



**Sita and Draupadi
the Two Great Icons for Womanhood**

Copyright © 2010, DollsofIndia

Indian mythology is special in that the mythological characters featuring herein, lead very human lives and reflect the human traits of love, courage, valour and righteousness, as also hatred, revenge and violence. Five important women featuring in the Indian epics of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata – also referred to as the Sreshta Naris (chaste or pure women) - have practically shaped the psyche of Indian women in the past and continue to do so, even in this jet age of modernity and advanced technology.

The Sreshta Naris include Sita (wife of Lord Sri Rama), Draupadi (wife of the Pancha Pandavas), Mandodari (the Demon King, Ravana's, wife), Ahilya (consort of Sage Gautama) and Tara (consort of Bali, the tyrant monkey king). In this article, we attempt to study two of these Panchakanyas, Sita and Draupadi.

Sita and Draupadi are considered icons of Indian womanhood even today. While these women show striking similarities in their life graphs, they are also very different in their own ways. Yet, they continue to shape the modern Indian woman in different ways.

Let us first undertake an individual study the lives of both these powerful women, before trying to draw a parallel of their lives.

Goddess Sita

Sita is the wife of Rama, the seventh avatar of Lord Sri Maha Vishnu, one of the Divine Trinity. Sita is one of the central characters of the Hindu Epic, the Ramayana. Born in Sitamarhi in Bihar, Sita was taken to Janakpur in present day Nepal by her father, King Janak, very soon after her birth.

Sita, considered an avatar of Goddess Sri Maha Lakshmi, is widely venerated as an icon for wifely and womanly virtues for all Hindu women.



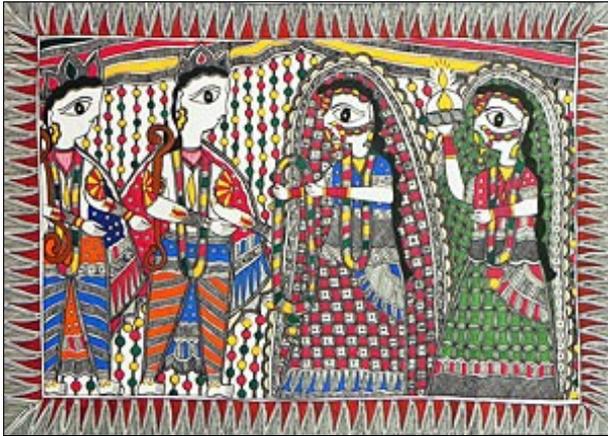
[Buy this Poster](#)

RAMA AND SITA IN EXILE

Legend of Sita's birth

As a foundling, Sita was discovered in a furrow in a ploughed field. She is hence considered the daughter of Bhoodevi or the Goddess Mother Earth. Sita was found by by Janaka, king of Mithila in present day Nepal. Janaka and his wife Sunayana adopted the child and raised her as their own. Hence, Sita is also referred to as Janaki. Since Sita was the Rajkumari or princess of Mithila, she is also referred to as Maithili. Janaka was called "Videha" as he had the ability to transcend body consciousness. Sita is hence also referred to as Vaidehi.

Sita's Swayamvara



[Buy this Painting](#)

RAMA WEDS SITA

effortlessly lifted Shiva's bow and strung it with a booming twang. Sita was given away in marriage to Rama, the prince of Ayodhya, who actually was the avatar of Vishnu.

When Sita attained marriageable age, Janaka arranged a swayamvara (a function where the girl is allowed to select her own groom) for her. Various kings attended the swayamvara in the hope of wedding the beautiful damsel with a divine aura. Janaka promised Sita's hand in marriage to the one who would string a gigantic Shiva's bow, kept in the mandap. All the princes and kings present at the venue failed at repeated attempts of lifting the bow. Even Ravana, the demon king of Lanka, could not succeed in this.

Finally, Rama stepped forward. Having offered obeisance to the bow and to all the elders present at the venue, Rama

Rama's exile

Soon after the wedding, Rama's stepmother, Kaikeyi, demanded from Rama's father, Dasaratha, that Rama be sent to forest on exile. She wanted her own son, Bharata, to become heir to the throne.

