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Women's misogyny in modern culture, with a mythological allusion to Draupadi

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Abstract

Feminism is a word that can be found in books, on social media, in print media, and in the expressions of so-called intellectuals. This is a burning era. Because this epic is so huge and each character is so powerful, every great writer, thinker, and literature lover has written from the perspective of various Mahabharata characters. Draupadi will be shown not only as an unsung heroine in the Hindu epic Mahabharata, but also as a role model for women's empowerment and resistance in the face of injustices. Her capacity to triumph over adversity in a venerable manner distinguishes her from other women. As a result, Draupadi becomes Hindu literature's most complicated and divisive female heroine. She could be womanly, empathetic, and generous on the one hand, yet wreak devastation on people who had offended her on the other. She was never willing to compromise on her rights as a daughter-in-law or the Pandavas' rights, and she was always ready to fight back or avenge any injustices meted out to her with zeal. She is considered a feminist pioneer. The subversion theory will be used to support the article's claim. This article will show how, despite her suffering, Draupadi was able to overcome her difficulties and persevere where other women would have given up. You'll find it more engaging and fascinating if you look at it from different writers' perspectives.

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Introduction

Women have always been disproportionately represented in society, from the Mahabharata to postcolonial times. The proposed article will shed light on this inequality by referencing the character Draupadi from the Mahabharata, as well as Draupadi, also known as Dopdi in Mahasweta Devi's works. Women's status has undoubtedly improved since ancient times, yet they are still seen as second-class citizens by the rest of society. Literature has always been a mirror of society; it reflects the state of various sections of society from various points of view at various times, and it gives its readers with a

variety of theories to comprehend diverse actions practiced within the community. One of these theories is feminism. It has been progressively developing as a philosophy for centuries, but the situation of the oppressed sector of society, women, has not improved; they continue to struggle with the age-old oppression of being born a woman. To become an important part of society, women had to overcome several obstacles, barriers, and obstacles. Previously, women had no rights, and they were segregated, rejected, and abused by men. Feminism has completely changed the profile and image of women, transforming them from puppets in the hands of men to rulers, presidents, craftsmen, and educators. Even in modern times, she is oppressed whenever she is compared to or treated by a man. It occurs because gender inequality remains a concern in society. Marriage and families, employment and the economy, political issues, religions, human expressions and other social preparations, and the plain language in which society converses all contribute to gender inequity. The suggested paper examines the heroic character's environment of gender oppression: Draupadi in Vyasa's Mahabharata and Draupadi in Mahasweta Devi's story Draupadi, which Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has translated into English. The 'stripping of Draupadi' is the fundamental issue of discussion in both situations. To aid the discussion, the paper will use the feminist theory of subversion. The act of subverting man-centered organizations is known as subversion. Subverting anything entails taking strong powers and transforming them into something that makes the oppressor's life difficult. The event, as a depiction of the ways in which such a discussion has grown and executed the possibilities of male authoritative structures working on the woman's body. Because a woman's respect is believed to reside in her neglected body, its violation by open stripping implies that she loses respect for herself as a person, as well as a gathering family or even the country in which she resides. Polyandry can be seen as a subversion of male centric standards in a man centric culture; despite the fact that she is exceedingly awkward, she offers her consent thinking about an amazing descent.

Literature Review

The paper will use the feminist theory of subversion to advance the issue. The act of subverting patriarchal institutions is known as subversion. Subverting anything means transforming oppressive forces into something that opposes the oppressor. Feminist studies (Mukherjee 2016, Chaudhary 2014, Chakravorty 2016) all point to Draupadi's experiences, particularly the disrobing incident, as examples of how such a discourse has developed and propagated the idea of the woman's body as the site on which male hegemonic systems work. Because a woman's honour is thought to live in her violated body, its violation by public stripping results in her losing the honor of herself as an individual, as well as a group family or even the nation to which she belongs. Polyandry, for example, may be viewed as a subversion of patriarchal norms in a patriarchal culture; despite her discomfort, she provides her agreement, believing that it will be for the greater good (Mukherjee 2016).

Draupadi's disrobing is the pinnacle of the Pandavas' dishonouring in the Mahabharata. Her actions shattered the captors' meticulous arrangements for her enslavement. She refuses to recognise their 'manhood' by refusing to acknowledge her 'dishonour.' Her defiance is based on rejecting the entire idea of linking feminine honor and purity with a body that is untouchable. Draupadi articulates the story of resistance on multiple levels, making her not only powerful but also

multifaceted. She succeeds in subverting a fabled Draupadi story while also jeopardizing the stability of gender hegemonies. Because she has been subjected to heinous attacks on her body and spirit, she confronts her oppressor with defiance, passion, and courage. Because she is able to disrupt the objectification and monetization of women in society, she becomes a feminist figure. When she emerges unhurt from the disrobing experience, it is because of her *stri-shakti* (womanly power). Jyoti Singh also focuses her research and study on Draupadi, an iconic female heroine from the Mahabharata, India's most famous epic.

