

Decolonizing Mythology and History in The Works of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni

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Abstract

The present research paper explores the decolonization of mythology and history in the literary works of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni from an educational perspective. The paper critically examines how Divakaruni reclaims traditional Indian narratives through a feminist and postcolonial lens, challenging the colonial and patriarchal interpretations embedded in mainstream historical and mythological discourses. Her novels such as The Palace of Illusions, The Forest of Enchantments, and Independence serve as pedagogical texts that not only reconstruct dominant narratives but also highlight the importance of marginalized voices, particularly those of women. These narratives provide an alternative epistemology to students and scholars by emphasizing indigenous perspectives, cultural memory, and subjective experience as valid sources of knowledge. This study highlights the relevance of her works in contemporary educational discourse, wherein literature becomes a powerful tool for interrogating colonial constructs and advocating inclusive learning. By giving voice to mythological women like Draupadi and Sita, and by portraying historical trauma from an intimate female perspective, Divakaruni re-centers subaltern identities and transforms mythical and historical figures into agents of resistance and empowerment. In doing so, she enables a critical reading of the past that inspires students to engage with literature not merely as fiction, but as a site of knowledge production and cultural transformation. Furthermore, this paper underlines how Divakaruni's use of English as a medium does not compromise the Indian ethos of her narratives but instead globalizes indigenous consciousness. Her work exemplifies how literature can serve as a decolonial educational practice, promoting critical thinking, intercultural understanding, and gender sensitivity in academic spaces. Thus, her writings hold significant pedagogical potential in shaping curricula that prioritize pluralism, cultural reclamation, and narrative diversity in postcolonial education.

Keywords: Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, decolonization, mythology, history, education, postcolonialism, feminism, curriculum, subaltern, cultural narrative

Introduction

In the domain of postcolonial literary studies, the concept of decolonization has become central to critical engagement with texts that challenge colonial narratives and epistemologies. Literature, as a cultural artifact, is not only a reflection of collective memory but also a potent space for resistance, reconstruction, and reimagination. The works of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni—particularly her re-narration of Indian mythology and re-interpretation of historical events—emerge as seminal in this regard. Her fictional reconstructions are rooted in a larger literary project of decolonizing the mind, reclaiming cultural identity, and foregrounding the voices that have historically been marginalized, especially those of women. The concept of decolonization in literature transcends the mere withdrawal of colonial powers; it encompasses a deeper intellectual and cultural process aimed at dismantling the ideological foundations laid by colonial regimes. Colonial literature often projected the colonized cultures as primitive, irrational, and inferior, thus justifying their domination. In response, decolonial literature seeks to challenge these misrepresentations and reassert the authenticity and complexity of native identities. This literary movement is not confined to nationalist glorification but involves a critical retrieval of indigenous narratives, languages, traditions, and epistemologies.

The educational importance of decolonized literature lies in its ability to foster critical thinking among readers and students. It encourages engagement with texts from alternative perspectives, often using counter-narratives that question dominant historical discourses. Writers engaged in decolonial work typically employ native mythologies, folk traditions, and oral histories to craft narratives that resist the hegemony of Western literary forms and ideologies. In this manner, decolonizing literature becomes an act of reclaiming cognitive sovereignty and rebuilding cultural memory.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's work is emblematic of this intellectual project. Her literary journey represents a conscious effort to reinterpret India's mythological and historical legacy from a postcolonial and feminist lens. Through the retelling of epics such as Mahabharata and Ramayana, she reclaims the stories for a new generation, presenting alternative readings that question the traditionally accepted norms and roles. In doing so, she offers a literary framework that educates readers on the multiplicity of truth, experience, and memory, all of which are central to decolonial discourse.

Mythology and history, while belonging to different narrative orders, play a fundamental role in shaping cultural consciousness. Mythology, embedded deeply in a society's belief systems, not only serves as a moral and philosophical compass but also as a medium to transmit collective identity and values across generations. History, on the other hand, is often perceived as an empirical account of past events. Yet, in both colonial and postcolonial contexts, it is increasingly evident that historical narratives are never neutral; they are shaped by power relations, ideologies, and silences. In the Indian context, colonial historiography systematically excluded subaltern voices and distorted indigenous mythologies to reinforce colonial superiority. Indian epics were often interpreted through Eurocentric paradigms that failed to capture their symbolic and philosophical depth. This misrepresentation affected the way Indian culture, especially its mythological women, were perceived in both the global and native consciousness.

