

## **Reconstruction Of The Character ‘Draupadi’ In The Novel Mahabharati: An Analysis**

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### **ABSTRACT:**

India is a rich country with its own culture. The contribution of Indian literature to the field of literature is also prominent. The epic “The Mahabharata” is one of the most important part of Indian classical literature. It is not just an epic, but it can be taken as a living document of the prevailing social system of that time. Draupadi, an important female character of this epic, is taken by Babita Borah Gogoi in her novel “Mahabharati”. Usually in other classical novels, the writer presents the character from his own point of view or from the point of view of the original author. But in this case, the exceptional writer has studied the various psychological aspects of the character and presented the character from her own point of view. The character has analyzed itself through various levels such as instability, existential and identity crisis etc. and has sought to establish itself in its own way. This paper is the study about how the central character, nurtured by the feminist notion of introspection, constructed itself and represented all women.

### **KEYWORDS:**

Mahabharati, Draupadi, Existence, Identity, Reconstruction, Instability, Introspection, Dharma, Exploitation

### **1.00: INTRODUCTION:**

“The Mahabharata” is considered to be one of the greatest works of Indian Aryan literature. Based on its large size and incomparable content, many people also want to call it “The Pancham Veda” (5<sup>th</sup> Veda). Carrying the signature of ancient Indian culture, civilization and social values, this epic is a glorious book from all sides- historical, political, and religious and so on. The struggle between the Kauravas and the Pandavas, which began with the conspiracy of wealth, greed for power, greed for throne, is at the root of the epic. Though the epic was written as a subtext of those events but we can also learn about a number of other events here. In addition, in the course of events described in the eighteen chapters, we again find the role of both male and female characters, along with the socio-political, economic and religious scenario of that time. The character of Draupadi, which

exists with its own characteristic features, is the center of attraction for every reader and critic. Time to time, the character has become the subject of in-depth study because of Draupadi's birth history, Draupadi's role in the battle of Kurukshetra etc. And "Mahabharati" is the fruit of such a deep study. Although there is not much difference between the Draupadi of "The Mahabharata" and the Draupadi of "Mahabharati" but the only point that makes the Draupadi of "Mahabharati" a little different is that the point at which the Draupadi of the epic left to think, the Draupadi of "Mahabharati" began to analyze herself from there.

### **2.00: OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY:**

The main purpose of this study is to discuss how the character of Draupadi seeks to reconstruct herself in the midst of curiosity and conflict of the mind.

### **3.00: METHODOLOGY:**

In this study, "Mahabharati"- the first novel written by Babita Borah Gogoi, is taken as the primary source. In addition, various books, commentaries etc. published in both Assamese and English language have been used as secondary sources to prepare the paper in an analytical manner.

### **4.00: ANALYSIS OF THE TOPIC:**

Draupadi, one of the female characters in "The Mahabharata", is the central character in Gogoi's first novel "Mahabharati". The novel's whole story and analysis focus on Draupadi only. Presenting the central character to the reader in such an analytical way is a complex task but Gogoi has accomplished this task very skillfully. The simplicity of Gogoi's style of expression and presentation fascinates every reader as the writer has been able to express her views easily and simply keeping in view the interests and abilities of the readers of any age. Written in first person, by reading the story, the reader feels as if we are engaged in a direct conversation with the character. It's a great way to get acquainted with the character. Of course, in order to add some facts, the reader may feel whether it is necessary to add those facts or not but at the last moment the author is able to explain that the truth was really the revelation of another truth and the answer to the question. Since the purpose of this research paper is to study the reconstruction of Draupadi's character in the selected novel, for that we have to go into the core of the novel and thoroughly analyze the content raised here. The peculiarity of the novel is that here the character seeks to capture every event, activity logically and tries to analyze herself in parallel with it. We will try to discuss this in detail.

**4.01:** The main theme of the story is the crisis of existence that the central character is suffering from. The character finds herself in a dilemma about her own existence. So at the beginning of the novel she asks, "Who am I? Why my birth is in this world and my existence here or how far-reaching is it? ... How meaningful was my birth to this world? Did the world really need me?" (Mahabharati, pp.9) She questioned herself and then answered to herself too-"From the moment I was born, I was looking for the answers to these questions but till now, not fortunate enough to get

the answers.” (Mahabharati, pp.9) In the crisis of existence, the character of Draupadi has tried to introspect, encountering that she had the answers to some of the questions, some of which she did not have. The curious character has lost its identity and is grieving, “Don’t I own anything in this world?” The character who was trying to find the cause of its birth was stubborn but in some places she became weak for which Basudev had to remind her of the purpose of her birth, “Never indulge in weakness in life....you were born not only for you, you were born for the good of the whole world but if you cannot do anything for the world then your name ‘Yajnasheni’ will be meaningless....” (Mahabharati, pp.31) There is a goal and purpose in every person’s life. Every human being tries to do something for the society but here the question arises, being born from a sacrifice for the sake of others (patriarchal interest), didn’t she have anything as her own? This is especially true of Draupadi’s name. Draupad was the name of her father, that’s why she was named as Draupadi, she was born out of sacrifice (Yajna), so she was named as Yajnasheni, for being the wife of five Pandavas or Bharatas, her name was again changed to Mahabharati and so on. It seems that the character does not have a fix name. Then what is the real identity of the character? Since the character’s name has been changed in different situations, the reader is forced to assume that the character has no fixed identity. The character again says, “Don’t I have any identity of my own though I was a princess?” (Mahabharati, pp.34) In the last part of the book, the character that is deceived by the third Pandava, says to warn every woman, “You can fall in love with someone but never lose yourself in that love.” (Mahabharati, pp.182)

