

## **DRAUPADI: THE REASON UNWRAPPED**

**Navya Manjunath Shet**  
Student  
Christ University,  
Bengaluru

### **Abstract**

The Mahabharata is a controversial Indian epic when it comes to research. It is the story of the Puru and Yadava clan, which belong to the Kshatriya or the warrior aristocracy of ancient times in India. One of the major but neglected character from the Mahabharata, Draupadi around which the reason for the Kurukshetra war is built. Draupadi, wife of Pandavas is 'made' as a major cause for the disastrous war. She was called 'Kulanasini' (destroyer of kingdom) after the Kurukshetra war and was even punished for crime which she never committed. Before Draupadi was married to Pandavas, there was rivalry between two set of cousins that is Kauravas and Pandavas. Though the war took place after when Draupadi was married to Pandavas doesn't mean that Draupadi was the reason for the Kurukshetra war. To make it clearer, women during the time were always subjugated by men. They took the oath on killing each other. They gave up the promise and prepared for the war. They even rejected in giving up the war, then forcing their mistakes on a woman.

**Keywords:** Draupadi, identity, Pandavas, war, blame.

Shantanu, the king of Hastinapur, is married to Ganga and is blessed by a son called Devavrata (Bheeshm). Satyawati is the second wife of Shantanu. Pandu and Dhritrashtra are two siblings and also the grand children of Satyawati were the rulers of Hastinapur. Pandu gets wedded to Kunti, and he is blessed with five children, Yudhishtir, Bhimsena, Arjuna, Nakula and Sahadeva, while Dhritrashtra who is blind is married to Gandhari and gets hundred children where Duryoghan and Dushyasan is one among them. Shakuni who is the brother also lives with them. When Pandu dies, Dhritrashtra decides to handover the throne to Yudhishtir where Duryodhan gets jealous of it, who joins his hands with Shakuni and plans hoax to kill Pandavas in a wax palace. However, they are escape and live undercover in a timberland where Bhimsen meets with, Hidimba, kills her brother who is evil, Hidimb He married to Hidimba and blessed with a child, Ghatotkach. The Pandavas unfold their personality when Arjun wins Draupadi in a contest arranged by her father Draupad. When the Pandavas say that they won something precious, Kunti tells them to share it among the brothers and they do so. Dhritrashtra recognizes the enmity between the brothers and asks five siblings to reunite to Khandavprastha, which is changed by Bhagwan Shri Indra's associate, Vishwakarma, and re-named it as Indraprastha. Shakuni welcomes the Pandavas to bet at Hastinapura. Here Yudhishtir winds up giving

Indraprastha, his siblings, properties and also Draupadi. Lord Shri Krishna goes to Draupadi guide when Dushasan openly strips in the public. During the time Arjun is married to Subhadra and gets a child, Abhimanyu. At this point when the Pandavas come back own Indraprastha, the Kauravas declare the war of Kurukshetra. Krishna becomes the charioteer to Arjuna. Also, it is here that Krishna who demonstrates his actual self to Arjun when he dithers to slaughter his relatives, cousins, and masters.

In the great Indian epic, the Mahabharata there is a wrong assumption that Draupadi, the common wife of Pandavas was solely responsible for the disastrous war that is war of Kurukshetra. The paper attempts to clear the misconception where single woman is ‘made’ as a cause for dreadful war in spite of the presence of other reasons and various characters. How can a single woman be the only cause for the war? Are they enough to cause a war in which all the warriors of the country would fight to death? Are all the men so much foolish that they would fight over the words of a woman or an individual? Does not it sound a totally illogical idea? Doesn’t it seem that the Pandavas were only obedient to their mother and not to their wife? These are some of the questions that’s strikes our mind when we read the epic.

The paper makes an attempt to understand the problems of Draupadi and the circumstances where Draupadi is made as a cause for the war. It also gives a vague idea of the actual reason for the war. For the disastrous war like Kurukshetra, a single woman can’t be the only reason. The paper also includes problems that were faced by Draupadi. There are multiple reasons as well. For instances, Kurukshetra war took place because of the rivalry between the brothers for the throne of Hastinapur. Draupadi as a ‘cause’ is just a blame put on her. Paper indeed does not pay attention to other women characters in the epic.

