

**From suffering to serenity:
Draupadi's victory over familial deceit, loss, and enslavement
through ethical integrity and Krishna's moral guidance**

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Abstract: The research paper examines Draupadi's resilience in the middle of profound suffering in the *Mahabharata*, highlighting her ability to transcend pain inflicted by those closest to her. The paper aims to bring Draupadi's ability to overcome the pain and suffering she encounters throughout her life. Despite the gender bias from her own father, conspiracy from her own brother, ill-treatment from her own mother-in-law, and lack of moral support from her own husband, she managed to continue her life. She found happiness through morality, forgiveness and having a moral anchor in life. This character sets an example for every other woman to lead their life more positively. Her way of leading life remains a lesson for every other woman who undergoes a similar kind of problems in their life.

Keywords: resilience, forgiveness, morality, anchor, pain

Introduction

The story is told from the perspective of Draupadi, the protagonist in the novel, and the Palace of Illusion is a retelling of the Indian epic *Mahabharata*. Chitra Bannerjee Divakaruni tried to bring attention to the suffering of women, and how they were able to come out of all pain. Draupadi, a strong woman, has experienced a great deal of suffering. Despite being born into a royal hierarchy, she was denied access to all the advantages. She did not receive the same treatment as her brother Dhri. She had to speak up straight away and defend her rights. Because she is a woman, she was disregarded.

Draupadi had dealt with every problem, including identity crises, battles, and masculine dominance. It is stated at the opening of the

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book that when she was born, everyone heard a voice telling them that she was so strong that she would rule the entire country. She also expressed her desire to produce a child who could rule the entire country on her behalf. The family doesn't want to show any interest in her, even if they have some indications that she will be courageous and capable of overcoming any obstacle. She is a girl, which is a very straightforward and comprehensible explanation.

Father's gendered neglect

In India, men are typically valued more. One cannot see any mention of Draupadi's brother Dhri's valor or any military prowess throughout the entire narrative. However, there exists proof of Draupadi's abilities. Conversely, Drupada, Draupadi's father, expressed interest in Dhri due to his gender. He was permitted to acquire military and related skills. No one has questioned him about whether he is genuinely interested in becoming king or in going to war. He never even voiced his thoughts on the issues. Her brother has been given lessons, which Draupadi is not allowed to listen to. This had hurt her a lot, and she expressed her feelings about not being able to listen to lessons through the following lines. He begins to take "other lessons, though these I couldn't share" (line 26, *The Mahabharata* 2005).

Draupadi has stated that she wants to go to school and learn how to fight, but her father has not shown any interest. Since the novel mentions that they are both from fire, it follows that they are comparable.

This is the pinnacle of male dominance. Drupada performed yagna before the birth of both Draupadi and Dhir because he secretly wished to have a boy first. This specific action makes it quite evident how much Drupada wishes he had a boy child. Unfortunately, Draupadi was born, and it is clear that he is unhappy. She expresses the feeling in the following lines. "A gaunt, glittering man walked towards my brother and me as we stood hand in hand. He held out his arms — but for my brother alone. It was only my brother he wanted" (Ibid, 7).

Brother's deadly conspiracy

Draupadi marriage is yet another difficult step for her. Her feelings were not respected. It truly shouldn't have occurred to any girl in that manner. Her father set up Swayamvara. Many took part, and the young warrior Karna prevailed by demonstrating his archery prowess. Draupadi is now somewhat relieved that, despite her failure to become

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monarch, she will at least have a courageous man. She might be able to fulfil all of her desires through him. However, she was not happy for very long. When she realized Karna was a lower caste, she hesitated.

Draupadi was not hesitant by nature; rather, her brother set her off. Her brother wanted her to wed Arjuna. Her own brother is responsible for the plot. He even went so far as to introduce Arjuna as a qualified brahmin, even though he is not. He twisted Draupadi's psyche by taking advantage of her confused state of mind. He has bad intentions. It is unacceptable to employ deceit to own a sister for a self-serving reason. Ultimately, though, she had to endure pain. Later, she was forced to select Arjuna, who met Draupadi's expectations by posing as a poor brahmin. She was now forced to pick Arjuna.

Draupadi had no choice but to move in with Arjuna after their marriage. In India, it is customary for women to visit the groom's home after marriage. She won't be asked for her interest, willingness, or desire. In actuality, she has no authority to decide where to go. She must now relocate to Arjuna's home. Thus far in the narrative, she has suffered at the hands of her own father and brother.