Being the very soul of obedience, Rama prepared to leave for his 14-year Vanavasa (stay in the forest). Sita, being a devoted wife, willingly renounced the luxurious life in the palace and joined her husband. Rama's brother, Lakshmana, too joined them for the Vanavasa. They spent some happy years in the Dandaka forest and then moved on to Panchavati.



[Buy this Painting](#)

NISHAD, THE HUNTER KING HELPING RAMA LAKSHMANA AND SITA TO CROSS THE RIVER BY BOAT

Sita's abduction



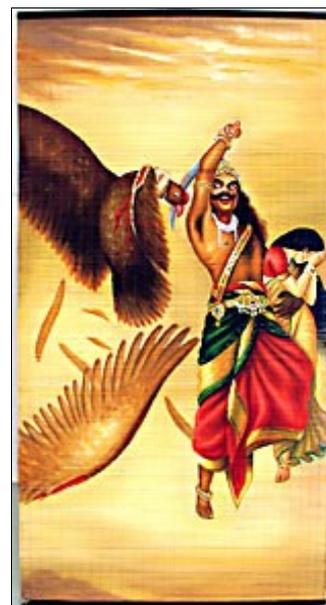
[Buy this Painting](#)

ABDUCTION OF SITA BY RAVANA

The time spent in Panchavati became a bane for Sita, as this was the scene for her abduction by Ravana. Disguising himself as a Brahmana mendicant, begging for alms, Ravana kidnapped Sita, while her husband was away fetching Mareecha, a magnificent golden deer, to please her. Mareecha was in actuality, Ravana's uncle, in the disguise of the attractive deer.

When Ravana's sister, Shoorpanaka, had made advances towards Rama, Lakshmana had cut off her nose in a rage. Sita's abduction, hence, was an act of revenge on the part of Ravana.

The vulture-king, Jatayu, who was a witness to Sita's abduction, tried to protect her. But Ravana chopped off his wings. Jatayu only survived long enough to inform Rama about the incident.



[Buy this Painting](#)

**JATAYU VADHAM - SITA
HORRIFIED SEEING RAVANA
CUTTING JATAYU'S WING**

Ravana took Sita to his kingdom and held her as a prisoner in the Ashokvan. Throughout the year of Sita's captivity, Ravana expressed his desire for her. However, she defied him and struggled to maintain her chastity.

Rama sent his friend and devotee, Hanuman, to seek Sita. Hanuman was the only one who could achieve this. Sita was overjoyed to see Hanuman and gave him her jewelry, asking him to give it to her husband. Hanuman was caught by Lankan forces, but managed to escape and in return burned down the Lanka city.

Sita is rescued



[Buy this Painting](#)

SITA'S AGNIPARIKSHA

According to one version of the story, Sita voluntarily walked into the fire to cleanse herself. She emerged unharmed, as the fire beneath her feet turned to soft lotus petals.

Yet another school of thought states that Rama ordered for Sita Agni-Pariksha as a punishment for her questioning the integrity of Lakshmana, who had refused to leave her alone during the Mareecha episode.

Rama was crowned king and Sita stayed by his side through the Pattabhishekham ceremony.



[Buy this Painting](#)

RAMA IS CROWNED KING WITH SITA BY HIS SIDE

Sita is again sent to exile



[Buy this Poster](#)

SITA'S VANAVASA

Rama's affection for Sita never once wavered, but some residents of Ayodhya still could not accept Sita's captivity in Lanka. A nasty washerman was berating his wayward wife and stating that he would never take her back after she had lived in another man's house. Rama knew Sita was innocent, yet he was forced to ask her to leave Ayodhya, as it was the ruler's duty to pay heed to his praja or subjects.

Rama asked Lakshmana to leave Sita again into the forest, even without her knowledge. This time, Sita was also pregnant. She was given shelter by sage Valmiki in his ashram. There, she delivered her twins, Luv and Kush.

Sita takes refuge with Bhumidevi

Luv and Kush grew to be intelligent and valiant princes. Sita eventually reunited them with their father, Rama. When Rama asked her to come back to him, Sita finally got angry and refused to return to Ayodhya.

