

EXPLORING DRAUPADI'S REPRESENTATION IN INDIAN MYTHOLOGY: THE MAHABHARATA AND SOUTH INDIAN ORAL TRADITIONS

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Abstract

The present research describes the Draupadi as she appears through too many facets in Indian mythology and particularly Mahabharata and South-Indian rich oral tradition. Draupadi is a figure with several layers, her intelligence quick wits and sheer grit to face adversities head-on make up one of the most enigmatic characters in human history. She is central figure and character in Mahabharata, a largely regarded Indic classic; shown as an assertive woman who takes part decisive action during the infamous dice game humiliation against her self-respect. In South Indian oral traditions, Draupadi is held up as a goddess and symbol of shakti (strength) strikingly pre-figuring Durga. which also Traditional refuge in pretended Women she was famously princess. Draupadi is of so much importance that we still can see her role in the stories and observed during some religious practices, including Draupadi Amman Festival. Specific rites and festivals are dedicated to her across India, as she is visualized in various forms the image of which today is partially seen through mythological texts. These festivals are a reminder of the socio-cultural and economic realities in which they emerge and include Draupadi temples not just to remember an era when she was honoured or condemned but as sign that even now, there is still something about her story that empowers people. This research seeks to fill some of those gaps by attending to the nuanced ways in which mythological figures change and are changed within cultural contexts, through polyvocal textual voices by looking at multiple representations of Draupadi across genres as well as practices associated with her festivals. This article tries to explore her character and significance by doing an extensive analysis of Draupadi, in order to better understand what this iconic figure continues to signify even after millennia.

Keywords: Draupadi, Mahabharata, South Indian oral traditions, Goddess, Festivals, Socioeconomic context

India has deeply woven the Mahabharata, a monumental narrative, into its religious and cultural fabric since ancient times. The epic has served as a foundation for the cultures of various South and Southeast Asian nations for over one and a half millennia. The narrative unfolds the tale of rival relatives struggling for dominance. One group of brothers acts with integrity and adheres to the ethical principles of their era. At the same time, their cousins are described as having employed various tactics to stake their claim to the throne of Hastinapur, a prominent kingdom of ancient India.

Legendary figure Krishna Dwaipayana, also known as Veda Vyasa, is believed to have initially crafted the Mahabharata more than three thousand years ago. The Mahabharata is the longest epic globally, comprising more than 100,000 verses. It is typically assigned to the centuries before the common era, although some aspects of its intricate narrative may have been in circulation even earlier. Numerous authors across various adaptations have enhanced the fundamental narrative of the epic, some recognized and others recorded, both in ancient India (Bharatavarsha) and other Asian countries. The most renowned Indian adaptations feature that of Vyasa himself, the Mahabharata of Kisari Mohan Ganguli, the author of Krishna-Dwaipayana Vyasa, gained notable recognition in the 20th century for

his BORI Edition, also known as the Critical Edition. Chakravarty Rajagopalachary (Rajaji) has elegantly reimagined the epic for a contemporary and sovereign nation. In addition to the prominent and widely recognized versions, there are numerous narratives among the Indigenous and tribal communities of India. Various regional versions also exist in the native languages of India, reflected in folk art, songs, theatre, and craft. It is enough to state that this grand narrative, alongside the renowned Ramayana, not only distinctly associates itself with the territory corresponding to India's modern political boundaries but also with the cultural legacy of other nations such as Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Fiji.

Across various faiths, sacred stories captivate the minds and hearts of individuals in profound ways. They do not merely outline religious beliefs but communicate lessons through interpersonal relationships and ethical decisions. Narratives have the power to resonate with individuals on a profound emotional plane. Furthermore, diverse texts and performances recount and reinterpret stories. The fundamental tales of the epic emerged as spoken traditions, intricately crafted by numerous anonymous individuals throughout history.

As previously mentioned, the Mahabharata is a straightforward narrative detailing the conflict between two factions of cousins, the Pandavas and the Kauravas, as they vie for control of a kingdom. The group comprises various characters, including some with celestial origins and unique abilities. Kunti, the mother of the Pandavas and the wife of Pandu, the king of Hastinapura, before her marriage to Pandu,

She was favored by Surya, the Sun deity, with a child destined to embody divine attributes and warrior prowess. Different iterations of the epic recount this event in various ways, with one account indicating that Kunti engaged in physical relations with a deity, leading to the birth of the child. Following the divine favor, Kunti bore three additional legitimate sons after her union with Pandu. The last three, together with the two sons of Pandu from his second wife, Madri, were collectively referred to as the Pandavas (of Pandu).

Shortly after the five Pandavas arrived, Pandu passed away, leaving Kunti a widow. Madri, her co-wife, performed Sati on Pandu's pyre, while Kunti could not follow her due to her responsibility to care for the children. The narrative of the Mahabharata intricately weaves Kunti's journey, beginning with her birth, her father's decision to entrust her to King Kuntibhoja, her marriage to Pandu, and her subsequent widowhood, a fate sealed by a curse that haunted Pandu. After the Kurukshetra war concluded, Kunti faced the immense responsibility of raising her children and endured a challenging life until her eldest son, Yudhishtira, became king. Kunti treated Madri's sons, Nakul and Sahadeva, equally to their stepbrothers. Kunti faced significant criticism for leaving her eldest son, Karna. However, it is essential to acknowledge the societal norms of that era that condemned an unwed woman for bearing a child. She faced criticism for keeping the identity of her son a secret from everyone.

Gandhari was a significant female figure in the epic, playing a notable role throughout the narrative. She was married to Dhritarashtra, Pandu's elder sibling, who was born without sight. She demonstrated unwavering loyalty and devotion, even going so far as to blindfold herself and turn away from the world. Her steadfast commitment to her husband and her union with the blind king had planted the seeds of conflict in her brother Shakuni's thoughts. He was deeply troubled by the current situation and pledged to bring down the Kuru empire by corrupting the thoughts of Gandhari's eldest son, Duryodhana, who, along with his 99 brothers and one sister, made up the Kauravas, the cousins of the Pandavas. Queen Gandhari made every effort to intervene, yet her attempts were futile.

Draupadi was another central figure in the Mahabharata. Her origins were linked to the sacred flames of a ritual conducted by King Drupad of Panchala, who was consumed by a longing for retribution against his former companion, Acharya Dronacharya. The sacrificial fire produced Draupadi, also

called Krishnaa (the dark one), and a son, Dhrishtadyumna, who would eventually slay Dronacharya in the Kurukshetra war. After her Swayamvara, Draupadi became Arjuna's wife, but Kunti also arranged for her to marry all five Pandavas. Her intelligence was evident in her discussions with King Yudhishtira, the eldest Pandava, regarding various statutes of law and Dharma. She remained loyal, accompanying her husband into exile following the fateful game of chance.