III-treatment by the matriarch (Kunti)

Draupadi would never have imagined that she would have to endure suffering due to another woman. Kunti now desires that Draupadi wed her surviving sons. She decided that if all of her sons married Draupadi, they would all live in the same home because she wanted them to stay together until the very end. Kunti addressed Draupadi about this with a wicked and self-centered mentality. She was unaware as a woman of the impact it would have on the next woman. Draupadi's attitude did not concern her. The unity of her own son was more important to her than the desires of other ladies.

This is just one more unwritten Indian cultural tradition. We talk a lot about women's sorrow, suffering, and male dominance. However, there are frequently women who are responsible for the misery of other women. Mother-in-law and daughter-in-law relationships are rarely harmonious. Women who suffer as a result of this connection must be taken into account.

Kunti kept hurting Draupadi. She was accompanied by Dhai ma, a loyal nurse. When the conflict between Draupadi and her mother-in-law was at its height, Kunti took her away from Dhai ma. Draupadi sought comfort in her friendship with the nurse, with whom she had a very strong bond. However, she separated Draupadi from the nurse,

which caused her to become mentally disturbed. Isolating someone hurts our mental health, and Kunti did that to her own daughter-in-law.

Draupadi made her feel uncomfortable and demanded that she plead for her identity in the palace. She ensured that she and her daughter-in-law always had a frosty, war-like relationship. That was done with the goal of demonstrating power. Another unspoken Indian family tradition is that Kunti does not want Draupadi to be more powerful than her. The mother-in-law needs to always be the leader of the household.

Husband's moral abandonment

One of Draupadi's husbands, Yudhishtira, lost all of his riches, kingdom, and authority during the dice game at the Hastinapura assembly. Sakuni's plot caused him to lose everything. It's not that he lacks the necessary skills to perform properly. The dice were so difficult that he lost everything. He lost everything in the first round. He had nothing left to wager in the second round. He had the option to stop there. He could have gotten out of there. He was jealous and wanted to play more, but he had nothing to wager.

In the second round, he foolishly wagered on his own wife. If he lost, he promised to make Draupadi a slave. There are a lot of things that come to mind. Who is he to wager on Draupadi? How did he make that decision without her concern? Will she consent? Draupadi was unaware of what was going on around her and had no idea about this. Men can make their own decisions, according to the typical Indian traditional mindset. Women's suggestions and ideas are typically ignored. It is thought that men are capable of making decisions and will do so correctly, while women lack this capacity.

This mentality is evident throughout the scene, and we can see how things went wrong. He's made up his mind to wager on his own wife. Ultimately, as Sakuni had predicted, Yudhishtira lost the dice game once more, leaving him with little choice but to turn over his own wife as a slave. If one watches the entire scene, one could see that Draupadi had no part, not even a minor one. But in the end, she must suffer because of his ignorance.

Sufferings as a slave

She was brought into the assembly after being sold into slavery. She was actually in her menstrual cycle at the time. That didn't bother them. In public, she was referred to as a whore. Despite being a queen,

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she was forced to perform all the tasks performed by slaves. Dushasana even attempted to take off her clothes. Even there, she questioned them and demanded an explanation for what was happening to her. However, she is powerless. Even her husband and other members did nothing when she passed away, and they are now without any rights. Draupadi might benefit from the so-called male power. At last, she went into exile for 13 years, which included one complete year where she spent without knowing where she was and what was happening around. Her lamentation can be understood through the following lines, "I cried until my eyes were swollen shut and my throat was raw. I cried for all that I had lost: my freedom, my pride, my husband's honor" (195).

Draupadi questions her husband's ability to put her in such a situation through the following lines. "Had they no shame, that they allowed themselves to be enslaved by Duryodhan? Had they no pride, that they would bring me, too, to this humiliation?" (182)

It is impossible to compare the level of mental struggle she endured throughout her years as a slave. How would she think inside? From the start, everything that happens to her goes against her wishes or is unrelated to her. However, in the end, she must endure suffering just like anything else. She had lost her boys in battle in the interim. It is impossible to imagine how much suffering she endured after Ashwatthama killed her five boys. The narrative depicts the suffering she endured as a mother. But in the end, she didn't want to continue her life in suffering. She wanted to bounce back as she always does. Every time she comes back with the moral support of Krishna. Even during the exile, she remembered the quotes of Krishna, which helped her bounce back to life. The lines are "Already I was storing these lessons inside me. I would use them over the long years of exile to gain what I wanted, no matter what its prices" (212).