Draupadi speaks out against the tremendous suffering and crimes inflicted on her, ultimately redefining herself. She refuses to be the object of masculine narrative, instead asserting herself as 'subject' and emphasizing the fact of her own existence while also creating meaning. She becomes that which resists 'contra' male knowledge, power, and glory through subversion. By doing so, Draupadi subverts commodification in society and foregoes her identity as a human, not a commodity, by rejecting patriarchal discourses of the political, social, and intellectual forces of the society.

Discussion and Analysis

In Hindu society, myth and mythological narratives are still relevant, but modernity is unearthing the roots of this culture and civilisation and educating our youngsters on the basis of otherness. Nothingness entails a lack of spirituality and, in certain cases, morality. According to Devdutt Pattanaik, "the old has changed in the past fifty years," particularly with postmodernism challenging the core foundations of Western science and revealing the strategic bias in colonial discourse. Former colonies want equal status for their beliefs in the age of political correctness.... Vishnu symbolizes all that is noble in Hinduism: discipline, detachment, obedience, selflessness, fidelity, justice, poise, and dignity in his avatar as 'Rama'. The epic Ramayana tells his story. Rama loses his legendary force as the symbol of perfection when the epic is viewed as a quasi-historical source, and he becomes a simple monarch. When the epic is viewed as fiction, Rama loses his spiritual majesty and becomes a figment of creative imagination. The conflict between Rama the historical figure and Rama the religious symbol has resurfaced in recent years, as Rama has become a symbol of Hindu nationalist politics. ;Pattanaik 2003:13

Mythological works are literature that represent religious ideals and norms in a culture. They exist as stories, and they essentially define the patterns of behavior of a specific group, as well as how society has been shaped by protecting the sanctity of those norms. The Mahabharata has been retold many times in media ranging from widely televised television shows to the ground-level level of traveling minstrels, and has become one of ancient India's most celebrated mythical epics. While the epic has long been a part of Indian culture and ethos, it has been rethought and reorganized in a predominantly male-centered setting since its inception as described by Ved Vyas, through translation and representation. From Kisari Mohan Ganguli's English translation through Devdutt Pattnaik's *Jaya*, the epic has shown patriarchal society as the norm, albeit subtly, with male people worshiping heroes and the narrative's agency being given to either an existing man or a patriarchal narrator. Another facet of this 'women's world' is the persisting concern with whiteness or skin

fairness. Panchaali was continuously inundated with 'solutions' to make herself fairer and more appealing as a dark-skinned young girl. It is only through her early interactions with Krishna, who has a darker skin tone than her, that she realizes the power and magnetism that her dark-skinned beauty and identity as a woman give her – women and their power is subtle and sensual, giving her an edge in relationships and even society, as the sorceress tells Panchaali (66). One of Panchaali's most essential identities as the story progresses is that of being the wife of all five Pandava brothers. The year was Vyasa's verdict, which tied her fate to the five brothers. But it was the additional 'boon' that Vyasa gave Panchaali that epitomised the patriarchy that assigned piety and purity to a woman's sexual identity — he gave her a virginity boon that would make her a virgin again if she married another brother. Panchaali had mixed views about this boon, believing it was intended "more for [my] husbands' benefit than [mine]..."; boons were given to women like "presents they didn't exactly want" (120). Panchaali, like the other Pandavas' wives, occupied a far different place within this marital structure than did the women of her day in their marriages. She was an important part of the politics of Indraprastha and Hastinapur, a constant by the Pandavas' side through all of their failures and victories, and acted as a voice of reason for each of the brothers – this has often been hailed as extremely unique characterization, for hers is the only female character who so forcefully pushes herself to the forefront of all matters and does not stay limited to the space that women were deemed to occupy – namely Panchaali, on the other hand, sees herself as more of a queen of the Pandavas than a mother of their children, forging her own unique female identity distinct from what society expected, and still expects, of women shaped by a code of marital conduct that required Panchaali to marry each brother, from oldest to youngest, for the rest of her life.

Within the patriarchal framework, Draupadi

Draupadi's portrayal in the epic leaves so much to be desired that most people dismiss her as inconsequential. Draupadi, on the other hand, is an underappreciated heroine of the epics. Regardless, there are female characters in both the Ramayana and the Mahabharata who are not allowed the opportunity to exist independently. Chitra Banerjee (2009) eloquently expresses this sentiment, lamenting about 'strong women' in epics who have remained dark characters, and whatever their thoughts and emotions are seen as unexplainable. These women are only pushed to the forefront when they agree to sacrifice their lives for the lives of the male heroes, therefore making their roles secondary to their fathers, husbands, brothers, and sons.