The Sanskrit narrative of the epic provides a detailed account of Draupadi's disrobing in the court of Dhritarashtra. Her vows of vengeance against the Kauravas for this incident are also highlighted. She possessed a deep understanding of the principles of righteousness as she sought guidance from the elders, including Bheeshma, Drona, and Dhritarashtra, regarding the nature of justice when she faced mistreatment and was subjected to humiliation after her eldest husband gambled away his stake in the game of dice. Numerous interpretations of the epic seek to hold her accountable for the ensuing violence, suggesting that she incited the conflict by wounding Duryodhana's pride and offending his closest companion, Karna, during the Swayamvara by declaring her unwillingness to wed a sutaputra (the son of a charioteer). It is important to note that Karna, abandoned as an infant by Kunti, was raised by a charioteer as his child. He was also referred to as Raadheya, the son of Radha. Draupadi was portrayed as a woman of great dignity, confident that her husbands would ultimately seek retribution against their cousins for the wrongs done to her. Draupadi dispatched Bheema to eliminate Keechaka, the sibling of Queen Sudeshna of King Virata, for his attempt to sexually assault her. Draupadi is a multifaceted individual who navigated the constraints of her patriarchal society while embodying a spirit of resistance, asserting herself in various situations when necessary.

Draupadi exhibited a nurturing aspect of her character; she demonstrated compassion and concern for the women, their spouses, and their children. One notable event involved Jayadratha, Dushala's spouse, who is Duryodhana's sister and a companion. He once encountered her and abducted her. However, after her rescue, she chose to spare his life, not wishing for Dushala to endure the consequences of her husband's actions. She decided to show mercy to Ashwattama even though he had taken the lives of her sons, who were defenceless and at rest after the conflict had concluded.

VERBAL HERITAGE AND FOLK ARTISTIC EXPRESSIONS

Showcasing Draupadi as The Focal Point

Draupadi stands out as a pivotal female figure across the various interpretations of the Mahabharata. To gain insight into her character, it is essential to examine not only the depiction in the epic but also the representations found in various folk art across different states. The traditional arts reveal much about the region's culture and people, illustrating how the characters within the narratives reflect the community's values and beliefs. Various mediums represented the epic, including folk art performances, theatrical presentations, dance interpretations of the narrative, and music that encapsulated the essence of the characters.

Folklore can offer new insights into portraying the epic's main characters, potentially excluding certain sections. The performers might alter specific details to resonate with the audience and reflect the societal context of the era in which individuals existed. Through a dance presentation, the performers donned vibrant costumes and sang melodies that illustrated scenes from the Mahabharata.

Various traditions present diverse narratives about Draupadi and her representation in the epic. Each state's folklore is unique in many ways. For example, the folklore surrounding Draupadi in Tamil Nadu varies from that of Rajasthan. The narrative of her awakening and intimate experiences with the Pandavas differ significantly from the Sanskrit rendition of the epic, which holds more prestige than traditional folklore.

INTRODUCTION TO THE SUBJECT

The analysis will explore various folk narratives that connect to the tales in the Mahabharata, highlighting the critical distinctions between the folklore surrounding Draupadi and the Sanskrit

rendition of the Mahabharata itself. We will discuss the variations in character representation and the potential inclusion of the folklore's backstory concerning the epic's female protagonist. This research will examine the folklore surrounding Draupadi from a South Indian viewpoint, highlighting various distinctions within the historical context. Including folk theatre will offer a more nuanced perspective on South India's representation of Draupadi. We will present a comprehensive review of the literature from the books and articles examined for the project. We will describe Draupadi in the mainstream Mahabharata, emphasising her significance from a feminist perspective. It will also present a comprehensive research methodology employed during the study and a detailed account of my findings and reflections. It will encompass citations of the books and articles consulted during preparation and a well-structured conclusion.

The study's objectives

The primary aim of this study is to explore various folklore surrounding Draupadi within South Indian traditions, particularly in Tamil Nadu and other southern states, highlighting the significant contrasts with the Sanskrit epic that predominantly emphasises the male figures of the narrative. This study aims to explore various sources to gather insights into the character of Draupadi as depicted in folk dances, art performances, and the newly created narratives surrounding her in these cultural expressions. It will also present specific findings, conclusions that may emerge upon completion, and personal insights that I will emphasise at the project's conclusion.

The texts 'Draupadi in Folk Performances and Scriptural Representations' and the Cult of Draupadi highlight the diverse depictions of Draupadi in Tamil Nadu folklore, which contrast sharply with her portrayal in the Mahabharata. Draupadi's character construction in Tamil Nadu folklore varies across different narratives. The Draupadi Amman festival, which Tamilians celebrate in honour of the female protagonist from the epic Mahabharata, illustrates these distinctions.

Certain invocatory songs performed in Tamil Nadu offer insights into Draupadi's character, elevating her status to that of a goddess through their praise. Tamilians, particularly in the Gingee region, regarded her as a supreme force. They frequently invoked, 'As you safeguarded the five, my mother, shield these children.' This refers to the notion that Draupadi played a protective role for the Pandavas rather than the other way around. The inhabitants of Tamil Nadu would revere her as a divine figure, seeking her protection for themselves and their offspring.

According to Tamil Nadu's regional beliefs, Draupadi was not simply a woman who married five men. Rather, they regarded her as a divine being, perceiving her as a celestial figure sent to safeguard the Pandavas from danger. The Pandavas revered her as a goddess and regarded her as a woman who wed only Arjuna.

This evocative piece offers insight into the viewpoint of the Tamilians.

'He adored you, Mother, by drawing the bow, Vijayan, O Mother, Arjuna.

By releasing the arrow, Mother,

He adorned you, Kantipan, Arjuna. You embody the Eternal Force for all five Pandavas.

Pucari is a traditional song in specific parts of Tamil Nadu. Pucari songs serve as invocatory melodies, functioning as a "song of praise" that dramatists perform during Draupadi festivals, typically at the start and conclusion of their extended theatrical presentations. We can also assert that Pucari songs expressed devotion to Draupadi. While some pujari songs do not provide many references to the disrobing of Draupadi, the Tindivanam pujari song highlights this incident. However, the portrayal shifts from a scene of degradation to hopeful victory: "With the wicked Duryodhana, you played dice and enjoyed it."

