The Ordeal of Draupadi/ Polarization
by Manvi Jalan

Bathed in milk and honey, woven in jasmine, they told me, I was too man to be woman, yet I was destined to unhinge the fate of my men, of war. I am and forever remain the Queen of the Palace of Illusions.

Lost to the vines of fate that entrap me. Sold like a slave to my husbands brothers, spit at my face you Kunt, and then call me a whore. They are men of many wives, and I of many husbands unchosen.

That day, when the petals of time unfolded our destinies within them, and the tree in the courtyard shed bright red petals, Yudhishtir had with a roll of his dice, sold me to the enemy.

That day, when they dragged me by my hair and every man in the room watched me with burning desire, you Kunt let them expose my naked body to satisfy your ego and I learnt that men choose themselves over their women.

But I am unnamed in my war, and it took a century for them to learn my name and hear my voice. I who saved the men from killing themselves. I the Queen of the Palace of Illusions, I, Panchaali.