



# Displaced Deities: Reimagining Diaspora With Mythological Characters

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**Citation:** Dr. Ayuta Mohanty, (2024), Displaced Deities: Reimagining Diaspora With Mythological Characters, *Educational Administration: Theory and Practice*, 30(7), 88-91  
Doi: 10.53555/kuey.v30i7.6481

## ARTICLE INFO

## ABSTRACT

The concept of diaspora, derived from the Greek word for "scatter," resonates deeply in literature and our daily lives. It explores the experiences of individuals who leave their homeland and navigate a new cultural landscape. This paper focuses on how Trisha Das' "Ms. Draupadi Kuru" utilizes diaspora to explore the identity quest of Draupadi, the Pandava queen.

The novel relocates Draupadi, along with Amba, Kunti, and Gandhari, from the celestial realm to modern-day Delhi, a drastic shift akin to a physical migration. This displacement forces them to confront a world vastly different from their heavenly existence. Draupadi, revered as a warrior queen in her past life, grapples with societal perceptions in the modern world. People might view her with pity due to polyandry, a stark contrast to the respect she commanded earlier. This loss of recognition highlights her displacement and the need to redefine her identity.

The novel delves into the challenges and triumphs of adaptation these characters experience. The women, accustomed to celestial grandeur, navigate the chaos of a bustling metropolis. The unfamiliarity of social norms, technology, and even clothing styles underscores the cultural clash they face. Yet, amidst the struggle, Draupadi discovers a sense of freedom in the modern world. Unlike her celestial life, she has the power to choose and forge a new path.

*Ms. Draupadi Kuru* transcends the fantastical by offering a relatable portrayal of the human spirit in a diaspora situation. Just like individuals who migrate, Draupadi, Kunti, Amba and Gandhari confront a harsh journey of adjusting to a new world. The novel emphasizes that even after facing challenges, one can achieve personal growth and redefine their identity, a message that resonates with the broader diaspora experience.

**Keywords:** Diaspora, Mythology, Quest, Identity, Culture

## Introduction:

The word diaspora, which means "to scatter" in Greek, is where the idea of diaspora originated. The word is also linked to the dispersion of Jews outside of Israel. The diaspora therefore originates from a dispersed group having a shared origin in a restricted geographic region. It denotes cross-cultural mobility of a particular population in which those relocated miss their native land. They still have a house, but the fact that it is in a foreign country makes it painful for them. They can distinguish between living at home and living abroad. Since the relevant field of diaspora is altering its perspectives in response to the evolving forms of technology in the digital era, a straightforward and singular explanation for the phrase is not conceivable. With the inclusion of new instruments and methods, the plight of the populace may now be studied in great detail. The conventional framework of the diaspora is affected by its scope, which gives it fresh angles and shapes.

Diasporic affiliations are numerous, varied, and always changing. They seek to define themselves at the same time that they try to adapt to their different life experiences. The development of a transcultural identity can resolve the conflict between these numerous, mobile, and changing identities. While evaluating the shared values of people and nation states, diasporic discourse forces us to reflect on the foundations of country and nationalism. Diasporic discourse reflects the understanding that residing is a component of a transnational system involving a motherland.

Numerous motivations, including the possibility of employment, independence, education, financial rewards, and many more, drive diasporic movements in the Indian setting. People who migrate have a variety of challenges in their new environment and culture, and they may look for manifestations of their home country abroad. The literature of the diaspora highlights the prevalence of sentimental recollections of their own place as well as the tension between the need to preserve their own culture and the inability to fully integrate into the new one.

This chapter discusses the same situation by integrating the characters of mythology with the concept of diaspora. The fiction selected for analysis in this chapter are *Ms. Draupadi Kuru*, written by Trisha Das. In the book, Trisha presents us the story of the Pandava queen Draupadi's quest to reclaim a new identity of her own when she relocates from the Heaven to the modern-day Delhi with Amba, Kunti and Gandhari. The paper reflects upon the harsh journey of these characters who try to adjust with the modern changes in their old Indraprastha and how even after facing so many issues can achieve their goal which they were not able to in their previous tenure on earth.

### Methodology:

This study utilizes close reading techniques to analyze the portrayal of diaspora in contemporary Mahabharata narratives. Additionally, contextual analysis will be employed to explore how these retellings engage with the concept of diaspora in relation to the selected novel.

### Discussion:

The concept of diaspora, or the experience of living outside one's homeland, finds a unique expression in the novel "*Ms. Draupadi Kuru*" by Trisha Das. The novel not only involves physical migration as the characters – Kunti, Draupadi, Amba, and Gandhari – embark on a journey from the celestial realm to modern-day New Delhi, it also effectively depicts a form of cultural and temporal displacement. This essay will explore how the novel portrays the characters' experiences through the lens of diaspora, highlighting themes of displacement, loss of identity, and adaptation.

