi is fond of asking Daima to tell the same story, particularly for the prediction that she will change the course of history. Because this prediction is the only thing to pull through herself from the initial rejection of her father as he wants only male child to take revenge from Drona.

This prophecy makes Draupadi to believe that she is so unique who came to earth for a great cause. She wants always best for herself by demanding or arguing to fulfill her needs and desires. She critically analyses and compares her name Draupadi, means a daughter of Drupad, with her brother's name Dhristadyumna, which means Destroyer of enemies.

Draupadi is never interested in learning drawing, painting, sewing and decorating rather felt attracted to solving riddles, responding to witty remarks and writing poetry. She wants the palace walls to be low so that she can see the worldly things. The interest of hers makes her secretly listen to the lessons taught to her brother, Dhri. Draupadi puts her aspirations thus: "But I hungered to know about the amazing, mysterious world that extended past what I could imagine, the world of the senses and of that which lay beyond them." (23-24) Her curious nature takes her to meet Ved Vyasa who foretells her future and bestows her with a new name Panchaali. she is happy with a new name Panchaali. " Each night I thought of my name. Already I'd insisted that everyone address me by it. *Princess Panchaali* . A name strong like the land, a name that knew to endure. It was what I'd been waiting for." (42).

At the stage of Conventional morality self sacrifice for the benefit of others is seen as goodness. Women are motivated to act based on what will care for and benefit others.

The conditions gradually changed her thinking, during Swayamvar, Draupadi insults Karna despite she is attracted towards him after knowing the melting story of Karna: "But my disobedient heart kept going back to Karna, to that most unfortunate moment in his life. We'd both been victims of parental rejection" (Divakaruni, 78). As she became a pawn in the hands of time, Draupadi raises a question against Karna, knowing well that it will wound him badly: "Before your attempt to win my hand, king of Anga, it said, tell me your father's name." (95)

As a responsible sister and daughter she has to give up her desire for Karna as well she regrets for dishonoring him : "I couldn't bear to see my brother to die... I knew would hurt him the most, the only question that would make him lay down his bow...my ill-chosen words (words I would regret all my life) quenched that light forever." (96-97)

From Conventional level, transition takes woman to realize she must strike a better balance between her needs and the needs of others. Unlike other women Draupadi is married to five men, Ved Vyasa designed a special code of marital conduct for her. She also felt strongly that the boon of turning into a virgin every year was also not for her but for her husbands:

I would be wife to each brother for a year at a time, from older to youngest, consecutively...Like a communal drinking cup, I would be passed from hand to hand whether I wanted it or not. Nor was I particularly delighted by the virginity boon, which seemed designed more for my husbands' benefit than mine...If the sage had cared to inquire, I'd have requested the gift of forgetting, so that when I went to each brother I'd be free of the memory of the previous one. (Divakaruni 120)

At the post conventional level, moral judgment is dictated by the principle of nonviolence. The needs of the self are just as important as the needs of others, which causes the woman to turn up at a universal ethic of care and concern.

Draupadi's principle of non-violence is made known after the great Kurukshetra war, when she realized the real horror of war, the worst condition ever, a mass destruction and the victims of war in particular wretched condition of women and children: "I wept in remorse for the part I'd played in pushing the Pandavas into war, for now I'd begun to realize its full horror." (290), To facilitate them, she gave high priority for women's welfare, like separate court for women and separate market to stand in their own : "I resolved to form a separate court, a place where women could speak their sorrows to other woman." (293), ...to set up the destitute in homes of their own and buy merchandise to start business for them. In time the women's market became a flourishing center of trade in the city..."(324)

Draupadi develops a clear understanding of her self and thus accepts things as they come in her life . And finally, she grows as a woman who wants to contribute her life to the service of people in her kingdom.

Works Cited

1. Divakaruni, Chitra Banerjee. *The Palace of Illusions*. New York: Picador, 2008. Print.
2. Kumar, Manoj. *Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni: A Critical Spectrum*. India: Ykiing Books, 2017. Print.
3. Saiffee, Rukhsana. *21st Century Diaspora: A Study of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's Fiction*. India: Akhand Publishing House, 2019. Print.
4. <https://www.verywellmind.com/the-carol-gilligan-theory-and-a-woman-s-sense-of-self-5198408>
5. <https://www.academia.edu/resource/work/12364633>