Instead, she sought refuge in her mother, Bhumidevi's arms. Hearing her plea for release from her injustice and from a life that had rarely been happy, the earth split open. Bhumidevi appeared and took Sita away with her.



[Buy this Poster](#)

SITA BEING TAKEN AWAY BY MOTHER EARTH

Draupadi

In the Mahabharata, Draupadi, was the adopted daughter of King Drupada of Panchaala. Later, she went on to become the wife of the Pancha (five) Pandavas. Being dark in complexion, she was referred to as Krishnaa. She was also called Panchali, being the daughter of the king of Panchala. Draupadi had five sons, one from each of the Pandavas, namely, Prativindhya, Sutasoma, Shruthakeerti, Satanika, and Srutasena.

Draupadi's birth

King Drupada had once been defeated by Arjuna, one the Pandava princes, on behalf of Drona (the Pandavas' Guru), who subsequently took half his kingdom to humiliate him. Drupada undertook a yagya or fire-sacrifice to gain revenge on Drona.

Draupadi emerged out of this yagya-kunta. She emerged as a strikingly beautiful, copper-skinned young woman. She manifested from the Agni (fire), along with her siblings Dhrishtadyumna and Shikhandi.

Draupadi's Swayamvara



[Buy this set of Dolls](#)

DRAUPADI WITH ARJUNA IN KATHAKALI STYLE



[Buy this Wall Hanging](#)

DRAUPADI FROM MAHABHARATA IN KATHAKALI STYLE WALL HANGING

Drupada wanted Arjuna alone to wed his daughter. The Pandavas were in hiding at that point of time, as they were believed to be dead in the Varanavata episode. Drupada set up a swayamvara for Draupadi, with the idea of bringing Arjuna out into the open.

The participants in the swayamvara had to shoot an arrow at a revolving target, while looking at its reflection in a bowl of water kept under it. Drupada knew that only Arjuna would be able to accomplish this task. Arriving with his brothers disguised as Brahmins, Arjuna successfully hit the target, winning Draupadi's hand in marriage.

Draupadi is married to the Pandavas

When the Pandavas came back home with Draupadi and asked their mother, Kunti, to take a look at what they had brought home, Kunti, without knowing, asked them to share it equally among themselves. The brothers would usually share the Bhiksha (alms) they received every day.

In order to obey their mother's orders, the five Pandavas accepted Draupadi as their wife, without discussing it with her or taking her consent.

Draupadi's polyandry

While polygamy was pretty much accepted during the time of the Mahabharata, polyandry was regarded with much censure in the era of the epic. Hence, Draupadi was much looked-down-upon for having married the five Pandavas. In fact, Karna, during the game of dice, had addressed her as a Veshya or prostitute for having several husbands.

Incidentally, though the matter of polyandry was so controversial, Draupadi is also regarded as one of the five Srestha (or the most chaste) Naris. This in itself is an anomaly and cannot be properly explained.

Reason for Draupadi having five husbands

When Krishna visits the family after the wedding, he tells Draupadi that her becoming the wife of five brothers came to be because of a karmic connection - from an incident in her previous birth.

In that birth, Draupadi had been a staunch devotee of Shiva. She had undergone severe penance to please Him and when He manifested, she asked Him to grant her a husband with five desirable qualities.

Shiva told her that it would be difficult to get one husband with all the five qualities. But he granted her a boon that she would get the same in her next birth. Hence she got married to five brothers, each one representing one of those qualities.



[Buy this Wall Hanging](#)

SHIVA

Draupadi Vastraharan

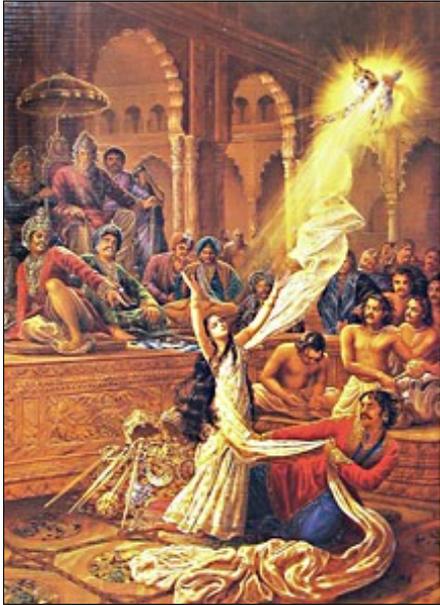
The Draupadi vastraharan is the turning point in the Mahabharata, one which verily marked a definitive moment in the epic. The vastraharan or the cheerharan is one of the most important events that ultimately led to the Mahabharata war.

