



Kumaravyasa's Kshatradraupadi

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Abstract : Kumaravyasa was a renowned Kannada poet of the 15th century, best known for his epic work *Karnata Bharata Kathamanjari*, a retelling of the Mahabharata in the Kannada language. His poetic mastery and deep philosophical insights earned him a revered place in Kannada literature. Writing in the Bhamini Shatpadi meter, Kumaravyasa skillfully blended devotion, heroism, and human values in his verses. His work stands out for its rich language, vivid imagery, and moral depth, making the Mahabharata accessible and engaging to Kannada-speaking audiences. Kumaravyasa is considered one of the greatest poets of medieval Karnataka and a torchbearer of the Bhagavata literary tradition.

Kumaravyasa's version emphasizes the philosophical and moral aspects of the epic, often focusing on the dilemmas and duties of characters like Krishna, Bhishma, and Karna. His narrative style, enriched with native idioms and vivid imagery, makes the text both accessible and profound for Kannada readers. The work reflects the regional flavor and cultural ethos of Karnataka while staying rooted in the grand spirit of the Mahabharata, earning it a timeless place in Kannada literature.

IndexTerms – Kumaravyasa, Draupadi, Medieval Kannada Literature, Bhamini Shatpadi.

I. INTRODUCTION

Our **Kumaravyasa** well known as Naranappa—a divine poet who embodied philosophy, poetic essence, and everything essential for literature—was a true Kannadiga. With a classical foundation and native blend, his poetry remains vibrant even today. All the characters portrayed by Kumaravyasa are truly exceptional and marvelous. Among them, Draupadi stands out as a highly spirited character. Born from fire, Draupadi carried that same dignity and gravity throughout her life. Wherever her character appears in the poem, there is always a strong mark of Kshatriya spirit.

II. KSHATRA DRAUPADI

Draupadi emphatically embraces Kshatriyatva. During Draupadi's Swayamvara itself, her clear stance becomes evident. She turns her face away from all those who come to win her. Draupadi's stand is not to marry an ordinary man. She longs for a partner whose individual personality transcends mere beauty or royal lineage. That is why none of the kings manage to catch her attention. When she sees Krishna, her mind is filled only with a sense of reverence, not romantic interest. When she goes with Arjuna to Kunti, she is met with a great challenge. Sharing her life with all five brothers is not an easy task. Yet, Draupadi is not shaken. She sees herself as a symbol of the soul (jeevatma), and considers the Pandavas as the five vital life-forces (pancha pranas) gifted by the Divine for the protection and fulfilment of the soul. With this spiritual perspective, she steps into a marriage that transcends physicality.

Just when life seems to be flowing smoothly, she is struck by the gravest of humiliations — the deceitful dice game. To her anguished question, **"If he has lost himself, does he still have the right to stake me?"** no answer is given. When valor, righteousness, and heroism turn into silent spectators in Duryodhana's court, Draupadi alone rises courageously to face the adversity. Against unjust and immoral behaviour, she stands as a volcano of self-respect, proclaiming in the assembly that a man who has lost himself has no rights over anything else — thus voicing a profound truth of dharma. When her husbands, who are hailed as heroes of the three worlds, sit helplessly, she turns to Krishna for refuge.

Kumaravyasa's Draupadi is bold and resolute — a wise woman who deeply understands the essence of worldly affairs and the fine distinctions between justice and injustice. Jayadratha, though Nadini's (Sister-In-Law) husband, had been captivated by Draupadi's beauty, and was infatuated with her. Overcome by desire, he sent messengers along with clothes and ornaments to Draupadi, who was then in exile. He thought that since she was in hardship, she would fall for these things. It is admirable that Draupadi, a woman, rejected the tempting offer based on the assumption that women easily fall for ornaments and fine clothes. She accepted and supported the Pandavas in whatever condition they were in and stood by them throughout life. She was always dutiful and disciplined. That is why Draupadi is considered one of the five great women of virtue (Pancha-pativratas).

Draupadi was an otherworldly beauty. Her beauty captivated everyone — even Keechaka desired her. He stooped to the extent of saying, **"My death is inevitable, but I will die after having you!"** Even here, it was Draupadi who suffered. She provoked Bhima with her words: **"A single husband kills the enemy for his wife's honor, and will sacrifice himself. You five husbands, supposed champions**

of three worlds cannot protect one woman — are you truly men or eunuchs?" This fiery anger, this fierce emotion — only KumaraVyasa could depict it so powerfully.

After Keechaka's death and Abhimanyu's wedding, when the Pandavas were content, it was Draupadi who once again reminded them of their duty: *"Has your manliness withered away? Are you now lost in luxury and pleasure?"* Even when Krishna set out on his peace mission at the request of the Pandavas, Draupadi wished for a war of righteousness. Though she understood the terrible consequences of war, she still longed for justice and peace through the criteria of moral values. Here, she even questions Krishna: *"Our sons — brave Sahadeva, Ghatotkacha, Subhadra's son (Abhimanyu) — and our father's army, which is equal to three Akshohini stand ready for battle. Why hesitate now?"* She demands from Krishna: *"Is it going to be peace or war? Tell me!"* She brings the situation to a critical turning point. Krishna too takes a stand for dharma. Draupadi, thus, became the cause for the psychological and philosophical battle of Kurukshetra — and left behind an indelible mark across ages that can never be forgotten.

Draupadi's personality is seen as a symbol of love and courage. Draupadi emerges as the best answer to the question of what a woman can be. As an individual force, the character of Draupadi and the questions raised through her by poet Kumaravyasa have become the questions of all womankind — continuing even to this moment.

III. CONCLUSION

In the Mahabharata, no one else has endured the hardships and humiliations that Draupadi did. Apart from dishonour, insult, and the grief of losing her children, she saw nothing but suffering. Though born a princess of Panchala, she ultimately did not belong to any kingdom — neither fully a Panchali nor just a puppet in the hands of the Pandavas. She asserted her individuality through Krishna. A daughter of fire who lived swallowing flames, she carried out her domestic responsibilities with great competence. The saying, *'Draupadi ate the leftover food after the completion of Pandava's meal, massaged Kunti's legs, taking the role of daughter-in-law'*, stands as a testament to Draupadi's noble qualities. With emotional purity, she served each of the five brothers understanding their individual dispositions. Though she had the boldness to question the dilemmas of justice and injustice, even when pained or enraged, she did so with the humility that reflected the unavoidable nature of the situation — not to be seen as mere stubborn pride. She was Krishna's beloved — his sister, devotee, and the woman who, despite her sorrow over the death of her sons, chose to spare Ashwatthama's life and even forgive Gandhari, stating that *"Women share joy and sorrow alike"*. Draupadi, despite all her pain, stood as a pillar of support for governance — a woman beyond ordinary. *Kshatra Draupadi* is the embodiment of the layered life of Indian womanhood — a fusion of pain, harshness, compassion, and tenderness. *Kumaravyasa's Kshatra Draupadi* is a distinct representation of feminine strength, motherhood, and the truth of a woman's lived experience.

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