**4.02:** From the very beginning till the end of the novel we can see that the character is suffering from extreme instability. This level of instability is very high in the early section of the novel. The character suffers from instability due to various reasons like self birth identity etc. The character expresses her instability for the first time through the dream described at the beginning of the story. The character seems to be dissatisfied with her personal life, which is why her instability is so frequent. But again and again the character says to itself, “Instability does not suit me. Anyway, this instability can’t be my ornament for the word ‘Raaj’.” (Mahabharati, pp.10) But sometimes the character expresses her determination very nicely, “My stubbornness was a little too much of a necessity. I couldn’t find peace until I did what I thought I would do.” In favour of her thought, Basudev said, “A person who escapes from the battle of life can never be great.” (Mahabharati, pp.26) From these lines one can learn how to stay stable during the storms of life and how to cope with life’s problems.

**4.03:** The character that is influenced by feminist ideology, on the one hand, is introspective and on the other, confesses everything. In the later part of this discussion, we will discuss how the character represents other women and has shown the hypocrisy of the patriarchal social system of that time. Here, we may quote few lines from the “Manusmrithi”:

In childhood a woman must be subject to her father, in youth to her husband, and when her lord is dead, to her sons. A woman must never be independent. Indeed Manu wrote: “Whether a

drunkard, leper, sadist or wife-beater, a husband is to be worshipped as God.” (Women in Indian Literature, Mythology, History and Society, pp.31.

This is a reflection of such a mindset that we see in the case of other female characters in the ‘Mahabharata’, including Draupadi. Draupadi acted as a united voice against the various injustices being meted out to women. Reading the events that took place in the lives of the heroines for those hundred or thousand years of meditative ideas raises the question, “Was what happened to them legitimate? If it was wrong then why didn’t they protest? Why the social system did not take any action against the perpetrators of these discriminations? But Draupadi, who was drawn by the author, questioned how he, despite being a father, had made his daughter a prostitute to take revenge, how could the Pandavas be able to distribute Draupadi as a commodity without thinking of the legitimate and illegitimate just for the sake of fulfilling the mother’s command, why didn’t anyone think for a second what Draupadi’s state of mind might be in all this? Looking at the questions, it can be understood that at that time, there was no way for women to express their personal desires, as everyone had determined by the society. The character says, “This is a woman’s life.... So maybe she was forced to bear this grief.” (Mahabharati, pp.89) In many cases the character accepted many injustices but in many cases we also see her protesting against injustice. Especially when Yudhishthira gambled in the Sabha-Parva and lost everything including Draupadi, she protested in front of all and said that Yudhishthira, who had already lost his freedom, did not have any right to spoil her life. Draupadi said, “Actually the name Dharmaraaj doesn’t suit you. Only you are responsible for spoiling my life.... In fact, you made me naked first....Huh! I have been worshipping you as my husband for so long.” (Mahabharati, pp.143)

Not only that, the character was repeatedly deceived by her husband Arjuna, the dearest husband of her soul. At the end of twelve years of banishment, Arjuna gifted Draupadi with three satins. Needless to say, Arjuna observed the vow of celibacy at that time. Draupadi, who lost her identity in Partha’s love, accepted one deception after another by pressing stone on her chest. “Those were none other than betrayals only....As a woman, how can I tolerate and accept my husband’s many girlfriends? But I endured. I endured many injustices. But today I admit, those were the biggest mistakes I have ever made in my life.” (Mahabharati, pp.111). After not arguing at the right time, the character regrets and blames herself, saying, “Why didn’t I protest then? Why did I endure the humiliation of my femininity? It was my mistake.” (Mahabharati, pp.111)

**4.04:** It is already known from the above discussion about the hypocrisy of the conventional social system but it is important to note that here, Draupadi raised the question of materialistic lifestyle which Draupadi did not ask in the original epic. The question was not only for the five Pandavas, but it was the question that engulfed their family, parents, teachers, Vyasadeva and others. So, in some places politics has become involved. Draupadi rebuked, “The establishment of religion! In order to establish religion, one has to do unrighteous deeds together.” (Mahabharati, pp.174) “I thought my relationship with these five people was only in the darkness of night. No one knew me

at any other time.”(Mahabharati,pp.126)- said Draupadi, harshly addressing the Pandavas, who had divided their sister-in-law as their wife.

**4.05:** In addition, Draupadi sometimes commented herself as selfish. As the wife of the five Pandavas, the character became selfish at some point. Not only that, but the character can be seen to be substantially vengeful in the face of disgrace. In this case it can be said that selfishness is a natural human trait. As a human being, Draupadi is no exception. But for this self-deprecating attitude, the character later regrets and feels ashamed. In many cases, she considers herself as responsible for the battle of Mahabharata.

**5.00: CONCLUSION:** Analysis allows us to get a glimpse of the oscillating mental state of the central character. By studying the psychological side of the character, we will discover the character in a new form. After knowing and understanding the character very closely, the question arises; does Draupadi really get the dignity, respect and love she deserves? If a queen cannot escape being insulted by a word like ‘whore’ in the presence of five heroic husbands, then it is easy to guess where the place of ordinary women is. The sharp, strong character, representing the entire female race, advised the race to never forget her own existence. She also warned that women are never weak; they are strong enough to cause creation and destruction. Therefore, the success of the novel and the newly created characterization of the character lies in its successful and positive application in real life, realizing the secret of the character’s introspection.

#### **6.00: WORK CITED:**

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