Yudhishtira and his four brothers became the rulers of Indraprastha, under the sovereignty of King Dhritarashtra. Dhritarashtra's son Duryodhana who resided lived in his father's empire, Hastinapura, was always looking at ways to defeat his cousins.

Together with his brothers, friend Karna and maternal uncle Shakuni, he plotted to bring them down. He called the Pandavas to Hastinapura to play a game of dice. Shakuni was skilled at winning by unfair means. The plan was that Shakuni would play against Yudhishtira and win the game, since it was impossible to win at the battlefield.

The game of dice began and Yudhishtira gradually lost all his wealth and kingdom in the stakes. He then went on to put each of his brothers at stake and lost them too. Ultimately he put himself at stake, and lost again. All the Pandavas were now the dasas (servants) of Kauravas.

But Shakuni wanted yet more. He told Yudhishtira that he had not lost all yet, that he still had Draupadi with him. He also told him that he could try and win it back by putting Draupadi at stake. To the shock of all present there, Yudhishtira put Draupadi as a bet for the next round.



[Buy this Poster](#)

DRAUPADI'S VASTRAHARAN

Bhishma and Drona opposed this move, but Yudhisthira ignored them and put her at stake. Shakuni won this round too and Duryodhana commanded his younger brother Dushasana to present her at the forum. Dushasana barged into Draupadi's living quarters - she was clad merely in one piece of attire and begged him not to take her to the sabha (court) filled with dignitaries. But Dushasana grabbed her by the hair and presented her into the court.

Now in an emotional appeal to the sabha of elders, Draupadi repeatedly questioned the right of Yudhishtira to place her at stake when he himself had lost his freedom in the first place. But no one could give her an answer, including Bhishma, the patriarch and a formidable warrior himself. Vidura was the only one who objected to the whole thing but he did not have the authority to stop it.

Then to the horror of everybody present, Duryodhana ordered his brother to strip Draupadi of her sari. Dushana proceeded to obey the order and starts disrobing Draupadi. Seeing her husbands unable or

unwilling to help her, Draupadi started praying to Krishna to protect her.

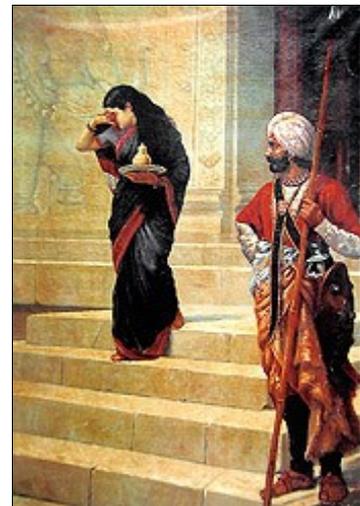
Krishna answered the prayer and a miracle occurred in front of everyone's eyes. Draupadi's sari keeps getting extended as Dushasana unwrapped layers and layers of it. Draupadi was lost in prayer and knew nothing. Finally, an exhausted Dushasana gave up his effort and fell to the ground. This way, Draupadi was protected from being humiliated in front of the entire congregation.

Panchali's vow

A furious Bhima vowed that he would not rest until he tore open Dushasana's chest and drank his blood. Duryodhana challenged Yudhishtira's four brothers to disassociate themselves from Yudhishtira and take their wife back. But they did not denounce their loyalty to their brother. Duryodhana went one step further and patted his thigh looking into Draupadi's eyes, implying that she should sit on it. In rage, Bhima vowed that he would break that very thigh in battle.

