



The Palace of Illusions: A Novel

By Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni

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Taking us back to a time that is half history, half myth and wholly magical, bestselling author Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni gives voice to Panchaali, the fire-born heroine of the Mahabharata, as she weaves a vibrant retelling of an ancient epic saga.

Married to five royal husbands who have been cheated out of their father's kingdom, Panchaali aids their quest to reclaim their birthright, remaining at their side through years of exile and a terrible civil war. But she cannot deny her complicated friendship with the enigmatic Krishna—or her secret attraction to the mysterious man who is her husbands' most dangerous enemy—as she is caught up in the ever-manipulating hands of fate.

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The Palace of Illusions: A Novel By Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Recasting the Indian epic *Mahabharata* from the perspective of Princess Panchaali, veteran novelist Divakaruni (*Queen of Dream*) offers a vivid and inventive companion to the renowned poem. Born from fire and marked with the prophecy that she will change the course of history, the strong-willed Panchaali declares early on that she won't spend her life merely supporting the men around her. Soon enough, she bucks tradition by simultaneously wedding all five famous Pandava brothers, who have been denied their rightful kingdom, and finds herself the happy mistress of the much-envied palace of illusions. Panchaali's joy is short-lived, however, when hubris, fate and the desire for vengeance in reclaiming the Pandavas' kingdom (all also prophesied) cause her and her husbands to make mistakes that have cascading political effects, shattering peace in the region. Devastation ensues, but spiritual remarks from the divine Krishna put life and death in a cosmic context. Despite an intrusive retrospective voice (I didn't know then how sorely...love would be tested) and a sometimes heavy-handed feminism, Divakaruni's rich, action-filled narrative contrasts well with the complex psychological portrait of a mythic princess. (Feb.)

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From [Booklist](#)

Starred Review The double bind that torques women's lives is Divakaruni's key theme in lambent novels and short stories about women who immigrate to America from India, and the curious ways the deep past seeps into the present. Divakaruni often weaves glimmering threads from the Hindu sagas into her fiction, and now, in her twelfth book, she goes directly to the source, the Mahabharat, India's most magnificent epic, and boldly retells this Homeric tale of a battle for supremacy between two branches of a ruling dynasty—and dramatization of the internal war between emotion and reason—from the point of view of its central female character. Smart, resilient, and courageous Panchaali, born of fire, marries all five of the famously heroic Pandava brothers, harbors a secret love, endures a long exile in the wilderness, instigates a catastrophic war, and slowly learns the truth about Krishna, her mysterious friend. By rendering the women characters as complexly as the men, and fully illuminating the “insanity of war” and the fragility of civilization, Divakaruni's historic and transporting variation adds new and truly revelatory psychological and social dimensions to the great epic's indelible story of sacrifice and spiritual awakening. Divakaruni has triumphantly fulfilled a profound mission. --Donna Seaman

Review

“A radiant entree into an ancient mythology virtually unknown to the Western world. . . . Remarkable.”
—*Houston Chronicle*

“A mythic tale brimming with warriors, magic and treachery. . . . Divakaruni's sentences dazzle; the images she creates are masterful.” —*Los Angeles Times*

“Complex, beautifully wrought. . . . Divakaruni's feminist reading of Indian lore offers readers a magical lens into the political interplay of gender, castes, birthright and life in the monarchy. . . . A writer to watch.”
—*Rocky Mountain News*

“Divakaruni's prose is as spirited as Panchaali herself, written with energy and humor.” —*Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel*

"Epics are intended to be accessible to the most extensive of audiences. And with *The Palace of Illusions*

Divakaruni likewise makes this reimagining of the "Mahabharat" easy to understand through the simple, straightforward narrative. Moreover, Divakaruni masterfully describes the lyrical beauty of Indians and the elegant logic of Hinduism." —*San Antonio News Express*

"*The Palace of Illusions* is not only an exciting, action-packed read, but also an educating one, and will likely encourage those curious enough to delve into the original Mahabharata." —Erin Kobayashi, *Toronto Star*

"Enchanting.... Anita Diamant's *The Red Tent*, Philippa Gregory's *The Other Boleyn Girl*—now we can add Divakaruni's *The Palace of Illusions* to the list." —*The Miami Herald*