Divakaruni, aware of these distortions, re-engages with mythology not merely as a cultural or religious exercise but as a political and feminist act. In *The Palace of Illusions*, she offers Draupadi a voice that defies the silence imposed by traditional patriarchal texts. Draupadi's inner world, her emotions, dilemmas, and assertions become central to the narrative, shifting the epic's focus from heroism and war to personal agency and resistance. Likewise, in *The Forest of Enchantments*, Sita is no longer the submissive and docile figure from popular renditions of the Ramayana but a woman of strength, intellect, and spiritual power. These novels are not mere retellings; they are cultural revisions aimed at reorienting the reader's understanding of mythology through the lens of lived female experience. Divakaruni also weaves historical events into her literary fabric, particularly in her novel *Independence*, where she explores the trauma and agency of Indian women during the Partition of 1947. The novel critiques the erasure of women's experiences from nationalist histories and positions their voices as vital in understanding the human cost of freedom. By doing so, she effectively collapses the boundary between mythology and history, treating both as narrative tools that need to be interrogated, revised, and reclaimed.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, an Indian-American author, has emerged as a significant literary figure whose works contribute meaningfully to the discourse of diaspora, gender, and decolonization. Her novels are characterized by strong female protagonists, diasporic dilemmas, and a profound engagement with Indian cultural heritage. Educated in India and the United States, she brings a cross-cultural perspective to her writings, making them accessible to global audiences while rooted in Indian tradition. Her literary oeuvre spans several genres—novels, poetry, short stories, and children's literature—but what remains consistent is her focus on identity, transformation, and cultural memory. Works such as *Arranged Marriage*, *Sister of My Heart*, and *Queen of Dreams* explore the diasporic experience with emotional depth and cultural sensitivity. However, it is her mythological novels that mark a decisive turn in her literary project toward decolonization.

In *The Palace of Illusions* and *The Forest of Enchantments*, Divakaruni revisits canonical Hindu texts and subverts them through female perspectives, questioning traditional roles and reclaiming female subjectivity. Her narratives serve as tools for readers, especially in educational settings, to critique, reflect, and reimagine inherited cultural narratives. Moreover, her use of English does not alienate her work from its Indian roots; rather, it enables the globalization of indigenous sensibilities, thereby promoting intercultural understanding and dialogue. Divakaruni's historical novel *Independence* further reinforces her commitment to rewriting history from below. The narrative centers on the lives of three sisters during the turbulent times of India's freedom struggle, portraying not only the political shifts but also the social and gender-based ruptures. This engagement with historical fiction complements her mythological retellings, collectively positioning her work as a decolonial corpus that reclaims narrative authority for Indian women—past and present.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this research is based on postcolonial and feminist literary theories, in which myth is analyzed as a cultural and discursive tool. These theoretical underpinnings are helpful in

understanding how Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni deconstructs Indian myths and reinterprets historical narratives to challenge colonial knowledge systems and patriarchal traditions. This framework highlights the processes of cultural recovery, gender resistance and narrative reconstruction through which Divakaruni's literature goes beyond the textual level to make an active contribution to a broader intellectual project - decolonisation and identity reconstruction. Postcolonial theory as a critical approach examines the intellectual and cultural heritage that colonialism and imperialism created. Its basic purpose is to bring to the fore the voices that the colonial power suppressed, and to recover the histories, narratives and perspectives that the Western hegemonic discourse either erased or distorted. Thinkers such as Edward Said, Franz Fanon, and Homi K. Bhabha gave depth to this theory, showing how literature reflects the deep psychological and cultural effects of colonialism.