Panchali also took a vow that she would leave her long locks untied till her hair was bathed in Duryodhana's blood. Finally, Dhritarashtra found his voice and, fearing the wrath of Pandavas against his sons, asked Draupadi to ask for whatever she desired. Draupadi asked for her husbands' release and that all else be restored to them, including their kingdom. Dhritarashtra granted it all to her.

After this incident, the Pandavas left on their 12-year exile and one year of Agyatavasa (living in anonymity). On their return, the Kauravas still refused to part with their territory. This is when they knew that the war was imminent and that there was no other choice except wage the Kurukshetra battle.



[Buy this Poster](#)

SAIRANDHRI - DRAUPADI IN DISGUISE - CARRYING MILK AND HONEY TO THE COURT OF KEECHAKA

Draupadi's devotion to Krishna



[Buy this Statue](#)

KRISHNA

Draupadi is regarded as the embodiment of bhakti. She showed unwavering faith and devotion to Krishna and he also protected her from all harm. Krishna regarded Draupadi as his Sakhi (friend). King Drupad had wanted her to marry his daughter, but Krishna had refused, saying that Draupadi was meant to remain his close friend and nothing else.

Once, when Krishna cut his finger on the Sudarshan Chakra (Divine Discus), Draupadi immediately tore off a little piece from her sari and bound the wound with it. It was this act of Draupadi that protected her during the vastraharan, when Krishna sent out reams and reams of cloth to protect her person.

Krishna continued to advise Draupadi on various other decisions. For instance, there is a school of thought that believes that Karna and Draupadi were very much in love at one time and were even contemplating marriage. But Krishna advised her against it and instead, promoted her marriage to Arjuna.

Draupadi's love for Krishna was purely spiritual and depicted the love of the Jeevatma (individual soul) for the Paramatma (Supreme Being). This relationship also shows that complete surrender to the Lord helps the devotee get past all trials and tribulations they face in their everyday lives.

How Sita and Draupadi were similar

Though manifesting in different yugas (epochs) and being raised in different vamshas (dynasties), Sita and Draupadi share striking similarities. Here is how one can draw a parallel between the lives of these two remarkable women:

- Sita and Draupadi were the central female characters of the two great Indian epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata respectively.
- Both were Srestha Naris in their time. They were equally powerful and ended up being two of the greatest women in Indian history.
- Neither Sita nor Draupadi were born in their respective vanshas or lineages. Sita was found while ploughing the Earth, while Draupadi rose from king Drupada's yagna fire.
- Both Sita and Draupadi were legendary beauties, whose grace caused great kings to desire, covet and even kidnap them. Ravana kidnapped Sita, while Duryodhana lusted after Draupadi.
- Great wars had been fought because of this very beauty of Sita and Draupadi.
- Both Sita and Draupadi had swayamvaras which severely tested the participants' valour and skills.
- Both women were married at age 14.
- Sita and Draupadi accompanied their husbands were in exile, which also lasted around the same time. Rama's vanavasa lasted 14 years, while the Pandavas were in exile for 13 years, including one year of living incognito.
- Both women suffered trials and tribulations throughout their marital lives. Their suffering ended only when their own life stories ended.
- They were also largely misunderstood by other people during their lifetimes, but received adulation after the end of their life mission.
- Both Sita and Draupadi became the direct cause of the fall of two great dynasties. Sita was responsible for the downfall of the Pulastya Vansh, while Draupadi destroyed the Kuru Vansh.
- Both women were incarnations of Goddess Sri Mahalakshmi. It is believed that Mahalakshmi manifested several times in the Dwapara Yuga. It is an established

belief that Sita was an avatara of Sri Lakshmi. But few are aware that Krishna's first 8 wives, including Rukmini were all avatars of Lakshmi. Even Radha, Krishna's childhood sweetheart, was an incarnation of the Goddess of Wealth.

Draupadi as Lakshmi's avatara

The five Pandavas were the amsas or atoms of Lord Sri Maha Vishnu. Hence, Draupadi was an aspect of Maha Lakshmi.

Sita, being one of the Pancha Maha Satis, was pure beyond measure. But so was Draupadi, one of the Pancha Maha Kanyas. Draupadi was also blessed by Lord Shiva himself. Lord Krishna had applauded her devotion and loyalty to her husbands.

