

Reclaiming the Epic: A Gendered Approach on Systemic Violence in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *The Palace of Illusions*

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In: *Book of Abstract REVA University*. edited by DR. C Chamundeshwari Associate Professor, Dept of English, REVA University, Bengaluru, India. ISBN 978-93-341-7423-6.

The contemporary canon of works in Indian English Writing has produced literature on ecofeminism, eco-criticism, digital humanities, and a retelling of ancient epics and folktales. Mythology is one of the arenas where writers like Ashwin Sanghi, Anand Neelakantan, Amish Tripathi, Devdutt Pattanaik, and Kavita Kane have contributed in the form of retelling of the epics from unique stances while maintaining the authenticity of the narratives. Along with a depiction of the authentic epics from a fresh outlook, overlooked and subjugated characters from the epics also have been the cynosure of their works while offering a voice to narrate their frame of mind. In this light, the representation of gender-based violence in literature started taking shape with the emergence of intersectional discourse and feminist theories in the twentieth century, where writers like Ismat Chughtai and Arundhati Roy accentuated gender oppression. *The Palace of Illusions* by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni retells the ancient Mahabharata from Draupadi's perspective. This article highlights how Chitra Banerjee has used mythology as a medium to underline the representation of systemic violence including their psychological suffering caused by commodification and silencing of women's voices. This empowering narrative that profoundly resonates with today's readers serves as an agency by adding to the discourse.

Keywords: Indian English Writing, Mythology, Systemic Violence, Mahabharata