In the Chola kingdom, there is a folk tale about a remarkably clever and insightful woman named Anjaramma, the daughter of a scholarly Brahmin. She consistently attended the court, outshining the

other esteemed scholars. In a calculated effort to humiliate her publicly, they offered her a silky fabric, expertly crafted to glide effortlessly from her waist. Anjaramma grasped their motives, and thus, when she appeared in court, she draped the fabric in a manner that ensured it would remain securely in place, regardless of the circumstances. The narrative likened her to Draupadi, a woman who endured humiliation and scorn from the authorities. In a manner akin to Anjaramma, Draupadi perceived Duryodhana's intention to humiliate her. Rather than relying on the widely accepted tale of Krishna's intervention during the disrobing episode, she took matters into her own hands, ensuring her saree was sufficiently long to preserve her dignity in public. The conviction about the power of the Devi in Tamil Nadu was profound. People revered Draupadi as an omniscient goddess with foreknowledge of the events that would unfold the day before her death. Some people associate Draupadi with Durga, envisioning her with a lion as her vehicle, and recognise her connection to various village goddesses in South Indian communities.

Tamil Nadu traditions place a greater emphasis on the depiction of the female character Draupadi within the epic. These vernacular adaptations grant her greater autonomy and endow her with divine abilities. Tamil Nadu's folk traditions are home to one of the most noteworthy examples of these local adaptations, which significantly emphasize Draupadi. The Vanniyar community holds her in high regard and observes the Draupadi Amman festival with great significance. During the festival, the Vanniyar community presents a rendition of the Mahabharata from Draupadi's perspective, whom they regard as a central goddess. The community held Draupadi in high esteem in the Gingee area, viewing her as a maternal figure of divine significance. The priests chanted hymns about a magnificent mother goddess who descended to earth to become the wife of the Pandavas, safeguarding them during their time in the forest. Cattival Cettiyar portrays Draupadi as a manifestation of supreme power, destined to wed the five Pandavas. This representation does not depict Draupadi as a divine figure of her disrobing event. We excluded the section because it did not align with the Vanniyar community's convictions regarding Draupadi's status as a goddess. Even the Pucari songs had entirely omitted that aspect. However, only Tindivanam Pucari's songs referenced the disrobing incident. Nonetheless, this iteration omitted any references to vengeful sentiments, focussing solely on the expectation of triumph for the populace. In contrast to the portrayal of Draupadi in the epic as a vengeful figure, this folk tradition presents her as a benevolent goddess.

The enactment illustrates Draupadi's role as a divine figure who saved the Pandavas during their exile. These communities did not view her polyandrous marriage as a significant issue, given the historical prevalence of such unions among them. Vyasa's Mahabharata narrative, with its patriarchal framework scrutinising a woman's virginity and sexuality, did not require the members of these communities to justify Draupadi's union with five brothers.

The tale of the southern Goddess Goddess Virapanchali presents her as a divine incarnation of Draupadi, who managed her desires by drinking blood, illustrating how maturity played a role in her domestication. As per a legend, Bhima, one of the Pandavas, expressed his inability to fulfil Draupadi's desires to Lord Krishna. Krishna responded by stating that his wife was the mother goddess Adi Maya Shakti. One night, as the Pandavas searched for Draupadi within their home, they witnessed her in a state of abandonment, unrestrained and liberated, as she consumed the blood of goats and buffaloes. When she spotted her husbands, she dashed towards them to consume them. The Pandavas hurried back into the hut, permitting her entrance only because she vowed not to consume them. When she consented to the condition, Bhima's hand released the door, allowing her to pierce his skin, resulting in a few drops of blood falling to the floor. The children's cries reached her ears, bringing her a sense of calm once more. These incidents are not included in Vyasa's Mahabharata.

People noted that Draupadi avoided intimate relations with her husband in the forest. According to the Draupadi cult, she was a devoted wife who, compared to the epic, was also regarded as a virgin goddess, elevating her status in folklore. The epic regarded the account of her walking through the fire to reclaim her purity after each year, as she prepared for her subsequent marriage, as a symbol of virtue. Nevertheless, within folklore, it was also regarded as a symbol of purity, and her abilities could

transform the red-hot coals into something as gentle as flowers. She would sometimes adorn her hair with fiery red coals, yet it would remain as refreshing as blossoms. Such powers instilled in individuals the confidence to approach Draupadi by traversing through flames. People viewed this practice as a means to purify themselves of their transgressions and establish a connection with the Mother Goddess. The Vanniyar community has formalised Draupadi's walking into the fire as a symbol of purity. They also chose to walk on fire to honor Draupadi and seek the Goddess's favor. In Tamil Nadu, walking on fire is known as the Thimithi festival.

Draupadi Amman Festival and Thimithi Festival

In Tamil Nadu, people envisioned Draupadi as a protector not only of the Pandavas but also of the community's people. For a millennium, the devotees of Draupadi revered her as an incarnation of the ancient Goddess Goddess Kaliyamman. The followers of Draupadi viewed her as a divine figure beyond Arjuna's reach, and they shaped their understanding of the epic according to their traditions and convictions. Due to their community's differing beliefs about the broader context of India, Draupadi did not receive the same significance as a wife of five men. People regarded Draupadi as a pure and virtuous woman, akin to Arundhati, untouched by the complexities of polyandry, and as a fundamental embodiment of divine feminine power. She possessed an uncanny awareness as if she were already aware of her destiny and that of her nation before her disrobing incident. It was suggested that she had been given a new purpose in this place—to assist Sunatan, a local ruler, in defeating a demon that haunted the surrounding woods. His uncertainty led him to tug at her hair, resulting in a bruise on her head, and consequently, the Goddess rendered him blind. Such were the powers of the Goddess.

Several songs depicted Draupadi as a maternal figure accompanied by a lion, reminiscent of the warrior goddess Durga in a hidden form. Given her depiction as a divine figure, numerous individuals within the community viewed Draupadi as a sibling of Lord Vishnu. In Tamil mythology, it was typical for Lord Vishnu to have a sister. The Pucari songs also depict Draupadi as having a sibling relationship with Lord Krishna. The narratives in Indian mythology, such as the Mahabharata, do not make such claims about Draupadi.

A stage performance known as Terukkuttu brings the myth integral to the ritual worship to life during the Draupadi Amman festival in Tamil Nadu. This represents a type of traditional performance art currently limited to select regions in Tamil Nadu, including Dharmapuri, North and South Arcot, and approximately the area associated with a prominent Draupadi cult, traditionally referred to as Thondaimandalam. The festival spans 21 days, while the various events of the Kurukshetra War took place over 18 days. Terukkuttu is essential in the Draupadi Amman festival, with specific episodes adapted to honour Goddess Draupadi. In the play, rather than physically pulling her hair, Dusshasan refers to Draupadi as Amman (mother) and yanks on a rope attached to her hair. The Mahabharata does not depict Draupadi with the same reverence and awe as South Indian traditions. Terukkuttu confidently depicted Draupadi as a formidable force, emphasising her role as the one who ended the Kurus' war. Bheema agreed to keep her actions of slaying and consuming creatures akin to demons secret, and in return, she was required to protect the Pandavas.