"*The Palace of Illusions* is unique, amongst Divakaruni's very best. It is particularly refreshing to read an author who breaks the mold as clearly as Divakaruni does.... A creative, illuminating feminist work that compels us to re-examine the original text.... As in all great cathartic tales, Divakaruni's novel grasps our attention from beginning to end and is a healing, aesthetic experience." —*India Currents*

"Divakaruni has taken a male-centered story and breathed new life into its female characters, giving us a rich tale of passion and love, power and weakness, honor and humiliation. Whether or not readers are familiar with the "Mahabharat" epic, still fascinating and relevant several millennia on, they will enjoy this entertaining, insightful, and suspenseful story." —*The Union*, Nevada City

"Known for writing on the modern Indian immigrant experience in novels such as "Queen of Dreams," Divakaruni goes back in time, this time with a novel look at the ancient Indian epic "The Mahabharat" (think: an Indian "Iliad"). With hundreds of characters in the story of a great war, she tells the story from the point of view of a woman - Panchaali - who is married to five brothers" —*New York Post*

"Divakaruni has woven a lyrical tale imbued with the scent of ancient incense, yet simultaneously rooted in modern-day relevancy. Brimming with betrayals, religious fervor and war-torn streets, **The Palace of Illusions** is a journey experienced from the vantage point of Panchaali, a powerful woman driven by love, honor and, in the end, a fate that unfolds despite her resolve." —Karen Ann Cullotta, *Bookpage*

"Your truly epic narrative myth calls for bitter experience descending, avalanche-like, down dynasties, incorporating dramatic turning points of ineradicable impact; curses; looming fates; tricky and meddlesome gods; feuds; sages, sorcerers and wars. These elements and many more are found in abundance in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's new novel, *The Palace of Illusions*, which ambitiously encapsulates the Indian epic "Mahabharat" within a 360-page novel." —Elsbeth Lindner, *San Francisco Chronicle*

"By rendering the women characters as complexly as the men, and fully illuminating the "insanity of war" and the fragility of civilization, Divakaruni's historic and transporting variation adds new and truly revelatory psychological and social dimensions to the great epic's indelible story of sacrifice and spiritual awakening. Divakaruni has triumphantly fulfilled a profound mission." —Donna Seaman, *Booklist*

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"*The Palace of Illusions* is as grand and tragic as the epic poems by Homer. The story is complex, as political relationships grow and develop, and friends and enemies are created, leading to battles and wars that will eventually destroy them all. I was captivated by the tragic storyline and the fate into which Panchaali

was born. This admirable attempt to recreate the epic *Mahabharat* from the viewpoint of a strong woman is Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's best work yet." —Marie Hashima Lofton, Bookreporter.com

"For more than 20 years now, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni has been telling stories of Indian women from her home in California. Her women are desperate, wonderful, complicated, lyrical, memorable, even magical.... Chitra's women experience love, loss and longing through tangled marriages, bitter divorces, childbirth, abortion, abuse, violence, racism, poverty and riches. Now, in a daring novel out this month, Banerjee Divakaruni returns to a fantastic world, inhabited by kings, queens, villains and sorcerers." —*Vogue India*

"Vivid and inventive.... Divakaruni's rich, action-filled narrative contrasts well with the complex psychological portrait of a mythic princess." —*Publishers Weekly*

"Divakaruni offers a quasi-feminist retelling of the great Hindu text known as the Mahabharat...an intimate, feminine portrait that is both contemporary and timeless. An ambitious project effectively executed." —*Kirkus Reviews*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Lawrence Rector:

The book *The Palace of Illusions: A Novel* gives you the sense of being enjoy for your spare time. You need to use to make your capable much more increase. Book can to be your best friend when you getting tension or having big problem together with your subject. If you can make looking at a book *The Palace of Illusions: A Novel* to get your habit, you can get more advantages, like add your own personal capable, increase your knowledge about many or all subjects. You may know everything if you like start and read a publication *The Palace of Illusions: A Novel*. Kinds of book are several. It means that, science publication or encyclopedia or some others. So , how do you think about this publication?

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Derick Heinz:

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world now. This particular book was represented how do the world has grown up. The words styles that writer require to explain it is easy to understand. The particular writer made some analysis when he makes this book. This is why this book appropriate all of you.

Yolanda Powers:

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