In fact, Duryodhana scripted his own end the moment he even thought of the Draupadi vastraharan, because he was trying to lay his hands on Sri Mahalakshmi herself.



[Buy this Painting](#)

GODDESS LAKSHMI

How Sita and Draupadi have different personalities

In spite of the above-mentioned similarities, Sita and Draupadi were also very different from one another. Here are the basic differences in the personality of both these women:

- Sita was a complete Pavitrata. She was married only to one person, Lord Rama, and was always totally devoted to him. Draupadi, on the other hand, had five husbands, though she was equally loyal to them all.
- Sita was always very gentle and soft-spoken, whereas Draupadi was rather aggressive and had a sharp tongue. For instance, when Duryodhana was fooled by the palace in Indraprastha and had an accidental fall, Draupadi had laughed, stating that he was as blind as his blind father, Dhritarashtra. Again, she had called Karna a "Sutaputra" or son of a low-caste charioteer.
- Sita was extremely submissive to her husband and went through the Agni Pariksha without even a shadow of protest. Draupadi, on the other hand, would have never acquiesced to go through that kind of a humiliation at the hands of her husbands.

Sita shows her powerful side

Though Sita was known to be mild-mannered, she also had a powerful side to her. In contrast to her slight frame, she had great mental strength and exhibited it throughout her life. Sita made some powerful speeches during the course of the exile.

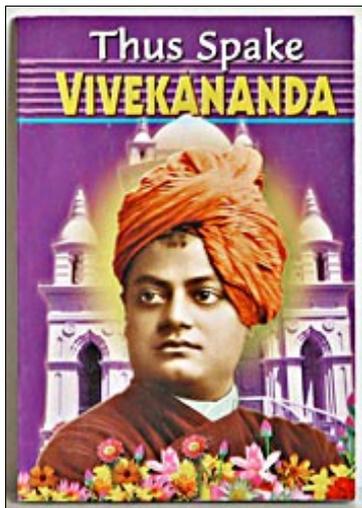
The first time, she speaks to Rama, telling him an ancient story about ahimsa or non-violence. This moves Rama and he promises her that he would never kill anyone without extreme provocation.

The second time, Sita addresses Ravana in disguise as the Brahmin mendicant. She looks at him with suspicion and tells him he does not at all look like a Brahmin.

When Hanuman reaches Lanka and meets Sita for the first time, he wants to see the Rama-Sita union immediately. He tells her that she could climb onto his back and travel with him to Rama. But Sita refuses, saying she would never want to run away like a cowardly thief and that she would want Rama to defeat Ravana and then come to fetch her, like any valorous Kshatriya (warrior) would.

Sita also portrays a lot of patience and forbearance. She magnanimously asks Rama to forgive Ravana when the latter surrenders himself at the Lord's feet. Thus, Sita exhibits all the qualities and traits of a strong woman, true to her purpose.

Every Indian woman has a bit of Sita in her – gentle, though strong; quiet, though purposeful; a little fickle, though also hugely forgiving and forbearing. After all, Indian women are all amsas of the all-enduring Bhoomidevi!



[Buy this Book](#)

THUS SPAKE VIVEKANANDA

To quote Swami Vivekananda, "All our mythology may vanish, even our Vedas may depart, and our Sanskrit language may vanish forever, even if only speaking the most vulgar patois, there will be the story of Sita present. Mark my words: Sita has gone into the very vitals of our race. She is there in the blood of every Hindu man and woman; we are all children of Sita."

Draupadi as the Daughter of Fire

Sita and Draupadi were both "Ayonija", but there was one major difference here. Sita was Bhoomi Devi's daughter, and hence, she showed much more patience and forbearance than Draupadi. Draupadi, on the other hand, was "Agnija" or born of the fire. Hence, she was wrath incarnate and showed her fiery nature in all she did.

According to different treatises on Hindu mythology, Draupadi was said to be an incarnation of many different Devis. As per The Garuda Purana, she was the incarnation of Bharati Devi, the consort of Lord Vayu. The Narada and Vayu Puranas portray Draupadi as the composite avatar of Goddesses Shyamala (wife of Dharma), Bharati (wife of Vayu), Sachi (wife of Indra) and Usha (wife of Ashwinis). They state that Draupadi married the earthly counterparts of these demigods, who had manifested in the form of the five Pandavas.