During the colonial era, the contemporary Tamil poet C Subramania Bharati, also known as Paratiyar, articulated the emergence of a new cult known as the Paratiyar cult, where individuals worshipped Draupadi. He garnered significant acclaim for his poetry's stunning artistry and originality. He also crafted an adaptation of the Mahabharata that gained considerable popularity among the Tamilians in the region. Primarily, he crafted a reinterpretation of the episode involving Draupadi's disrobing. This episode featured numerous interpretations by various local artists, yet it was particularly notable for Paratiyar's ability to express the theme of political freedom within the nation. Tamil literature recognises Kamban's contribution to the Ramayana as a significant element; however, it primarily resonated with the upper caste and class demographics, leaving the lower class largely unengaged.

The Paratam cult presented performances that showcased a distinctive fusion of classical epic narratives and the essential local aspects of village Hinduism in the Tamil region. Although Draupadi, represented as Amman (GoddessGoddess) or Tiraupataiyamman, was the primary divine figure, the focus also encompasses both epic and local characters. The ritual performance of the Paratam honored and satisfied all these deities through three distinct methods: temple rituals, poetic recitations known as Piracankam, and all-night presentations of the Therukkuttu.

The community altered these facts to align with their convictions. Given the community's predominantly martial nature, they had no reservations regarding Draupadi as the mother goddess. They primarily consumed non-vegetarian food, so they had no qualms about offering such items to the deities, as they believed that the gods also favoured non-vegetarian offerings. They firmly believed in the ceremonial practices surrounding these deities within folk traditions. The socio-cultural beliefs of the community shaped the oral traditions surrounding Draupadi in Tamil Nadu.

Folklore tradition held women in high regard, with Draupadi's status as a mother goddess surpassing her portrayal in the epic Mahabharata. Tamil Nadu's traditions portray the Mahabharata as a cultural essence, thereby interpreting the narrative through the lens of the Mother Goddess. The historical period of Tamil Nadu occurred significantly after the Mahabharata, leading to distinct South Indian preferences in their viewpoints. During the Chola period, the Mahabharata began to disseminate throughout other regions of South India.

RITUALS LINKED TO THE CELEBRATION OF DRAUPADI AMMAN

- Flag Raising
- The planting of the 'nine' grains
- The beginning of sections of the Mahabharata narration
- Draupadi's emergence (a daytime performance)
- The start of the Terrukkuttu troupe's performance series spanned an impressive eighteen nights of theatrical presentation.
- Around the third night of the series, the Terrukkuttu performance "The Marriage of Draupadi" (to Arjuna) occurs.
- Around the third night of the series, the Terrukkuttu performance "The Marriage of Draupadi" (to Arjuna) occurs.
- The binding of kappa wristlets (turmeric-dyed amulets) on temple officiants and representations of deities (occasionally accompanied by flag hoisting).
- Draupadi's ceremonial figure adornment, with her hair flowing freely
- The firewalking typically occurs on Sunday morning following the conclusion of the eighteenth Terrukkuttu drama titled 'Eighteenth.'

Flag hoisting: Several temples begin their festivities by raising the Goddess's flag and her vehicle, the lion, outside the temple. Numerous Draupadi temples in India do not have permanent flag poles, necessitating the cutting and erection of new ones every year.

The process of planting the nine grains, referred to as 'navadhanya', typically occurs during the inaugural ceremony of the festival (flag hoisting). This ensures that grains germinate and grow during the celebration. This aligns with the performance depicting Draupadi's wedding at various places of worship. Typically, the grains are located within the temple, either in the inner sanctum or just outside. At the festival's end, people either discard or dispose of the sprouts somehow. An incident from the Mahabharata, where the Pandavas and Draupadi lived in seclusion in the forest and were deprived of food, references the 'nine grains ritual.' Duryodhana sought to guarantee that the

Pandavas lacked sustenance, so he provided roasted grain to all who approached him for food. Draupadi, disguised as a gypsy, managed to acquire some roasted grain, which Krishna, through his magical abilities, transformed into growing grains. This episode is maintained within the Draupadi tradition in the Terrukkuttu performance titled 'Draupadi the Gypsy'. The untimely deaths of Draupadi's children following the battle may symbolize the cycle of life and loss in this grain ritual.

The Draupadi Amman festival elaborates on this ritual, using Terrukkuttu as a theatrical presentation to illustrate Draupadi's story through folk art. Terrukkuttu is referred to as the street dance of Tamil Nadu. Terrukkuttu is referred to as the street dance of Tamil Nadu. We can trace the origins of these dramas back to 1600 BCE. We can trace the origins of Terrukkuttu back to 1600 BCE. However, the early nineteenth century identified the earliest credible records of Terrukkuttu performances associated with the eighteen-day Draupadi festival in Dindigul, Tamil Nadu, which featured eighteen distinct dramas as part of the street procession. Traditional Terrukkuttu performances took place at night, usually in outdoor settings within the temple grounds, with each distinct performance lasting through the night and ending at dawn. Traditional Terrukkuttu performances took place at night, usually in outdoor settings within the temple grounds, with each distinct performance lasting through the night and ending at dawn.

Typically, the temple officiants connect the kappa to them during the flag-hoisting ceremony before the broader group of participants do. The officiants first secure wristlets to all the temple deities, then attach them to the binding cords of the festival's primary drum. The kappa holds three primary significances:

It brings all participants into a deeply personal connection with the deity.

It obligates those who wish to engage in the festival, especially the firewalk, to achieve a state of sexual and overall ritual purity.

It guarantees the participants the protection of the Goddess.

The Tamilians observed a festival known as Thimithi, which features a ceremonial practice of walking through fire. A series of rituals unfolds, recreating significant moments from the Mahabharata. Thimithi symbolises battle triumph in the Mahabharata, where the Pandavas emerged victorious over the Kauravas. In contemporary times, a symbolic depiction of Draupadi undergoing new trials after enduring hardships exists. The procession of the Pandaram, the chief priest, traversing the flames with the Karagam, the sacred pot, is a powerful representation of Draupadi.

Not only does Tamil Nadu observe this practice extensively, but so do Sri Lanka, Singapore, Malaysia, South Africa, and various other nations with significant South Indian communities. According to the Tamil calendar, this celebration occurs primarily one week before Diwali in Aipasi. Aipasi denotes the period spanning from mid-October to mid-November in the Tamil calendar. Many believed Draupadi had to traverse a bed of burning coals and emerge unscathed following the Mahabharata war to demonstrate her innocence. A group of Tamilians known as the Draupadi Amman cult revere Draupadi as Draupadi Amman. They regard her as a village goddess, meticulously following the rituals and festivals dedicated to her. One notable village in Tamil Nadu is Kondal, located in the Nagapattinam district. The festival saw the Tamilians venerate Draupadi as the ancestral deity. The festival saw the Tamilians venerate Draupadi as the ancestral deity. Tamil Nadu and Karnataka have numerous temples dedicated to Draupadi and Kondal. People of all genders, including children, believe that traversing fire cleanses one's soul from sins. The celebration included specific ceremonies. The festival featured particular ceremonies.