Epic, the Mahabharata is the reflection of human nature. Mora says that the Mahabharata is an accurate affidavit to the greatness of India where “the two ancestral forces forever at odds within human nature that is War and Love” (137). The Mahabharata includes of literal battles. It deals with the contrast between clan and caste society. There was competition for the throne and property of Hastinapur between the cousins. This conflict between the cousins was ended with the eighteen days’ war that is the war of Kurukshetra (Thapar 1830). Women did not have her role as a cause for the war. It was the desire of power and treasures that men had towards their kingdom. Jayanti Alam says, “The Mahabharata as an age of prebrahminical supremacy” (1517). She even takes the other great Indian epic that is the Ramayana, where she says, “it shows the typical brahminical morality which pervades even in the 21st century- that is victim of the sexual crime who is to be blamed, as she is appears to be the women and not the criminal since he is the man” (1517). When men do not want to be blamed for the crime that he committed then that blame was put of women, who did not have the voice to speak in the society.

This article uses the theory of socialistic feminism where Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni uses in her novel *The Palace of Illusions*, which is written from Draupadi’s point of view, asks some very important questions, especially about the patriarchal practices, that in some or the other way, continue to bind us till date, identity issues in the Mahabharata.

Draupadi is the most important character of the Indian epic the Mahabharata. She was born out of fire by the yajna performed by the king Draupada, who was the ruler of the kingdom of Panchala. She was the wife of Pandavas brothers. She possessed a male child from all five husband. She is one among five Panchakanyas (‘Pancha’ means five and ‘Kanya’ means Virgin). Draupadi was the most beautiful woman during mahabharata. Arjuna hence won Draupadi’s hand.

A child being born acquires deep knowledge about the life of its contemporary society through its family and surroundings in the childhood itself. This is where that child becomes mentally and physically strong from the grass root level to face the ups and downs of the life. Whereas Draupadi, being a young damsel who came out of the fire had no childhood at all. She initially did not have any experience being in the patriarchal society. She was abandoned by her parent's love. In the beginning she was not been able to get the canon of the life. She accepted the life that came on her way. Juan Miguel de Mora his article 'The Mahabharata: A Portrait of Humanity' speaks about all kinds of love in the Mahabharata. He says that love is one of the important element to build up an individual. It is the key to unlock many problems that we come across in our life. This is where Draupadi emerges as an innocent 'newborn' lady, lacks some potential to defend the problems that she faced in her later life. As she enters the world in the middle stage and as she was not able to study what is life from her childhood, Draupadi fails to erase the blame put on her and becomes vulnerable to it.

The problem of identity is the most common problem that is faced by all most all the women of all the ages and even today it is the same as incurable disease. It is frequently seen where there is the existence of patriarchal society. Even in Draupadi's case it is the same. She began to face the problem soon as she stepped into the world. She was given the name 'Draupadi', as an identity of her father Drupada. She was referred to by a few different names also. She was called Panchali, because she was the princesses of Panchala. As the granddaughter of Prushata she was known as Parsati. She was given the name 'Draupadi', as an identity of her father Drupada. These are some of the names that shows Draupadi had no self-identity.

Draupadi had no freedom to select her life partner. For instance, during the Swayamvara of Draupadi, the princess of unequalled beauty, where the Kings and Princes assembled in hundreds, every avid to wed the princess. Ruler Drupad, father of Draupadi arranged a challenge. At the centre of the corridor a mechanical gadget was raised; on it was put a spinning object fit as a fiddle of a fish. The impression of this rotating fish could be found in the water underneath. An overwhelming bow was kept adjacent. Anyone who sought the hand of Draupadi in marriage needed to lift the enormous bow, twist it and tie the bowstring, then, taking a gander at the reflection, he needed to focus with five bolts and cut down the turning fish. Such a one would be a saint deserving of Draupadi's hand. A considerable lot of the gathered lords withdrew, when they knew about this challenge. The many rulers who had come to wed Draupadi were all beaten. At last, Arjuna in disguise of bramhana contested and won the competition and also the Draupadi's hand. And thus Draupadi was married to Arjuna. When Draupadi arrives with the five Pandavas to meet Kunti, they inform her that Arjuna won a prize at a competition to which Kunti says, "Share the prize". This motherly command leads the five brothers to become the five husbands of Draupadi. Five brothers shared Draupadi just like a 'toy' among themselves. During the marriage, Draupadi was not given any opportunity to express her feelings about the person whom she was supposed to marry. No single soul asked her whether she is interested in marrying Arjuna or no. After coming to her in-law's house also no one assisted Draupadi, whether she is really comfortable in having five husbands. This shows how Draupadi was subjugated by the men in those days. She was given no place to raise her voice. This shows the power of patriarchal society during the time, where even Chitra Divakaruni in her novel uses this concept to bring into light subjugation of women in those days. Gender played a vital role in taking major as well as minor decisions, especially in women's matter.