In the Indian perspective, the colonial campaign was not limited to geopolitical appropriation but also systematically undermined local knowledge systems, literary traditions and spiritual values. The British intellectual tradition often presented Indian myths as superstitious or primitive thinking, and reworked Indian history to suit the imperialist ideology. the process of decolonisation becomes absolutely necessary not only at the political but also at the intellectual and cultural level.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's literary vision is linked to this post-colonial effort. His mythological novels are not mere retellings of Indian epics, but resistance narratives that challenge the dominant interpretations of those texts. When she places the inner consciousness of characters like Draupadi and Sita at the centre of the text, she demolishes the colonial-patriarchal outlook that has defined these characters for centuries. His writings also question the dichotomous notions of East and West, ruler and ruled, and reclaim cultural territories that were once subject to colonialist attitudes. Thus, they do not merely resist colonialism, but rebuild Indian cultural heritage with autonomy and dignity. Feminist literary theory, especially in the postcolonial context, analyzes how gender structures interrelate with colonial power. In many postcolonial societies, colonialism reinforced preexisting patriarchal systems. Feminist thinkers believe that decolonisation is incomplete unless it addresses the dimensions of gender oppression. In this dual structure, women are not only victims of colonial oppression, but also marginalized in their own culture.

Divakaruni 's literature is an excellent example of this double resistance. His characters are not mere victims of fate, but thoughtful, curious, and rebellious, projecting their agency powerfully. In *The Palace of Illusions*, Draupadi herself narrates the story of her life, and now she is not a backdrop to the epic of male warriors, but a heroine herself. Similarly, Sita's voice plays a central role in *The Forest of Enchantments*, challenging the moral and cultural codes that were imputed to her. These narratives not only counter the image of the "submissive Indian woman" inherent in the Western view, but also break the trend of glorifying female suffering that pervades Indian traditions. Myths have always played a major role in the formation of collective consciousness. In the Indian tradition, myths are not just stories of the past, but a means of communicating moral, cultural and spiritual values. Colonial discourse often separated these myths from historical and political discourse, considering them unscientific and imaginary. But in postcolonial literature, myth becomes an effective narrative tool that challenges these rejections and restores cultural identity.

Divakaruni presents myth not as a static tradition, but as a vibrant and evolving force. His interpretation with Draupadi and Sita is full of repetition and incorporation of contemporary sensibilities. They do not allow myth to remain merely a sacred tradition, but mould it into a communicative form, open to re-reading and critical reflection. Mythic cultural heritage does not remain in their hands. He turns into a political strategy and educational tool.

The process of rewriting myths in postcolonial literature is a re-assertion of cultural self-existence. This shows that these stories belong to the public and can be told in a new form to reflect their real life. Divakaruni brings together education and resistance by choosing myth as her literary canvas. His novels teach readers to question inherited narratives and discover voices that have been ignored in the past. Thus, myth becomes a narrative tool that is as much a means of salvation as it is of preservation.

Rewriting Mythology: A Feminist Perspective

Myths have been the repositories of cultural memory and moral teachings for centuries, shaping collective consciousness through stories from generation to generation. However, traditional mythological narratives - particularly Indian epics such as the Mahabharata and the Ramayana - have been produced and disseminated mainly from patriarchal and colonial perspectives, with male experiences given priority and female voices either silenced or marginalised. In postcolonial feminist literary discourse, reclaiming myth is an act of rewriting, not just retelling. A writing that is not written by women, but by them. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's novels *The Palace of Illusions* and *The Forest of Enchantments* come across as a powerful intervention in this context. These works reproduce the two most prominent women of Indian mythology - Draupadi and Sita - not as mythological icons, but as self-conscious, intelligent and communicative human beings. In *The Palace of Illusions*, Divakaruni recreates the story of the Mahabharata from the point of view of Draupadi, who is traditionally portrayed as an important but silent character. This Draupadi is no longer a victim of fate or subject to male judgments, but the speaker of her own story. A woman who questions, desires and resists. Her psychological and emotional dimension, absent in earlier male-dominated narratives, comes alive in Divakaruni's use of a first-person narrator. Emotions such as anger, desire, remorse, and resolve take her far beyond an object of war or a humiliated wife to a fully human form.