Enraged at a jest by Parvati, Shyamala, Sachi and Usha, Brahma cursed them to be born on earth as human beings. Parvati deemed that they would be born as one woman, Draupadi, and share her earthly body for a smaller period of time. The deities also requested Bharati to join them in this human birth.

Draupadi's fight against injustice reflects Parvati or her Shakti aspect. She also showed shades of Kali. At other times, Draupadi was docile and tame and waited to be rescued from her attackers, thereby exhibiting qualities of goddesses like Sachi and Usha. Sometimes, Draupadi was also the picture of astuteness, in hiding her true identity and asking Bhima to kill the evil Keechaka like Goddess Bharati would.



[Buy this Poster](#)

SHAKTI

Draupadi was also avatar of Goddess Shree or Wealth who was the wife to five Indras in their mortal manifestation, that is, the five Pandavas. She was born many times for imprisoning the Indras. Her first birth was as Vedavati (the avatar of Swaha, Agni's wife) who cursed Ravana. She then came again as Maya-Sita, especially to take revenge from Ravana, while Agni hid the real Sita. The third birth was partial - she was both Damayanti and her daughter Nalayani. She married Sage Mudgala. Her fifth avatar was that of Draupadi herself. Hence, it could be said that Draupadi was a composite avatar of all the eight goddesses, namely, Kali, Parvati, Sachi, Shyamala, Usha, Bharati, Shree and Swaha.

Draupadi shows patience and forbearance

Draupadi was never the type who would easily forgive and forget. Of course, she also had a lot of patience, as she had suffered many hardships while in the forest. She had not uttered a word of protest when Kunti had unknowingly asked all her sons to share her. At Yudhishtira's behest, she had quietly married all the brothers although this system of marriage was not at all prevalent at her time.

Draupadi had worked as a menial maid for Queen Sudeshna of Virata during their time of Agyatavasa (living incognito). She also suffered multiple insults from Dushasana, Duryodhana, Karna, Jayadrata and Kichaka. She kept herself focused on her devotion to Krishna, knowing that he would come to her rescue when the time came.

Draupadi went through terrible humiliation during the vastraharan episode. Even though she had no support from her otherwise valorous husbands when Dushasana brought her before the court and attempted to disrobe her, she had still accompanied them to the forest and spent the 13 years of exile with them.

She had also shown a keen sense of logic and quick thinking when she denied that she had been enslaved in the game of dice. She had pointed out that he had no right to put her at stake, as he himself had no powers left and had himself become a mere slave.

Draupadi did forgive Ashwatthama for killing her five children, but only in the end, after she came to know the futility of war, and that it was going to be better for her to leave the past behind her. Other than this episode, one does not see her forgive any of her enemies.

Two legendary women from two different Yugas

Though both Sita and Draupadi were divine beings, who came to earth to fulfil a certain mission, there is bound to be a major difference in the personalities. This is because both the women hailed from different yugas. Sita came from the Treta Yuga, while Draupadi manifested in the Dwapara Yuga.



[Buy this Wall Hanging](#)

DUSHASANA

One has to understand that things were very different in these two yugas. The Treta Yuga had very little evil and so, one could see more idealistic characters such as Rama and Sita in the Ramayana. Hence, it was appropriate for Rama and Sita to be mild-mannered and the very soul of forbearance, in this particular yuga.

In stark contrast, the Dwapara Yuga was full of arrogant and evil characters, who most of the time adopted adharmic (unrighteous) methods to get what they wanted. Duryodhana, Dusshasana and Shakuni were probably the most cunning of the lot, who would not stop at anything to attain their goals. Such people did not at all deserve the least bit of forgiveness. Draupadi's anger and her attitude of seeking revenge, was appropriate for the Dwapara Yuga.

