Faculty of Engineering and Technology
SRM Institute of Science and Technology
SRM Nagar, Kattankulathur - 603203
Chengalpattu

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SUBMITTED TO

DR. POONAM PRASAD
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND FOREIGN LANGUAGES
SRM INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

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Illusions and Realities: Exploring SDGs 12 and 13 Through "The Palace of Illusions"
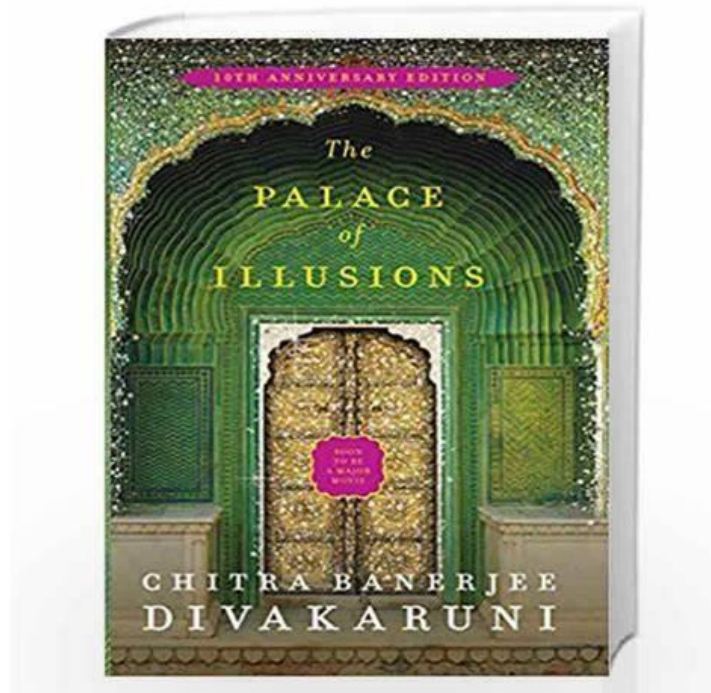
Group Members

S. No	Reg No	Name	Subtopic
1	RA2411030010223	Harsh Sanjay Tambekar	Introduction, The Palace of Illusions: A symbol of Unsustainable Luxury (SDG 12)
2	RA2411030010219	Devansh Goenka	Draupadi's Role in Consumption and Conflict, The Game of Dice: Greed and Overindulgence(SDG 12)
3	RA2411030010263	Ramesh Chettiar	Kurukshetra War: Environment Devastation, Draupadi's Regret: Cost of Destruction, War's Impact on Resources and Climate(SDG 13)
4	RA2411030010230	Awanish Kumar	Lessons on Sustainability and Climate Action, Conclusion(SDG 13)

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Report: *Connection of The Palace of Illusions with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 12 and 13*

Introduction

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's "The Palace of Illusions" offers a feminist retelling of the Mahabharata, exploring themes of power, materialism, war, and sustainability. The novel aligns with SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) and SDG 13 (Climate Action) by highlighting the dangers of overconsumption, greed, and environmental destruction. The Palace of Illusions represents extravagance and unsustainable consumption, while the Kurukshetra War reflects climate devastation due to human conflict. This report analyzes how the novel conveys the need for sustainability, ethical consumption, and climate responsibility.

The Palace of Illusions: A Symbol of Unsustainable Luxury (SDG 12)

The Palace of Illusions, built by Maya, represents grandeur, wealth, and unchecked ambition. Though admired for its magical illusions and lavish design, it ultimately breeds jealousy and resentment, especially in Duryodhana. The palace's extravagance leads to conflict, mirroring how unsustainable consumption creates economic disparity and social unrest today. SDG 12 emphasizes responsible resource management, reminding us that unchecked materialism can destabilize societies. The novel critiques luxury-driven excess and stresses the importance of moderation and sustainability in wealth distribution.

