

अनुसन्धान-प्रकाशन-विभागीया त्रैमासिकी शोध-पत्रिका

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प्रधानसम्पादक:  
प्रो. मुरलीमनोहरपाठक:  
कुलपति:

सम्पादक:  
प्रो. शिवशङ्करमिश्र:

सहसम्पादक:  
डॉ. ज्ञानधरपाठक:



**DRAUPADI IS THE SHINING EXAMPLE OF INDIAN WOMANHOOD**

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**Introduction**

The Mahābhārata is universally accepted as an encyclopedia of ancient Indian culture and civilization. The great epic, composed in different ages, presents conflicting views on women. The women characters in the Mahābhārata express the power of dharma in the form of their patience steadfastness and their sincerity. The epic depicts the life and destiny of many ideal women like Gāndhāri, Draupadi, Kunti and so on. Their lives reveal the ideology of dharma or the moral order of the universe. These women gave their lives to keep dharma, the ever active, ever present moral law which regulated the entire universe.

**Draupadi**

Draupadi is one of the powerful characters in the great epic. She personifies a bunch of virtues and noble qualities. Throughout the *Mahābhārata*, she appears as the embodiment of courage, fortitude, sense and sensibility, and even pride and prejudice. She is regarded as one of the most complex and controversial female characters in ancient Hindu literature. Her character has been depicted with wonderful skill by Kṛṣṇadvaipāyana Vyāsa.

Draupadi was born in the palace of Drupada, King of Panchala. She was known also as Pāṅchālī. She had a brother named Dhṛṣṭadyumna. Her birth was not a usual one. Her father was ambitious and pleaded for divine children. The very circumstances of her birth made it abundantly clear that she had come to their world to fulfil a great mission. She arose from the sacrificial fire lit by her father Drupada and at once a voice from the air announced that Draupadi would light the burial fire of the Kuru family.

**Marriage of Draupadi**

After escaping from the lac palace, Pāṅḍavas reached a village named Ekachakra, after a long march through the forest. They stayed in a Brahmin's house. They heard of the *swayamvara* of the lovely Draupadi and decided to attend it unrecognized. The Pāṅḍavas went to Pāṅchala along with the Brahmins.<sup>31</sup> On the way of the journey, they met Vedavyāsa and, receiving his blessings, went to the capital city of Pāṅchāla and took their abode in the house of a potter, unidentified by anybody.

When Draupadi assumed youthful age, her father Drupada arranged a *svayamvarasabha* (marriage assembly) to facilitate Draupadi to select her companion of life. This indicates the self-respect and reputation enjoyed by the royal women in those days. In that *Sabha*, having exhibited a great bow, Druapda proclaimed that he who bent this bow and hit the eye of the rotating fish by looking at its reflection in water would win Draupadi. Arjuna's matchless skill in archery helped him win the contest and secure the hand of Draupadi.

**The wife of five Pāṅḍava-s**

The *Pāṅḍava-s* returned with her to the potter's house where they were living on alms according to the custom of Brahmins, and the brothers reported to their mother that they had brought alms on that day. As soon as Kuntidevi heard the footsteps of her sons outside, she told them from inside to share the alms equally among the five brothers, without knowing that it was a bride that had been brought by them. And as the mother's mandate cannot be discarded, Draupadi became the wife of the five *Pāṅḍavas*.

कुटीगता सा त्वनवेक्ष्य पुत्रानुवाच भुङ्क्तेति समेत्य सर्वे।

पश्यात्सु कुन्ती प्रसमीक्ष्य कन्या कष्टं मया भाषितमित्युवाच। (Mahabharatha I, 182.2)