Draupadi is also unusual in a masculine and patronymic context, being single in the sense of being chilly, unpaired, and distant. She creates the setting for a violent exchange between men, the effective cause of the decisive conflict (Spivak 1981). Her eldest spouse is going to lose her in a game of dice by default. He had staked everything he owned, and Draupadi was a part of it (Mah. 65:32). Furthermore, despite being a powerful, energetic, and opinionated woman, Draupadi remains devoted to her five brothers. According to Alleyn Diesel (2002), she is "considered by many men as a prize, valued object to be competed for and squabbled over, and she becomes the fundamental reason for internecine strife, which brings disorder (adharma) and ruin to society" (Diesel 2002: 9).

Draupadi's peculiar civil standing, on the other hand, appears to provide justification for her situation and non-recognition. Draupadi can be classified as a prostitute since "the text specified one husband for a woman, but she is dependent on multiple husbands." As a result, there is nothing wrong with bringing her into the assembly clothed or unclothed' (Mah. 65:35-36). The legitimized pluralization (as a wife among men in singularity as a possible mother or harlot) of Draupadi is utilized to display male pride in the epic. Karna, for example, publicly dubbed Draupadi a whore for having five husbands. Despite these harrowing encounters, Draupadi is unfazed by the brutal treatment she suffers from the male characters in the novel. Rather than weakening her, these experiences of mistreatment have strengthened her and made her more tough. She maintains her uniqueness, strength, and unwavering resolve for justice and retribution, making her an empowering figure.

Draupadi had to endure shame, torture, and deprivation throughout her existence. Draupadi, despite being unjustly treated and consequently enraged, gets strength from her purity, triumphing over male intimidation and violence, and thereby bringing healing to communities. These "convey the ultimate victor of women's strength," according to the author (Diesel 2002: 10). Draupadi remained resolute in her resistance to masculine rule despite this.

Men's property or assets are women. When the five boys arrive at the house, they invite their mothers to see what they've brought back from their adventure. Without realizing it, the mother tells the brothers to split evenly. There is no doubt that Draupadi as a daughter-in-law, wife, and mother is completely under her control. This is obvious in the manner Kunti assumed it was the normal alms her sons brought daily to the household (even though some could claim that Kunti was unaware that her sons had brought Draupadi). Even still, there is no explanation for why the sons chose to obey their mother's orders without inquiry. The solution is self-evident. Draupadi has no say in the entire drama because she is seen as a possession. As a result, the boys did not see the need to inform their mother that they had brought somewhat different alms to be shared evenly this time.

As a result, Draupadi has five husbands, despite the fact that she chose her true spouse at the swayamvara.

One can't help but ask what the point of the swayamvara was if it isn't taken into account at the end of the day. Actually, the swayamvara's behaviour is questionable as well. The kanya (daughter) gets to choose her spouse in a traditional swayamvara, however in the case of Draupadi, her father King Draupada arranges the swayamvara because he wants Arjuna (his choice) to come out of hiding. It's worth mentioning that issues that directly affect women are never discussed with them or given their approval. Draupadi raises an important question: "Is a lady her husband's property?" Is she a gambleable object?" 474 (Mankekar 1993). Because Draupadi was handed to the five brothers by their mother, she is now their property and can be bet on. Draupadi also criticizes the monarchs' dharma (religious obligation), particularly those present in the assembly. Her comments are a challenge to the monarchs' knowledge of right and wrong, not just a pleading from a humiliated and powerless lady. Draupadi is defying the norms by questioning the behavior of her husband and the dignitaries present, which was unheard of during the Mahabharata's period. In other words, she was upsetting the

(Sabha) court's order since she was deviating from the norm, hence the subversion. For a woman of her time and place, this was unthinkable. Draupadi's question is seen by Das (2014:228):

It is a question of the protection of those who find themselves unprotected by a system in a court full of the most powerful kings of the time, here was a woman who dared to speak up, aloud, against male perpetrated injustices.

Conclusion

The chosen texts have had enormous financial success in contemporary Indian English literature, with millions of copies sold and the books being translated into regional languages. The representation of the marginalized voices of the epic Mahabharata, which managed to attract the attention of current culture, has been the reason for their persistent influence in literary circles in India and beyond the world. Their achievement ushers in a new period of transformation, one in which women's stories and experiences are not only established in reality through the media or reports, but also documented through historical fiction, solidifying the idea of femininity as a powerful force to be reckoned with. They provide women the power to rebel against the epic's and society's patriarchal, phallocentric narratives, such that these texts become testaments to their resistance and battle to discover their voice and a platform to communicate it.

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