In the Mahabharata, where it demonstrates the commonplace brahminical profound quality which infests even in the 21st century—that is casualty of the sexual wrongdoing who is to be faulted, as she is given off an impression of being the ladies and not the criminal since he is the man. This shows how the ladies are reprimanded for any mishap that happens and are not adulated for the great things. In these sagas we see patriarchal society. Women are clearly ruled by men. They scarcely making the most of their opportunity that they had for themselves. This shows when men would prefer not to be blamed for the wrongdoing that he conferred then that fault was put on women, who did not have the voice to talk in the general public.

The cause for the war is was initially hidden from the beginning of the mahabharata, since the age of Shantanu. Shantanu had a son by name Devavrata (Bheeshm) from his first wife Ganga. Shantanu while travelling near the banks of Yamuna, he came across a beautiful lady Satyawati. Satyawati was an adopted daughter of the chief of the fishermen of her village. Upon seeing her, Shantanu fell in love with her and desired to her. Upon asking for his consent, her father agreed to the marriage on condition that Satyawati's son would inherit the throne of Hastinapura. Even though Shantanu disagreed to this, Devavrata was successful in settling misunderstanding. He personally met Satyawati and his father and took the oath to reassure the skeptical chief, further he also vowed lifelong celibacy to ensure that future generations borne of Satyawati would also not be challenged by his offsprings. If not for Satyawati's father's greed of wanted his grandsons to rule the kingdom, Hastinapur would have had the true family heir, thereby avoiding all conflicts. If Devavrata had not taken the vow of brahmacharya, the actual Kuru lineage would be ruling Hastinapura and there would not be any possibilities for the war.

There are many other instances which clearly mentions that there were multiple reasons behind the war such as foolishness of Kunti where, if she did not give birth to Karna before marriage or at least if she did not leave him stranded, Karna would not have become a reason for strength to Duryodhana's army. Furthermore, she asked her sons to share Draupadi (though out of ignorance) opening up a whole new box of ill treatments and struggles for both her sons and her daughter-in law. Along with these Dhritarashtra's misfortune and insecurities also became the cause. If Dhritarashtra was not blind then he would have been the king without debate and hence, Pandu would never have had a chance at throne. Also, if his sons (Duryodhana and the rest) were born after the normal pregnancy period of 9 months instead of the 2 years then, for sure Dhritarashtra's son would have been the rightful heir to the throne. Again, no struggle for the power with Pandavs. In spite of these many reasons, Draupadi is victimised in the epic. Rashmi Luthra says, "Draupadi has caught the imagination of a wide array of scholars and artists and especially feminist writers" (146). This might be the reason where Draupadi is still believed to be the cause for Mahabharata even in present days.

Dice game is a game that ruined the Puru and Yadava clans. This was the game that was played between Pandavas and Kauravas. Yudhishthir, the elder of Pandavas pledges all his properties and finally loses everything. At last pledging his wife Draupadi, tries to win the game. But even at last he loses everything to Kauravas. Draupadi turned into the serving house keeper of Duryodhana and Kauravas. Successful and licentious Duryodhana requested that his sibling Dushasana convey Draupadi to the court. He complied with his senior sibling and brought defenseless Draupadi dragging by her hair. Her challenge that Yudhishthira had no privilege to put her in question was not heard in the horrifying cries of the women in the court. Heads hung with disgrace. Bhishma, Dronacharya, and Vidura could do nothing. Lord Dhritarashtra was quiet. Duryodhana requested Dushasana to undress Draupadi. Bhishma protested, Dhritarashtra trembled, yet the desire, pride, and visually impaired force of triumph