This depiction critiques the patriarchal morality that is inherent in the original epic - The moment when Draupadi is humiliated in the court and her five husbands remain silent. Divakaruni redefines the incident not just as a personal trauma, but as a political awakening. Draupadi's soliloquy brings to the centre the loss of her authority over the body and identity, communicating directly with contemporary feminist concerns such as consent and autonomy. His relationship with Kṛṣṇa also takes the form of not only spiritual, but intellectual association. Divakaruni's Draupadi is not a symbol of submission imposed by religion, but a woman who challenges it and chooses her own path.

In *The Forest of Enchantments*, Divakaruni recreates the story of Sita from a feminist perspective. This is the same Sita who was presented in traditional texts as the embodiment of renunciation, purity and tolerance, even as her voice was almost obliterated under the cover of the ideal. But in this novel, Sita

herself speaks - She gives words to her inner duality, morals and decisions. The novel begins and ends with Sita's speech, which is a sign of her being at the centre and re-establishing autonomy.

This Sita is no longer meek or devoted; She questions Rama's decisions - especially abandonment - and refuses to accept marriage or motherhood as the fullness of her being. Divakaruni brings subtle changes in the narrative that challenge the tendency to glorify female suffering. Sita's silence here takes the form of resistance, not submission. The forest, which has traditionally been a symbol of exclusion and misery, becomes a place of introspection, freedom and rebirth at Divakaruni. Writing her own story is a process of self-treatment and resistance for Sita. An attempt to leave a legacy that is defined by her own experiences, not by the male gaze.

Divakaruni's Sita is endowed with both compassion and strength, but she is also a thoughtful and articulate woman. Her return to earth is also a voluntary decision rather than an imposed end. This presentation negates the colonial-patriarchal framework in which Indian women are mere idols of victimhood and sacrifice; Instead, she portrays women as masters of their own destiny.

The uniqueness of Divakaruni's writings lies not in the use of myth alone, but in the dissolution of the traditional structures contained therein. In both the novels she rewrites from within. Respecting the basic structure, break her gender prejudices. She also criticizes moral codes, such as religion, which are mostly created by men for men. Through Draupadi and Sita she exposes the intrinsic inconsistencies of these systems. These characters do not reject tradition, but reinterpret it and make space for their own voice in it. Colonial rule had also separated myth from lived experience by making it rigid and stereotyped. Divakaruni retells these myths in English, from a migrant perspective, not only reclaiming them for women, but also freeing them from the colonial knowledge systems that portrayed Indian myths as either mystical spirituality or backward superstition. Thus, his writings contribute to the broader project of decolonisation of literature - She shifts narrative authority away from the centre and towards the cultural and gender marginal.

Reinterpreting History through Fiction

Fictional narratives have long held the power to reclaim silenced histories and challenge monolithic national discourses. In postcolonial literature, fiction becomes a potent medium for decolonizing the historical record by highlighting the experiences of those marginalised by official historiography—particularly women. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's historical novel *Independence* exemplifies this literary intervention. Set during the turbulent years of India's Partition and freedom struggle, the novel reframes historical memory from the vantage point of female experience, thereby questioning the colonial as well as patriarchal filters through which Indian history has traditionally been constructed and disseminated. Divakaruni's reimagining of historical events not only critiques colonial historiography but also contributes to a larger project of national self-recovery through alternative, intimate, and gendered storytelling.

In *Independence*, Divakaruni departs from the grand narratives of political freedom to explore how history unfolds in the domestic, emotional, and psychological spaces of individual lives—particularly those of women. The novel traces the intertwined fates of three Bengali sisters—Priya, Deepa, and Jamini—who live through the political upheaval of the 1947 Partition. Instead of focusing solely on iconic political leaders

or elite voices, the novel foregrounds ordinary people's fears, sacrifices, and confusions during this period of national transformation. This shift from centre to periphery, from male public figures to female domestic experiences, constitutes a deliberate act of decolonization in narrative terms. Divakaruni challenges the idea that history is solely the record of wars, treaties, or political speeches. Through the lived experiences of her characters, she restores to history the emotional texture and ethical dilemmas faced by those whose voices are often erased in traditional archives. The pain of displacement, the trauma of sexual violence, and the burden of familial duty emerge as central motifs that rehumanize the idea of national independence. The novel becomes a corrective to colonial accounts which often exoticized or oversimplified Indian experiences, as well as to nationalist versions that prioritized heroic masculinity over the suffering and contributions of women.