Among These Practices Are:

The Thimithi cycle begins on the first Monday of the Tamil month of Aadi, between July and August. Sri Marriamman Temple raises a flag featuring the image of Lord Hanuman, the Monkey God, to commemorate this event. The Sri Marriamman temple will recite the Tamil rendition of the

Exploring Draupadi's Representation in Indian Mythology: The Mahabharata and South Indian Oral Traditions

Mahabharata every night until two days after the Thimithi ritual. At the Sri Marriamman temple, the celebration of Thimithi and associated activities begins and ends. At the Sri Marriamman temple, the celebration of Thimithi and associated activities begins and ends. Daily prayers and fasting are essential for up to three weeks before the Thimithi ritual, serving as a means of purification and cleansing for the devotees.

The Tamil community observes Aravan Puja on the first Monday before the new moon in the Tamil month of Purattasi, which falls between September and October. The Tamil community observes Aravan Puja on the first Monday before the new moon in the Tamil month of Purattasi, which falls between September and October. During this time, the Tamil community participates in the Aravan puja, also known as 'prayers for Aravan.' These prayers honor Arjuna's son, who made the ultimate sacrifice to Goddess Kali to secure victory for the Pandavas. He was the offspring of Arjuna and his Naga spouse, Uloopi. People also refer to him as Iravan. People typically showcase the head of Aravan to symbolize the sacrifice and place a torch near Aravan's shrine to signify the battle of Kurukshetra.

The Battle of Kurukshetra: This significant event commemorates the 18-day conflict that culminated in the Pandava triumph. During the final phases of the conflict, Lord Krishna, the embodiment of Lord Vishnu, the Preserver of the universe, took on the role of Arjuna's charioteer. To commemorate this occasion, a chariot procession takes place around Telok Blangah and Bukit Merah on Friday and Saturday, leading up to Thimithi.

Keesaka Samharam: This ceremony occurs nearly a month before the Thimithi ceremony. This ritual depicts the defeat of Keesaka, who served as the commander-in-chief for the king of Matya, an ancient Indian kingdom. In his effort to win over Draupadi, Keesaka meets his end at the hands of Bhima, one of the brothers from the Pandava lineage.

In the lead-up to the Thimithi festival, devotees engage in a period of preparation. Ten days before the firewalking ceremony, they offer their prayers while carrying milk pots, and the women participate in kumbiduthandam, a ritual involving prostration after taking three steps. Male devotees exclusively practice the Angaprathachanam, a worship form that involves rolling one's body. During the Angaprathachanam, the men don their dhoti and roll across the grounds of Sri Marriamman Temple, completing one to three laps of 150 meters each.

The Thimithi ceremony entails excavating a fire pit measuring approximately 3 meters in length within the grounds of the Sri Mariamman temple. After excavating the enormous pit with the burning coals, another smaller pit awaits milk pouring. For assistance, the individual responsible for igniting the fire pit uses sandalwood pieces. After the opening prayers, all participants in the firewalking ceremony fasten a yellow string with turmeric and a sprig of margosa or neem leaf to their wrists. After the opening prayers, all participants in the firewalking ceremony fasten a yellow string with turmeric and a sprig of margosa or neem leaf to their wrists. The firewalkers, all men, take a traditional 5-kilometre journey from the Sri Srinivasa Perumal temple on Serangoon Road to the Sri Mariamman temple on South Bridge Road. Before the firewalkers made their way to the Sri Mariamman temple for the firewalk, a ritual of penance involved striking their hands with a Chaatai (whip). However, the government has now banned this practice.

The Sri Mariamman temple meticulously arranges firewood in pits specially excavated for the firewalk. Afterward, they maintain the flames, which occasionally reach such elevated temperatures that the temple walls need water cooling. The Thimithi ceremony commences as the chief priest walks across the firepit, skilfully balancing the karagam atop his head. After the journey, the participants traverse the 3-meter-long pit and immerse their feet in a pool of cow's milk. A firehose dispenses milk and water to douse the flames in the pit. Following the firewalking ceremony, an evening procession featuring Sri Draupadi Amman will take place, pausing at designated locations for devotees to present their prayers. While firewalking is the ceremony's pinnacle, the Thimithi cycle concludes two days later. On this day, reciting the concluding chapter of the Mahabharata illustrates the war's triumph by

lowering the battle flag and the coronation of Yudhishtira, the eldest of the Pandava brothers.

The festival culminates in performing scenes from the Mahabharata, highlighting Draupadi's trial by fire, a testament to her strength and commitment to righteousness. For over two millennia, India has celebrated the festival. Beyond this narrative, the true essence of this celebration lies in grasping the sacred nature of fire and its purifying effect on those who traverse it. In the local context, Thimithi is known as Poo Methipoo, drawing a comparison between the colour of coal and the vibrant heaps of orange flowers. In Tamil, the term for flowers is "poo," whereas "methipoo" denotes the colour orange. This ritual is open to participation from both men and women. In Tamil Nadu, many villages consistently hold this annual event before the Goddess Mariamman temple. Participants begin their practice at the break of dawn, around 4 a.m., and conclude by 11 a.m. Genuine devotion to Draupadi is widely believed to enable one to traverse the flames without harm.

Karaga Festival

Karnataka reveres Draupadi as a manifestation of divine feminine power, honouring her like the veneration of local goddesses. The Karaga festival is associated with the Karaga, a folk dance honouring Draupadi, referred to as Droupthamma in this region.

We can trace the origins of the Karaga tradition back five centuries. It is believed that this festival emerged from the Tigala community, a Tamil-speaking group of gardeners in Southern Karnataka. Individuals in this community identified themselves as Vanihikula Kshatriyas. Specific individuals assert that the Tigala community descends from the Veerakumars, who were part of the legendary army that assisted Draupadi in overcoming the demon. Some believe the lions of Angirasa, the sage whose descendants established many dynasties governing South India, are the community's origins. Some individuals believe that the Tigala community traces its lineage back to Agni, the deity associated with fire in Indian mythology. The Puranas depict Draupadi as an exemplary woman, while the Tigalas revere her as their community deity. The celebration is held in honour of Draupadi.

