

MS. DRAUPADI KURU**BLENDING MYTHOLOGY WITH MODERNITY****Ms. Ayuta Mohanty^{1*}, Dr. S.D. Chaudhuri²**

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ABSTRACT: Mythology and Modernism are poles apart with reference to time. But if we analyse each and every aspect of modern world, people living in this world as well as the contemporary situations, we will be able to find the presence and influence of mythology in each of these. Mythological literature plays a very important role, even in the modern society as they form the basis of our thinking, mentality, perspective and personality. The trend started by contemporary writers of recreating the different colours of myth on the canvas of contemporary society can really become masterpieces in reforming the way we look at certain things and groups. This paper discusses one such masterpiece that beautifully blends the colours of the mythological literature, the Mahabharata, with the contemporary modern Delhi to recreate strong, brave and exemplary women characters of the Mahabharata who made their own decisions and changed the course of their lives.

KEYWORDS: Myths, Modern, Women, Feminist Revisionist Mythology, the Mahabharata

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INTRODUCTION:

Mythology includes stories from ancient times and Modernism is a quite contemporary term and movement. So, clearly these two terms are poles apart based on time reference and features. But if we analyze both the ages closely, we will be able to compare various aspects of both the ages and find similarities in them. Mythologies plays a major role in laying the foundation of ideals, thinking, values, belief and perspective of every individual in a society till date. The writers of the modern period have popularized a new genre, mytho-fiction, in which they are recreating and re-visioning the tales from the mythological literature from new and fresh perspectives and some are even blending it with modern places, situations and scenarios. These mytho-fictions provide the readers a fresh perspective to look at the story and the characters. This paper discusses a mytho-fiction by Trisha Das titled *Ms. Draupadi Kuru: After the Pandavas*. Trisha has very beautifully blended the characters from myth with the modern and contemporary setting and situations and in the way created strong and exemplary women characters from mythology who can be treated as role models for women of every age.

METHODOLOGY:

The research paper involves close reading and contextual analysis of the selected text with the concept of 'Feminist Revisionist Mythology' in the backdrop. Possible influence of the retellings on the socio-cultural aspects will be investigated. 'Feminist Revisionist Mythology' deals with mythological tales recreated with a feminist

perspective or re-visioned from the perspective of a female character.

DISCUSSION:

The story starts in the heavenly world where the bored Draupadi gets fascinated by the contemporary mortal world from Narad Muni's stories, hatches a plan to visit the mortal world again and decides to take help from Krishna. She convinced Krishna who allowed them to stay in the mortal world for thirty days with some words of caution and gave Narad Muni the responsibility to guide them. Draupadi convinced Amba and Kunti to accompany her while Gandhari also insisted on accompanying them and the four ladies went with Narad Muni and landed at New Delhi, the modern equivalent of Indraprastha of their time. He gave them all the basic things and information they needed to stay in the mortal world for thirty days. But none of them knew how their life was going to change in these days. In this paper, we will look at three characters: Kunti, Draupadi and Amba. We will analyse the portrayal and development of each character one by one.

KUNTI: Kunti had agreed to visit the mortal world to meet Karan, her first born whom she had abandoned as she was a maiden during his birth. Even after his death, Karan had preferred the birth and death cycle as a mortal instead of residing in heaven with his mother Kunti and brothers, the five Pandavas. When Narad Muni told her that Karan, in his present birth has also been left by his parents in an orphanage, she broke down thinking about the fate of his son as she had expected that after his re-incarnation, he will get the belongingness and love

that she could not give him in that birth. But later she composed herself and decided to search for the orphanage. When they met for the first time in the orphanage of Delhi, she could see anger and hatred in his eyes for his family, she remembered the disappointment and pain that she had seen in Karan's eyes during her time except the fact that he was respectful while this time, the young boy of eleven years was very disrespectful. However, Kunti did not lose hope. She came to know that he was involved in illegal activities. She saved his life and convinced him to become a good person. She decided to stay back to look after Karan and other kids of the orphanage to provide them a better life.

DRAUPADI: When an astrologer talked about how the name of Draupadi is considered bad luck, she was hurt. She thought, "Remembered as a woman who serviced five men; a woman whom no one would name their daughters after for fear they might share her destiny. Her life, her strength, her courage in the face of constant challenges... her sacrifices... they all meant nothing." (Das 67). When the astrologer told her that by modifying the spelling of her name, she can be a "proper lady", she thought of all the characteristics that the society considers attributes of an ideal woman but she feels proud of herself as she was not one of them as "[s]he had qualities that were admired, even worshiped in men; courage, initiative, rational thoughts, vision." (Das 69-70). When some people in the park misbehaved with Amba, it was Draupadi's courage and intelligence that saved the day. Draupadi remembered the time she had to marry five persons just because her father wanted that and she was given no choice rather than accepting it. As a princess, she always had to accept other's decisions, but this mortal world gave her the freedom of making choices and decisions based on her own will. So, she also decided to stay back and enjoy her new life with the freedom she was going to get here.

AMBA: Amba, the eldest princess of Kashi who had dreamt to marry Salva was kidnapped by Bhishma from her swayamvar due to which she lost her beloved and the rest of the till her death she spent in want of revenge against Bhishma even her next life was also devoted to this sole purpose. But

this time, in this mortal world, she fell in love with a man Zafar and with great difficulties and opposition from the rest three women, she finally married Zafar, a thing that she could not enjoy in her last life. On facing opposition from their families, Amba and Zafar eloped and went to a temple to get married. When Narad Muni came there to take the four ladies back to heaven, Amba was the first one to deny him. Draupadi looked at her and knew that, "[s]he was going to fight this. Never had [she] seen [Amba] so resolute, determination screaming from every inch of her." (Das 273). She finally felt wanted and loved, a feeling she did not get in her time.

CONCLUSION:

These reinterpretations enrich our traditions as well as add new dimensions to the existing ones. The writers are recreating mythology in various innovative ways to portray the contemporary reality. These retellings of mythology are helping to extract undiscovered aspects of these ancient stories in the light of contemporary situations. These retellings become a source of wish-fulfilment for the characters as well as the readers. There appears a hope of a possibility of a difference in the story-line or the ending. This modernist tendency of bringing a slight change in the story makes it quite interesting for the audience as they are able to get new insights for them. The selected text ends with such a modernist tendency where these four characters achieve those things that seemed impossible for them in their times. Retelling of the epics can play an important role in supporting the agenda of women power. While re-interpreting the different layers of the mythology blended with modern settings or themes, we can get a glimpse of the dynamic role of the Indian woman, in the past as well as motivate the contemporary ones. We get a glimpse of four strong-willed and brave women from mythology who coped with every difficulty in the modern world and proved themselves worthy to be labelled as role-models for women of every age.

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