Partition has been widely studied as one of the most traumatic events in South Asian history, yet much of the recorded narrative has centered on political leadership and communal violence from a male-dominated viewpoint. Divakaruni's *Independence* offers a different lens. The three sisters, though rooted in the same family, navigate Partition in starkly different ways—one through a desire to become a doctor and serve the nation, another through romantic rebellion, and the third through familial obligation. This diversity of experience highlights how nationalism is not a singular ideology but a complex field negotiated differently by women across social and emotional spectrums. These female perspectives do not merely serve as background to the national drama but become the focal point for interrogating what independence truly means. Priya, for instance, challenges the expectation that patriotism must conform to male-dominated models of sacrifice and public engagement. Deepa, who falls in love with a Muslim boy, exposes the contradictions within a nationalism that proclaims unity but practices division. Jamini, who sacrifices her desires for familial stability, raises questions about duty, silence, and invisible suffering. Together, they reclaim Partition not as a moment of masculine political glory but as an era of personal upheaval, especially for women navigating fragmented identities and loyalties.

Colonial historiography often cast India in passive, exotic, and monolithic terms, presenting it as a land of timeless tradition and chaos awaiting British rationality and order. This distorted framing justified imperial rule and erased the multiplicity of Indian voices, especially those of women and subaltern groups. Even after independence, much of mainstream Indian historiography remained influenced by colonial methods of documentation—linear, male-centric, and power-oriented.

Divakaruni's fiction intervenes in this tradition by proposing an alternative historiographic method—one that values emotion, memory, oral testimony, and domestic space as valid forms of historical knowledge. In *Independence*, the act of remembering becomes central. Characters frequently look back, reflect, and reconstruct their pasts in ways that challenge both colonial and nationalist certainties. Their stories reveal that history is not a fixed account but a contested space shaped by perspective, power, and silence. By blending historical fact with fictional narrative, Divakaruni reclaims the authority to represent the past. Her prose is rich in sensory detail, emotional nuance, and cultural specificity, allowing readers to connect with history not as a list of dates and names but as a lived and felt experience. This storytelling

approach critiques the rigid methodologies of colonial historians and affirms fiction as a legitimate and powerful mode of historical engagement.

Myth and Memory as Resistance

In the realm of postcolonial literature, the reclamation of myth and memory operates as a vital form of resistance—resistance against imposed historical narratives, cultural erasures, and patriarchal dominance. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, in her works, especially *The Palace of Illusions*, *The Forest of Enchantments*, and *Independence*, utilizes myth and memory not simply as literary devices but as tools for rewriting history and challenging cultural hegemonies. Through the narratives of mythological and historical women, she builds an alternative archive—one that is rooted in cultural intimacy, feminine subjectivity, and narrative empowerment. Her work stands as a testament to how literature can serve as an act of political and cultural resistance, especially when it intervenes in myths that have long silenced the voices of the oppressed. Traditional Indian mythologies, particularly the Mahabharata and the Ramayana, have for centuries been central to Indian identity and moral imagination. However, these epics have largely been transmitted through male-centric narratives that marginalize or entirely silence the perspectives of women. The voices of characters like Draupadi and Sita have been either muted or appropriated to reinforce patriarchal ideals of devotion, purity, and submission. Divakaruni's retelling of these characters' lives is a conscious act of reclaiming those voices, allowing them to narrate their own experiences, conflicts, and desires.

In *The Palace of Illusions*, Draupadi is no longer the woman who causes a war but the one who questions the values that define honor and duty. Her voice, rendered in the first person, interrogates the injustices she faces—not only from her enemies but also from the very men who claim to love and protect her. Similarly, *The Forest of Enchantments* gives Sita a voice that is wise, resolute, and aware of the structures designed to confine her. Her silence is no longer a passive response but a deliberate political stance. Divakaruni's reconstruction of these women's inner worlds offers readers a view into emotional landscapes long overlooked by mythic tradition. In doing so, she restores agency and subjectivity to characters who were denied their voices in canonical texts.