This dance features a ritual vessel filled with water, beautifully decorated, and balanced on the carrier's head, while those around them raise their swords high as part of the tradition. The artists would execute a range of acrobatic displays during the procession, accompanied by several musical instruments such as the 'Thavi,' 'Nadaswaram,' 'Muni,' 'Udukka,' and Panba. Karnataka observes the Karaga festival, whereas Bengaluru's celebration attracted thousands of artists. The Mysore king reportedly invited scholars in the 17th century to establish the scriptural basis of the Karaga performance. The Mysore king reportedly invited scholars in the 17th century to establish the scriptural basis of the Karaga performance. They concluded that kara means hand, and ga means "that which is held." The festival is known as Karaga because the priest carries the Karaga, a water pot in Kannada, in his left hand on the day of its "birth."

Rituals Preparation for The Karaga Celebration

Two weeks before Chaitra's full moon night, the festival's organisation began with raising the temple flag on the banks of the Sampangi tank and reciting mantras. A special puja honouring Draupadi takes place on the sixth day. On the seventh day, tradition dictates retrieving the unclean Karaga, or hasi Karaga, from a nearby saltwater pond. Three days before the festival, the Tigala community selects the Veerakumars. The selected individuals receive initiation at the temple and maintain their purity and innocence until the conclusion of the festival. The firewalking ritual takes place on the ninth day. On this day, the temple Veerakumaras dress in dhotis and wield swords in their hands. They perform a mesmerizing dance over glowing embers, and in their fervor, they strike their bare chests with the edges of their swords. Then, they begin to run over the charcoals. This is when the garaga effortlessly positions itself above the head of the carrier, who remains in seclusion. The temple's vicinity is filled with 500 exquisitely adorned chariots that journey from various parts of the city to partake in the festival's celebration. Before transporting the vessel, the individual must engage in a strict process representing the deity of strength. He departs from his residence and reaches the

sanctuary to embrace a period of solitude ahead of the celebration. His spouse takes on the appearance of a suffering individual and fails to recognise him amidst the procession. She presents her mangalsutra and bangles to her husband. Once the festival concludes, the couple undergoes a remarriage ceremony. They confine the individual to the temple grounds and engage him in preliminary ceremonies. He then maintains a diet of milk and fruits until the festival's conclusion.

Commemoration of the Karaga Festival

Remarkable rituals and a stunning procession mark the Karaga festival. The karaga consists of an earthen pot holding a floral pyramid and a small figure of the Goddess, topped with a delicate silver umbrella. The head has the karaga aloft, maintaining a delicate balance without contact. The precise contents of the Potter mystery remain unknown, but it is thought that the pot holds items such as lemon, vermilion, tamarind, and more. The garage carrier dons a woman's attire in shades of saffron and adorns his forehead with vermilion. He also adorns himself with her bangles and mangalsutra. He subsequently positions the karaga atop his head, and the procession commences from the Dharmaraya Swamy temple at the stroke of midnight.

The garage bearer is surrounded by numerous turbaned, bare-chested, and dhoti-clad Veerakumaras who wield unsheathed swords. The swords hold great importance for the bearer of the karaga, as losing balance and permitting the karaga to fall would result in the Veerakumars accompanying him, being expected to stab him with the swords. However, to this day, such a misfortune has never occurred to anyone.

The procession winds its way through numerous streets and alleys of the city, arriving at the temple in the early hours of the following day. Before the profession's return to the temple, it pauses at the Dargah-e-Sharif of Hazrat Tawkal Mastan, an 18th-century Muslim saint. According to tradition, the saint shared a close friendship with the Hindu priest. On his deathbed, the saint desired the karaga to pause at the Dargah, or mausoleum, following its departure from the temple. The Tigala community has maintained this tradition for over 300 years following the saint's passing. The event unfolds with the rhythmic cadence of drums and the captivating exhibition of swordsmanship. Several individuals carry pots adorned with flowers on their heads to test their character's resilience. Upon the procession's return to the temple, participants conclude the celebrations by dousing one another with turmeric water. The kamaga returns to its original saltwater pond the following day. The karaga carrier concludes his period of fasting.

The bearer must not let the ceremonial vessel slip from their grasp throughout the performance, as failure would result in severe consequences. We intend this practice to honour the essence of being a woman and the qualities of femininity. However, one could also interpret it as mocking Yudhishtira for failing to shield his wife during the disrobing incident. Typically, an individual would don women's attire and bear the substantial karaga pot, embodying a temporary manifestation of Draupadi. Usually, we choose a male for this task, as the physical strength associated with masculinity is required to carry the Karaga. The Acharya Pujari sect of the Tigala community selects a man because carrying the Karaga requires physical strength. The Karaga priest undergoes austerities for six months before adorning himself with his wife's mangalsutra, which she retrieves during the marriage ceremony on the tenth day. He additionally dons a sari and adorns his forehead with vermilion, which signifies the status of a married woman. During this event, he adorns himself with thick black bangles. She will see her husband from the time of Vijaydashami, as he will reside in the temple once the Karaga concludes. When the Karaga procession halts in front of her residence, she, unlike the other devotees, cannot receive the blessing. Like the Vijaydashami celebration of Dussehra or Dasara, the final day also marks the victory of good that the Karaga commemorates. Throughout the 11-day festival, attendees receive complimentary cooked rice blended with various spices.

Bengaluru Karaga Celebration

The Dharmaraya Swamy temple in Nararathpete typically hosts the Bengaluru Karaga. The

procession begins at the Dharmaraya Swami temple, the event's starting point. The priest is dressed in feminine clothing and holds the Karaga, a three-foot-tall pot symbolising Draupadi. According to legend, the date paused before the Hazrat Tawakkul Mastan dargah and only resumed its journey when Mastan Baba, a revered saint, tied a thread around the foot of the priest carrying the karaka. The procession paused at the temples, honoring Mariamma, Muthyalamma, and Yellamma, whom Draupadi regarded as her sisters.

Karnataka observes the Karaga festival, with subtle differences in the rituals and traditions practised in various regions. In Madikeri, four Karagas, revered as Shakti Devtas, emerge from four significant Mariyamma temples to participate in the festival. This celebration occurs on Vijaydashami day in Mysore, with its inaugural festivities dating back to 1924, and spans four days.

Indeed, a narrative highlights Draupadi's bravery and strength, in which she assembled a group of warriors known as the Veerakumaras to defeat a demon named Timrasura, whose defeat was crucial for the Pandavas' victory in the battle. As the moment approached for Draupadi to depart from the earthly realm, her warriors implored her to remain. Due to her inability to stay with them, she assured them she would visit the Veerakumaras annually on the full moon of the first month in the Hindu calendar. Karnataka's people celebrated her arrival with a festival honouring her as Adi Shakti.