Draupadi just broke like anything. The explanation is that she aspired to accomplish something from the start of her existence. However, nothing worked in her favor. There was no support for her. Her husband didn't ethically support her, and she was denied education and the opportunity to develop battle skills. She had her own interests and abilities. She was unable to carry it out anywhere. She was not allowed to demonstrate her abilities. So, as life goes on, she consoled herself by saying that through her sons, she would conquer everything. Her sons should fulfil all their dreams and passions.

Losing sons in war

Hearing that her kids were slain in battle should be devastating for a mother who has placed all of her trust in them and is waiting for them to fulfil her desires. She may have believed that there was no use or hope in carrying on. She had ripped her clothes and hair, and she had shown her sorrow in every way possible. At that time, she was opposed to ending the conflict. Ashwatthama killed all of her sons, so she begged one of her husbands to carry on the conflict and kill him. She questions her husband for not saving her sons through the following lines. “You call yourselves warriors, yet you let my innocent boys be slaughtered? Their blood cries out from the earth — how will you wash it from your souls?” (344).

The height of her grief can be understood in the following lines, “I had birthed them in hope, raised them in exile's hardship, only to see them cut down before manhood. What mother's heart survives such a wound?” (346).

Forgiveness: A way to happiness

Surprisingly, though, she ultimately wished to return her call out of respect for Ashwatthama's father, Guru Drona. She exhibits this trait throughout the entire book. Whatever happened to her, she always accepted it. Claiming that it was dharma, even she had pardoned Ashwatthama. Draupadi's habit is evident from the outset. Draupadi somehow managed to show some empathy or compassion to all of them, starting with her father, who prevented her from acquiring knowledge and skills, her brother, who had a plot in her marriage, Kunti, her mother-in-law, who could thwart her development, and Ashwatthama, who murdered all of her sons. Despite suffering at the hands of each of them, she offered something unique and surprising in return. She left her loss and suffering behind, preventing others from experiencing her suffering.

Draupadi ought to have felt fulfilled by being sympathetic to the person who had caused her such pain. Therefore, she ought to have applied that forgiveness to her life, which would have allowed her to focus on other things. For example, we might not have seen this aspect of Draupadi if she had been struck all over and felt broken right away. She repeatedly got to her feet. The majority of her life went against her desires and expectations. Despite everything, she was able to return and carry on with her life.

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This is how Indian women have traditionally thought. Despite suffering in some way, they were able to return to their normal lives. While some people accept sacrifice, others do not. Indian women's primary concern is the happiness and comfort of their families. Even if they are initially in agony, they eventually forget about it as they tend to their family and environment. Draupadi somehow overcomes all of her hardships, even in the Palace of Illusion.

Krishna's moral anchor

The one external, invisible force that helped her in overcoming all her trauma is the image of Krishna. Here, Krishna should be considered as a hope.

Every individual has that one hope in their life. Whatever is going against you, however, the situation may change against you; despite everything, there will be one driving force that makes you come out of all the circumstances.

For Draupadi, it is Krishna. Krishna acted like a mentor, a savior in all her hardships. Krishna plays a vital role in accepting all her situations. Not only accepting but surviving in all kinds of broken situations. When she was surrendered as a slave to the Pandavas, she faced the disrobing of the saree. But surprisingly, they could not disrobe the entire saree. As they kept on disrupting it, the length of the saree kept on increasing, and it couldn't be finished completely. She realises that Krishna is saving her and says like this, "Krishna held the other end. I could feel his presence, strong and invisible." (164)

Draupadi believes that Krishna is the one who saved her dignity in front of others. Even before this, in the very beginning of the story, she believes Krishna is the one who has given her wisdom and is leading her. In the thirteen years of exile, the image of Krishna gave her solace. Likewise, Krishna played a major role as mentor and savior throughout her life. He acted merely like a guide for her. He taught her many things. In a place, he taught her the importance of time and consequences in a way that can be understood from the following quotes: "Time is like a flower... An inner petal would never know the older one, even though it was shaped by them" (82). She never wanted to dwell on things that had happened. She desperately wanted to bounce back. That is visible in the following lines. "I would no longer waste time on regret. I would turn my face to the future and carve it into the shape I wanted" (360).

Conclusion

Draupadi was able to recover and demonstrate her resilience despite her pain, grief, worry, and trauma. She serves as a model for what a woman ought to be. What has happened to her is intolerable for any woman. Nothing stood in her path. No one has given her moral support. Like anything, all of her dreams were dashed. However, she was able to carry on with her life. She had the capacity to forgive those who opposed her. The slayer who killed all of her sons had been pardoned by her. Throughout her life, she was able to maintain morality. She serves as an example of what an ordinary Indian woman ought to be like. Through morality, forgiveness and having Krishna as a moral anchor, she was able to get rid of all pain and survive.

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