Cultural memory is often shaped by those in power, and the act of remembering itself becomes political. Colonial regimes not only controlled territories but also narratives—what was remembered, how it was recorded, and whose experiences were deemed worthy of preservation. In postcolonial societies, especially in India, there has been an urgent need to recover suppressed memories and reconstruct them in ways that reflect indigenous consciousness and lived realities. Divakaruni's works exemplify this reconstruction. Her narratives are filled with the textures of everyday life—rituals, customs, idioms, and emotional truths that mainstream historiography often ignores. By focusing on the lived experiences of her characters, especially women, she contributes to the rearticulation of a cultural memory that is inclusive, dynamic, and rooted in subjective experience. In *Independence*, for instance, she does not recount Partition through political milestones or public speeches but through the fractured bonds of family, the trauma of sexual violence, and the emotional cost of nationhood. This personal history complicates the national narrative and expands the scope of memory to include the silenced, the wounded, and the invisible. Through

her works, Divakaruni reminds us that memory is not monolithic. It is layered, contested, and fluid. Her reconstruction of cultural memory challenges both colonial historiography and orthodox religious interpretations by giving voice to those excluded from the dominant archives.

Western colonial narratives have long positioned Eastern societies, particularly India, as exotic, irrational, and in need of Western rationality and governance. This narrative dominance extended to literature, where Indian myths were either dismissed as primitive or romanticized in ways that stripped them of their philosophical complexity. By writing Indian mythology and history in English but from within an Indian cultural framework, Divakaruni resists this narrative dominance. Her fiction does not cater to the Western gaze. Instead, it demands that Western readers engage with Indian realities on Indian terms. Her characters are not symbols of spiritual mystery but fully realized individuals shaped by their histories and environments. She does not dilute cultural references for accessibility; rather, she incorporates them with confidence, trusting the reader's capacity to understand or at least respect the unfamiliar. This narrative approach turns the colonial language of English into a medium of resistance and reclamation. Furthermore, her reinterpretation of myth challenges the static, linear models of Western storytelling. Indian myths, with their cyclical temporality, layered narration, and moral ambiguity, offer a narrative structure that resists the Western need for closure and binary oppositions. Divakaruni's adaptation of these forms reinforces the uniqueness of Indian narrative tradition and reclaims it as worthy of intellectual and artistic respect.

Comparative Perspectives

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's engagement with mythology and history through a feminist and postcolonial lens places her within a growing tradition of Indian and global writers who are reshaping literary canons. Her narratives are not isolated in intention or execution; rather, they resonate with a broader literary movement that seeks to challenge inherited colonial epistemologies and patriarchal mythmaking. To fully understand Divakaruni's contribution, it becomes essential to compare her work with that of other postcolonial Indian writers, contextualize her feminist myth-making on a global scale, and locate her in the broader discourse of diasporic feminist literature. Such comparative perspectives deepen our appreciation of her unique narrative strategies and thematic concerns, while also situating her within a complex and evolving literary tradition. Postcolonial Indian literature has been marked by a vibrant diversity of voices that aim to rewrite history and myth from alternative, often marginalized perspectives. Writers such as Amitav Ghosh, Shashi Tharoor, and Githa Hariharan have explored India's colonial legacy, national identity, and mythological roots through varying narrative styles. However, Divakaruni's work distinguishes itself through its deep focus on female subjectivity and the reimagining of epic narratives from a woman's point of view.

For example, in Githa Hariharan's novel *The Thousand Faces of Night*, the myth is reconstructed in the context of Indian women's domestic life, but there the myth is often used as a background symbol. In contrast, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni places myth at the centre of her narratives, where women like Draupadi and Sita themselves become the narrators of their epic stories. Similarly, while Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* presents the post-colonial trauma of Partition and memory through a fragmented narrative structure,

Divakaruni's *Indepence* presents Partition from a gendered perspective, in which she brings to the centre the emotional and physical experiences of women. A side that Ghosh only alludes to, but not prominently.