Yakshagana

Yakshagana is not merely a festival in Karnataka; it is a vibrant form of folk theatre that draws its themes from the Ramayana, Mahabharata, and various mythological narratives. One significant play, Draupadi Pratapa, is essential for grasping the representation of Draupadi within this theatrical tradition. The play portrays Draupadi not merely as an ordinary woman who married the Pandavas but rather as the embodiment of the supreme Goddess Goddess Chandi. The play illustrates her dominance by defeating the demon Kaundilya, who posed an obstacle to Pradyumna and Rati's union. People perceived this as a part of Krishna's divine play, aimed at instilling humility in the Pandavas and deliberately addressing their pride. As she embodied the Goddess Goddess Chandi, the folk tradition appeared to assign divine supreme powers to Draupadi, suggesting that no masculine force could overcome her. This play shows that no man could conquer her, and the abilities ascribed to Draupadi surpassed those of the Pandavas, with men themselves seeking her assistance in times of need. The society during this period exhibited matrilineal and matriarchal characteristics, and it was not considered unusual for women to have multiple husbands. As they consumed non-vegetarian food, they found it natural to offer non-vegetarian dishes to the deities.

Telugu Utsavam

In Andhra Pradesh, a celebration known as Alugu Utsavam takes place in honour of Draupadi. People revere her as the Goddess Goddess Shakti, and an 18-day celebration known as Brahmotsavalu takes place during July-August, following the Varalakshmi Vratam. The Draupadi-Dharmajula Swami temple in Puttur hosts significant events over the last three days of the festival, with Alugu Utsavam, Agnigunda Pravesam, and Rathotsavam being the highlights of this celebration. Many devotees typically come from the Tamil-speaking regions of Puttur, Nagari, Nagalapuram, and the adjacent villages of Tamil Nadu to participate in special pujas. She is revered as a manifestation of divine energy. She is represented by a six-foot-high sword sanctified with its pointed edge resting on the ground within the Draupadi Dharmarajula Swami Temple in Puttur. People revered Draupadi for embodying divine power as a formidable sword. This event will take place on Friday, followed by the observance of Varalakshmi Vratam. An elaborate chariot will parade the deity through the main roads on Saturday. Shortly after the ritual concludes, the enormous sword, balanced on its pointed edge, subtly tilts towards the sanctum sanctorum, adding a fascinating aspect to the procession.

The event will culminate on Saturday night with the Agnigunda Pravesam, where the faithful will walk on embers to honor their commitments. A tale exists that recounts how, when a strange illness plagued the community, the inhabitants, guided by a wise sage, discovered an idol of Draupadi in an

ancient well and constructed a modest temple to honour her. Over time, individuals experienced healing, leading to the establishment of a grand temple in the region in subsequent years. The cult of Draupadi encompassed a belief that she was an incarnation of Kali, born to aid Krishna in his mission to eradicate evil from the world. People regarded Draupadi as a sister to Krishna, just as they viewed Shakti as his sister. People viewed her as a fierce embodiment of strength and power. The representations of Draupadi as a divine figure in South Indian oral traditions were noteworthy.

The Mahabharata, Authored By Veda Vyasa

The Mahabharata, authored by Veda Vyasa and translated by Pratap Chandra Roy, holds Draupadi in high regard yet does not elevate her to a goddess. Before her death, Draupadi was not considered a fundamental deity and had no significant role to fulfil. The Mahabharata portrays her as an intense character originating from fire, but the epic does not reveal her true nature until the incident of her disrobing. Draupadi faced criticism for marrying five men, and they recounted the reasons behind her multiple marriages. The book failed to illustrate her propensity for taking the lives of men or animals for sustenance, akin to the demons lurking in the forest. Rather than initiating and concluding the conflict as recounted in the oral traditions, she relied on her husbands to eliminate the men or engage in battle on her behalf. Draupadi was not a divine being, nor did she possess the ability to foresee Duryodhana's intentions during her disrobing incident. Following her time in the forest, people viewed her as an ordinary spouse rather than a pure deity. In the era of the Mahabharata, she existed within a patriarchal society, and her historical context depicted her not as a goddess but as a formidable figure capable of defending the Pandavas from enslavement, albeit not portrayed with the physical strength often emphasised in vernacular adaptations of the epic. The Mahabharata does not mention her involvement in creating the Veerakumaras to defeat the demon Timrasura. Indeed, in the Mahabharata, there are several instances where the Pandavas offered their protection to her. The narrative did not portray her as a divine figure, nor did she traverse the coals after the conflict, contrary to what the oral traditions suggested. Draupadi endured the oppressive structures of her society, facing numerous injustices before ultimately rising to triumph. She endured multiple injustices to achieve male success. Like other women of that era, she endured innumerable injustices to achieve male success. In her swayamvara, her father disregarded her preference and organised an archery contest to determine who would claim Draupadi's hand. Father organised an archery contest to determine who would claim Draupadi's hand. The competition for Draupadi's hand in marriage compelled her to consent. Despite the term Swayamvara, the patriarchal framework ultimately determined a woman's autonomy in decision-making.

Another instance where her father viewed her as a possession was when he wagered her during a dice game and dragged her by her hair to the court. She reprimanded everyone in the court, questioning why no one spoke up when she was pulled into the proceedings after Yudhishtira had staked himself before Draupadi's own staked fate. The oral traditions of South India do not extensively cover this topic. The narrative also illustrates Draupadi's unwavering loyalty as a wife; despite the injustices inflicted by the Kauravas, she remained with the Pandavas during their exile and cared for her children. Such details were absent in the South Indian epics, which portrayed her primarily as a virgin goddess rather than as the spouse of the five Pandavas. She experienced significant humiliation from the men and the society surrounding her as they persistently labeled her with derogatory terms. She was reluctant to marry five men, but he had to make a compromise and wed them to fulfil the promise made to the mother of the Pandavas, leaving her without a say in the situation. Despite this, with her determination and bravery, she rose as a champion in the grand narrative of the Mahabharata.

The Mahabharata emerged during an era where men held significant prominence, while women had limited rights and existed within a patriarchal framework. People often remembered Draupadi not for her strength and autonomy but for her beauty and role as the five brothers' wife. People viewed her as the primary instigator of the conflict, having urged her husbands to engage in battle against the Kauravas. This is a prominent illustration of how one can hold a woman's allure accountable for immoral conduct while the men in the community evade responsibility for their actions. She became

well-known for her disrobing incident and needed Krishna's rescue. This exemplifies the perception of Draupadi as a figure in need of rescue. Acknowledging that she was a strong individual adept at asserting herself is essential. She had a critical goal and was adept at asserting herself and employing her intellect when the situation required. She was knowledgeable and challenged the royal elders in the assembly for allowing the injustice directed at her and failing to defend her. She needed to establish her presence as an individual and use any resources available to gain some influence over the dominant societal frameworks. People perceived her as clever and resourceful in her attempts to navigate the structures and assert some control. Furthermore, the male sages who composed the Mahabharata presented their viewpoint through a masculine lens, failing to fully comprehend the complexities of the female psyche. As a result, the portrayal of Draupadi in the Mahabharata is explained.