Draupadi's Role in the Cycle of Consumption and Conflict

Draupadi takes immense pride in her palace, which fuels her sense of superiority. When Duryodhana visits Indraprastha, she mocks him for falling into an illusion, publicly humiliating him. This moment becomes the catalyst for revenge, leading to the game of dice and eventually war. This reflects SDG 12's warning about the consequences of excessive consumption and pride. Just as greed and economic inequality today cause global tensions, Draupadi's attachment to material wealth contributes to her downfall and the war that follows.

The Game of Dice: Greed and the Consequences of Overindulgence

The game of dice symbolizes reckless consumption and unsustainable decision-making. Yudhishthira gambles away his wealth, kingdom, brothers, and even Draupadi, driven by overconfidence and greed. This aligns with SDG 12's focus on mindful consumption—just as wasteful behaviors lead to financial ruin, Yudhishthira's lack of restraint results in catastrophic loss. His irresponsibility leads to destruction, reinforcing the importance of selfdiscipline and sustainable decision-making. The novel suggests that greed, when unchecked, ultimately destroys civilizations.

Indraprastha's Fall: The Cost of Unsustainable Living

Indraprastha, a once-thriving city, becomes a victim of conflict and destruction, illustrating how unsustainable practices can collapse entire civilizations. Just as modern overconsumption leads to environmental and economic crises, the novel warns that cities built on excess and greed are doomed to fail. SDG 12 promotes sustainable urban development, highlighting the need for responsible resource allocation. Indraprastha's fall serves as a reminder that societies built on material excess rather than sustainability are bound to suffer.

Kurukshetra War: Environmental Devastation and Climate Impact (SDG 13)

The Kurukshetra War represents human-driven environmental destruction. As millions of warriors fight for power and revenge, the natural world suffers. The land is burned, rivers turn red with blood, and fertile fields become barren wastelands. This reflects SDG 13, which emphasizes the climate impact of war and human conflict. Just as modern wars lead to deforestation, water contamination, and habitat destruction, the Mahabharata illustrates how human greed and ambition destroy nature. The novel warns against unsustainable warfare that disregards environmental consequences.

The Impact of War on Natural Resources and Climate

The war does not only destroy lives but also depletes resources. Weapons, fire, and destruction wipe out forests, contaminate water, and leave the land uninhabitable. This mirrors real-world environmental issues—deforestation, water scarcity, and pollution caused by conflicts and industrial expansion. United Nations (2015) highlights that climate change is worsened by human activities, including wars over resources. The novel suggests that wars not only destroy people but also their ability to sustain life, reinforcing SDG 13's call for climate action and conservation.

Draupadi's Regret: Understanding the Cost of Destruction

By the end of the novel, Draupadi realizes the consequences of war. She loses her sons, her kingdom, and the people she loved. The destruction around her reflects the irreversible consequences of human greed and unsustainable actions. This parallels climate change today, where unchecked industrialization and consumption cause permanent environmental damage. SDG 13 emphasizes the importance of taking action before it's too late, urging societies to prioritize sustainability over power struggles. The novel serves as a warning that war and excess bring irreversible loss.

Lessons on Sustainability and Climate Action from the Novel

The Palace of Illusions teaches that responsible consumption (SDG 12) and climate consciousness (SDG 13) are essential for survival. Draupadi's pride in material wealth and the war's environmental destruction highlight the importance of sustainability, ethical governance, and climate responsibility. The novel urges us to reflect on our choices, emphasizing that unchecked ambition and greed lead to downfall. By prioritizing sustainability, resource conservation, and responsible governance, societies can prevent the disasters that Draupadi and the Kuru dynasty faced.

Conclusion

The novel serves as a cautionary tale about materialism, greed, and war, reinforcing the relevance of SDG 12 and SDG 13. The Palace of Illusions warns against overconsumption, while the Kurukshetra War highlights the environmental consequences of human conflict. The novel suggests that true power lies in wisdom, ethical governance, and sustainability, urging societies to adopt responsible consumption and climate-conscious policies. By learning from the past, we can build a more just, sustainable, and environmentally conscious future.

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