Moreover, Divakaruni takes a different route from Shashi Tharoor's satirical myth-based novel *The Great Indian Novel*. While Tharoor recreates myths through political satire, Divakaruni adopts a tone laced with introspection, emotional depth and moral complexities. Their language is poetic, the characters are introverted, and the approach is driven by personal experience and emotional intensity rather than satirical politics. This inner emotionality brings her closer to the tradition of feminist narrative realism rather than political allegory, allowing her to present collective history from a uniquely personal perspective.

Divakaruni's reinterpretation of the myth places her in the line of international feminist writers who have challenged patriarchal structures through the deconstruction of cultural narratives. Writers such as Margaret Atwood (*The Penelopiad*) and Madeline Miller (*Circe and the Song of Achilles*) also redefine myths from a feminist perspective. Atwood's Penelope, just like Divakaruni's Draupadi, comes out of the shadows of her male protagonists and reclaims her narrative. She articulates the anger, the sarcasm and the resistance hidden within her, negating the ideal feminine qualities that were thrust upon her. However, Divakaruni's work differs and stands out from these writers because she writes from a vibrant cultural tradition. Whereas Western feminist myth-writers generally draw inspiration from Greco-Roman mythology - which has often diverged from today's religious and social structures - At the same time, Divakaruni comes from a tradition where characters like Sita and Draupadi are still worshipped, rites are performed in their name and their images live on as social ideals. Writing within this vibrant cultural heritage, the reinterpretation for Divakaruni becomes not just a literary experiment, but a cultural intervention. An intervention that redefines the feminine characters whose images determine the role of women in Indian society even today. While Western writers often adopt a sarcastic or irreverent tone, Divakaruni critically reconstructs these mythological characters with respectful diction. She pays homage to the spiritual soul of the epics, but also exposes the gendered silences inherent in them. This nuanced and balanced approach enables Divakaruni to build bridges between traditional faith and contemporary critique, earning her mythologies a distinct place on the global feminist literary map.

Conclusion

The literary contributions of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni stand as a compelling intervention in the contemporary landscape of feminist postcolonial writing. Through her nuanced use of mythology and history, Divakaruni reconstructs narratives that have long been shaped by colonial and patriarchal perspectives. Her approach is not merely literary but decolonial—one that seeks to dismantle inherited structures of power and knowledge, and instead create narrative spaces that validate suppressed voices, particularly those of mythological and historical women. The “decolonizing” in her writing is not limited to external forms but delves into the heart of cultural memory, aesthetics, language, and identity. Her work opens a dialogue that reshapes the way we engage with Indian epics, national history, and diasporic consciousness.

Divakaruni's literature presents a wide field for academic research, especially in the context of how contemporary literature can become a medium for cultural critique and recovery. Her retellings of myths and history provide opportunities for comparative study with other global feminist writers - such as Margaret Atwood and Madeline Miller - who engage in mythological retellings. Her novel *Independence*, which depicts the Partition of India, provides a very suitable basis for gender-based studies. Especially in areas where questions of memory, suffering and nation identity become important in the South Asian diasporic context. At the same time, his writings also raise many serious questions related to language-politics - How a postcolonial language like English can be repurposed to tell an indigenous story while maintaining cultural depth. Future research may also explore the educational utility of her novels, particularly in the context of decolonizing postcolonial literature, women's studies, and diaspora studies courses. Another potential research area is how the process of intergenerational transmission of myth and memory occurs in migrant communities. Divakaruni's role has been instrumental in re-presenting Indian myths to a global readership, and this work establishes them as a bridge between generations and geographical boundaries. Additionally, it is worth considering what kind of response his works have received in India and abroad, and how cultural proximity or distance affects the interpretation and critique of his literature. In sum, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's literary vision contributes not only to the enrichment of English literature but also to the reawakening of Indian cultural consciousness. Her work serves as a living archive—where myth, memory, and resistance coexist—offering readers, especially women, the space to reclaim stories that once belonged to them but were never told by them.

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