RESULTS

Draupadi In Indian Mythology

Draupadi is a pivotal figure in Indian mythology, celebrated as one of the most beloved female characters within the rich tapestry of South Indian oral traditions. This section will outline my discoveries and reflections regarding Draupadi in the Mahabharata and why I chose to focus on her for my research project. I will also discuss Draupadi and offer my opinion. I will also highlight any additional information about Draupadi that is relevant to the topic and can be found in the literature.

Personal Connection with The Research

I have a personal connection with the subject I am exploring. My grandmother's tales of Indian mythology, especially the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, have captivated me since my early years. I have also explored numerous texts on Indian mythology and persist in nurturing an intense fascination with the myths. Given my interest in mythology, I am eager to explore the female central character of the Mahabharata, Draupadi, which has motivated me to undertake this project. The Mahabharata holds a profound significance in Indian culture and is one of the most captivating elements of literature. I was intrigued by the oral traditions surrounding Draupadi from South India, which highlighted significant variations in the character's depiction in the Mahabharata, influenced by the socioeconomic context.

Personal Perspectives on The Research Work

In my opinion, Draupadi stands out as a significant and remarkably dynamic character in Indian mythology. Literature, traditional tales, legends, and television series have reimagined Draupadi, the central narrative figure with a rich history. My work briefly overviews various oral traditions in South India, highlighting the enduring Bhagavati cult and their interpretation of Draupadi based on their beliefs. The research could provide important insights into Draupadi's portrayal and the impact of their socioeconomic circumstances on their perceptions of her. A different viewpoint could clarify why South Indian culture depicts Draupadi as a goddess.

Given that Draupadi did not come into existence through conventional means but rather emerged as a fully formed adult in the Mahabharata from the yagna performed by King Drupada and the priests and was prophesied to aid in avenging King Drupada, she was regarded as more than an ordinary woman; she was likened to a goddess. During an era when women had limited access to education in politics, economics, and art, she took it upon herself to acquire extensive knowledge and receive a thorough education in these areas. She applied her expertise to her married life and assisted her spouses in making sound political choices for the benefit of the people. As she navigated a male-dominated society, she had to strategically manoeuvre within the existing structures to gain influence and authority over the prevailing system. She had to leverage her husband's affection to seek retribution by eliminating the Kauravas for their public humiliation.

My exploration of Draupadi in the Mahabharata and the oral traditions of South India revealed that her character lacked significant agency, primarily catalysing the ensuing conflict. When the five Pandavas informed her of her impending marriage, she remained unfazed and did not react to their disregard for her autonomy. Instead, they merely viewed her as an object, presenting her destiny as a prize that a warrior could claim after successfully striking an arrow at a spinning fish. However, the depiction of her as a vengeful figure belied her intelligence. The South Indian tradition depicted Draupadi as a goddess, mirroring Krishna's depiction as a deity in the epic. Only animal sacrifice could calm her, portraying her as a powerful force capable of being fierce and spirited when necessary. In this way, the Pandavas revered the forest as a guardian and regarded her as an influential figure, embodying the essence of a virgin goddess. The Pandavas depicted her as possessing extraordinary abilities, capable of rescuing herself from a compromising situation and discerning the motives of those who opposed her. This representation is closely linked to the socio-cultural characteristics of the South Indian region and its culture.

Analysis of the Subject Matter

The subsequent paragraphs provide a detailed exploration of the findings and perspectives presented. People often perceive Draupadi as an influential female figure who motivates the Pandavas to fight the Kauravas. However, she also reflects the patriarchal context of India during the composition of the Mahabharata, embodying a more reserved and feminine side. The South Indian tradition revered her as a goddess and regarded her as a Shakti endowed with immense powers and agency. She was known as a Grama Devta, embodying the essence of the village goddess. People did not regard Draupadi as a genuine woman or an average individual capable of challenging the system in any manner. The epic neither represented her fears nor illustrated her frustrations or experiences. Unlike the South Indian tradition, which did not require such an explanation, we needed to articulate the rationale behind Draupadi's marriage to the five Pandavas. I have also concluded that the distinct eras of the Mahabharata and the southern Indian cult have influenced the representation of Draupadi, particularly about the socioeconomic context of that period in South India. I have observed that specific rituals and traditions linked to the Draupadi cult carry deeper meanings or symbolism related to particular Mahabharata events involving Draupadi.

Data That May Be Shared

There are numerous ways to enhance this work. Given the limited availability of information, this study may need help to deliver a comprehensive analysis of Draupadi's representation in oral traditions and the Mahabharata. Some sources offered insights into the oral traditions surrounding Draupadi; however, access to these resources could be more extensive and challenging. It would be enlightening to explore the historical context and understand how South India's culture perceived Draupadi uniquely and the distinct socio-political landscape of that era. It would be fascinating to explore the Draupadi cult in Kerala.

Additionally, gaining insights into the Brahminization of local South Indian tribal deities and understanding how this process gradually integrated into South Indian culture and impacted the social dynamics of the region would be pretty enlightening. It would be valuable to gain insight into the current status of the South Indian cult. It would be fascinating to explore a woman's viewpoint on the rituals and traditions honouring Draupadi, particularly regarding their active participation throughout the process.

CONCLUSION

The study provides insights into Draupadi from various historical perspectives, drawing on South India's oral traditions and the Mahabharata. This work provides insights into the research conducted on the oral traditions of South India related to Draupadi, as well as references from the original Mahabharata authored by Veda Vyasa. The work briefly discussed the other significant female figures in the epic, including Draupadi, the central female character from the Mahabharata. The work

outlined its objectives and then conducted a literature review to explore a comparative analysis of the epic's Draupadi character and the oral traditions surrounding her in South India. South Indians represent Draupadi in a way that reflects their customs and significant celebrations. The analysis provided a concise overview of her character representation in the epic and the oral traditions of South India. The text comprehensively explores the rituals and traditions associated with various Draupadi festivals. During that period, the study also examined how folk theatre represented South Indian society. During that time, it was possible to uncover the economic and political landscape of South India. The study employed a specific research methodology to examine the techniques used in the process. The chapter discussed the application of a qualitative method, specifically comparative analysis, as well as the process of gathering information and the ethical challenges encountered during the research process. The following chapter offers insights into my relationship with the subject, the reasons behind my choice, and the observations and discoveries I encountered during my research. Additionally, a section delves into information that could have been useful but escaped my notice during the research process.

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Author's contribution

N Sathiyarajan– Conceptualization, Methodology, Writing - Original Draft, Writing - Review & Editing, Visualization, Investigation and Supervision

V Arthy – Validation, Methodology, Conceptualization, and Methodology and Writing - Original Draft

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