was not set up to listen or see sense. Lord Krishna comes to the rescue exhausted Draupadi had however one trust, one final would like to spare her effortlessness. Sri Krishna could alone, and would, spare her from disfavor! She began rehashing and petitioning God for his beauty, a guardian angel of his enthusiasts, the Master of the Universe. What's more, the Lord does not hold up when his fan is in such a grave emergency. Sri Krishna gave unending lengths of cloth to Draupadi. Here, Dushasana pulled one yard of her robe - sari - and there two yards were included by the beauty of Sri Krishna! The abhorrence Dushasana continued endlessly, his hands throbbing and incapacitated with exhaustion, yet there was no limit to the covering of Draupadi's body. Finally, Dushasana given way, totally depleted. "Triumph to Lord Krishna", shouted Draupadi and tumbled down oblivious tears moving down her eyes. This shows how cruel the men were during the time. Draupadi became really helpless in spite of having five husbands who did not come to help even when she was about to unclasp. No Pandavas wanted to lose their honor from breaking their promise by helping Draupadi. Men were so self-centered that they were ready to do anything to restrain their self-respect. This situation is the peak level of Draupadi's grief.

Next comes the Kurukshetra war, the war that was fought for the throne of Hastinapur by Pandavas and Kauravas. Many of the people or the authors believe that the war was fought mainly because of Draupadi humiliated Duryodhan, who mocks him and tells him that sons of a blind man are also blind, when he stumbles in the Maya Mahal, and he takes a vow to humiliate her. So in order to take the revenge on Draupadi, Duryodhan takes an oath of insulting her. Later Draupadi, as result was humiliated in the public. Her curse and Pandavas revenge on Kauravas on humiliating their wife was the main reason for the war. But this is not really true. She is a subjected to awesome mortification and joke in view of her activities. Draupadi is likewise blamed for setting off the Great War between the siblings the Kauravas and the Pandavas. She resembles you and me, who longed and desired for appreciation and honor, yet the patriarchal set up denied her this position.

Draupadi had a place with an intense family. Draupadi –the daughter of earth-had a solid social standing and backing from a compelling family which recognizes her from conventional ladies. Regardless of her position she experienced incredible misery. She was the honor of the family, however she was subjected to extraordinary mortification and sufferings. She was offended, uncovered and openly assaulted while her spouses quietly viewed. In spite of this Draupadi was not a weak, a latent and meek lady. She challenged the unfairness and constrained every one of the men-including her spouses, father in law and every one of the older folks to scrutinize their activities. Her character is a motivation and an impression of an advanced woman. Like contemporary times, ladies then were dealt with as properties of their spouses. They had no political-efficient social freedom. They were the duty of their dad, spouse and later children.

Unfortunately, today no one understands Draupadi's sufferings. She was censured, then and even at this point. She is viewed as the reason for the war, yet as a general rule it was the male inner self that created the decimation of the whole human progress. Her significant other, Yudhishthira, reprimanded her for intersection her cutoff points. Indeed, even today Mahabharata is known as a war of Dharma against Adharma. The Plight of Draupadi is either quieted or overlooked.

Concluding, it is just a blame that was put on Draupadi for being the cause for kurukshetra war. It was the men when they wanted to escape from the crime they committed, they put the blame on woman. Draupadi, being brilliant woman she was not really able to clear

the blame put on her. Her exploits & adventures, trials and tribulations epitome of the ultimate woman who goes through so much, and yet, leaves so much to be desired. Since time immemorial, she captures the ultimate essence of womanhood. Draupadi is not merely history or myth but also an epitome of feminist desire that remained latent in Mahabharata.

This study aims to investigate as to how Draupadi was made as a cause for the war and the problem that she faced in the hands of men. But the research paper is not concerned with the other women characters in the epic who were also subjugated by men. It also doesn't necessarily explain the actual cause for the war in depth. This study is therefore a pioneering attempt to adapt the concept of socialistic feminism. Opportunities for further research are abundant. This study suggests the following further research direction. First, the research can be done in investigating the actual cause for the war from the age of Shantanu. Second, how other women characters like Kunti, Gandhari, Amba, Hidimba etc. became the victims to men and also their bravery and determination to live in such society. Third, how the epic the Mahabharata has its effect on present generation etc.

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