In the present Kali Yuga where we live, things are only getting worse, what with global terrorism, unrest and war in almost all countries of the world. In such a yuga, one would probably have to resort to severe measures to curb the existing violence. Peaceful means may not necessarily work for this particular yuga. In this context, a woman would have to be more like Draupadi in order to survive and live a

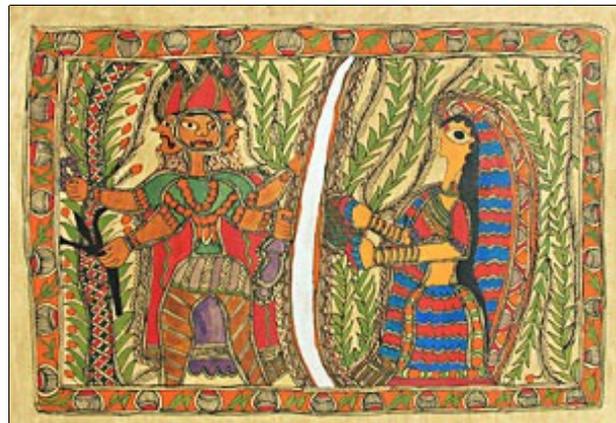
fruitful life.

Each yuga came with its own specifications and requirements. Hence, we cannot really say that Sita was too submissive or that Draupadi was too aggressive - it was all a need of the hour at that particular moment in history.

How Sita and Draupadi are relevant even today

Both Sita and Draupadi were equally powerful women, who have captured the very essence of the true Indian woman. Extraordinarily beautiful and highly virtuous, they were also strong - so strong, in fact, that no calamity could diminish their spiritual aura. It is no wonder that Indian Hindu women still hold them in the highest of regard and worship them for their own salvation.

Some men may conveniently point out that Sita suffered all the trauma only because she disregarded the Lakshman-Rekha (the line drawn by Lakshmana, before he went in search of Rama during the Mareecha episode). Many say that this was her punishment for not respecting the authority of the men in her family.



[Buy this Painting](#)

RAVANA ABDUCTING SITA AS SHE CROSSES THE LAKSHMAN REKHA

Indian women even today are expected to stay within the "line of control" men draw for them. Her behaviour, the way she moves around in the social circuit and so on, is usually governed by her familial head. Abandonment and social ridicule are what she will have to face if she dares to defy any of the set rules.

Draupadi was born out of king Drupada's revenge against his enemies. She showed this personality throughout her life story. Her vastraharan was what caused the epic war of Kurukshetra. This shameful episode led to her curse that a land that reduced its women

to such levels of indignity would never ever prosper.

Here too, we can draw a parallel between Draupadi and the present society's attitude towards Indian women. Many Indians still believe that Draupadi suffered so much only because she refused to accept Duryodhana's advances before her marriage. She had also ridiculed him, calling him "the blind son of a blind father". Many Indian women are still brutally beaten up by their husbands because they "back-answered" them, hence challenged their authority. We also hear of many women being humiliated, raped or even murdered by a potential suitor for having rejected him.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Indian woman depicts many shades of character. She is capable of expressing the deep love and tenderness of Sita, while also turning into an aggressive, revenge-seeking entity like Draupadi.

Draupadi exhibited her own gentle and spiritual side when she forgave Ashwathama towards the end of the war. Sita, on the other hand, showed her aggressive and defiant side when she chose to reject Rama and instead, return to her Mother, Bhoomidevi, at the end of her life mission.

Each Indian woman has a little bit of Sita and Draupadi in her. No matter what suffering or trauma she has to undergo in her life, she is capable of bending to her circumstances, finally emerging victorious. Though she remains submissive in a society that is still largely male-dominated, she manages to struggle and hold on to her dignity, achieving success and winning the respect and recognition of all those around her.

This article was written by **Saipriya Viswanathan**. Saipriya is a teacher/performer of Bharata Natyam, Carnatic vocal music and Carnatic Veena. She is a recipient of several awards for both dance and music, including the Sur Mani and Singar Mani titles. She is a recipient Govt. of India Merit Scholarship for dance and is a diploma holder in Carnatic vocal music.

Our efforts have been directed at making this article informative and refreshing for you. We will truly appreciate all forms of feedback. Please send your feedback to info@dollsofindia.com.

Copyright © 2010, **DollsofIndia**