If we consider Displacement as the first theme for analysing diaspora in the novel, all the four characters, Kunti, Draupadi, Amba, and Gandhari, are displaced from their heavenly abode and placed in a new, unfamiliar environment - modern-day New Delhi. This displacement forces them to confront a different way of life and societal norms. Their once familiar surroundings – the grandeur of heaven, the divine order – are replaced by the bustling chaos of a modern metropolis. We can take the example of Kunti who was accustomed to the ethereal beauty of the heavens and had to navigate the cacophony of traffic and the sight of towering buildings in New Delhi. This unfamiliar environment creates a sense of disorientation and loss, forcing them to confront a drastically different way of life. As celestial beings, the four women found it difficult to understand and cope with the social etiquette or customs of modern society. The novel portrays their confusion over greetings, clothing styles, or even table manners. This culture clash highlights the sense of displacement they experience. Moreover, in the celestial realm, Draupadi was a revered warrior and wife of powerful Pandavas. However, in the modern world, people might recognize her name but misunderstand her story. The novel depicts how she encounters the modern views about her and how people pity her due to the concept of polyandry, a stark contrast to the respect she commanded earlier. This loss of recognition emphasizes the displacement she feels. Furthermore, simple things like using a mobile phone or operating household appliances poses a challenge for them. The novel focuses on their initial reactions on coming across modern technology and its advantages and disadvantages, producing initial frustration or humorous attempts to navigate these modern conveniences, highlighting the gap between the celestial life and the new world.

This abrupt displacement from the familiar celestial realm to the modern metropolis throws each character into a crisis of identity. Kunti, accustomed to the ethereal beauty of the heavens and the respect accorded to her as the wife of Pandu and mother of the Pandavas, finds herself grappling with the harsh realities of the mortal world. Here, she encounters a reincarnated Karan, a young boy brimming with anger and resentment towards his unknown birth parents. This encounter shatters her self-perception as a nurturing mother. The consequences of her past actions – abandoning Karan as a baby – stare her back in the face, forcing her to confront the pain and guilt she has harbored for centuries. The celestial Kunti, revered for her wisdom and strength, now questions her maternal role and wonders if she can ever redeem herself in the eyes of her son.

Draupadi's experience is equally jarring. In her celestial life, she was a powerful warrior queen, admired for her courage, intelligence, and unwavering loyalty. However, in the modern world, she encounters a society with vastly different social norms. The concept of polyandry, readily accepted in her celestial existence, is met with pity and judgment here. People view her with a mixture of curiosity and disapproval, focusing solely on her marital status rather than the strength and resilience she embodied. This challenges her self-image as a strong, independent woman. The legacy she envisioned for herself – one of valor and leadership – seems obscured by societal prejudices. This loss of recognition and respect forces Draupadi to question her place in this new world and compels her to redefine her identity beyond the confines of her past.

The contrast between their celestial personas and the way they are perceived in the modern world is stark. This displacement not only disrupts their sense of belonging but also compels them to confront the limitations and

biases they may have held in their previous lives. The journey to New Delhi becomes a catalyst for introspection and a chance to rewrite their narratives, forging new identities that resonate with the realities of the world they now inhabit.

The initial shock of displacement gives way to a remarkable display of resilience by the characters. Faced with a world vastly different from their celestial abode, they adapt, transforming themselves and discovering new purpose in the process.

Kunti's journey is a poignant example of adaptation and transformation. Haunted by the past, particularly her decision to abandon Karan, she encounters a reincarnated version of him filled with anger and resentment. This shatters her self-perception as a mother and forces her to confront the consequences of her actions. However, instead of succumbing to despair, Kunti finds a new purpose. She decides to stay back in the mortal world and care for orphaned children, including a young Karan. This selfless act allows her to fulfill a maternal role she couldn't in her past life. It's a chance at redemption, a chance to build a nurturing bond and potentially heal the wounds of the past.

Draupadi's transformation stems from the stark contrast between her celestial life and the freedoms of the modern world. In her heavenly existence, she was a warrior queen, bound by duty and societal expectations. However, in the mortal world, she encounters a sense of liberation. The concept of choice and self-determination is a revelation for her. Unlike her past life, she now has the power to make her own decisions and chart a new course. This newfound freedom empowers her to redefine her identity beyond the confines of her past experiences, the judgmental views on polyandry, and the expectations placed upon her. She chooses to stay back and explore this liberation, forging a path that allows her to be more than just a mythical figure.

Amba's story takes an especially moving turn. Consumed by centuries of seeking revenge against Bhishma, her life had been dedicated to a singular purpose. However, the modern world throws a curveball – love. She encounters Zafar, a man who awakens a yearning for happiness and connection she never knew existed. This unexpected love forces her to confront the vows that have defined her existence and the societal expectations that limited her. In a bold act of defiance and self-discovery, Amba elopes with Zafar and chooses to stay in the mortal world. This transformative choice signifies her liberation from the shackles of the past. It highlights the power of love to heal old wounds and forge a new path filled with happiness and fulfillment.

These transformations transcend the fantastical elements of the novel. They offer a relatable portrayal of the human spirit's ability to adapt and find purpose even in the face of displacement. The characters remind us that challenges can be stepping stones to growth, and new beginnings are possible, even in unfamiliar territories.

The characters' struggles with adaptation extend beyond personal experiences. They become a subtle critique of societal norms in the modern world. Kunti's story throws a spotlight on the patriarchal ideal of motherhood, where a woman's worth is often tied to her ability to be a perfect, nurturing mother. Her journey with a reincarnated Karan forces readers to confront this societal expectation and the pressure it places on women.

Similarly, Draupadi's experience challenges the judgmental attitudes towards polyandry in some cultures. The novel doesn't endorse or condemn the practice, but rather presents it as a reality within Draupadi's past life. By juxtaposing her celestial identity with the societal perception she encounters in the modern world, the novel invites readers to question these ingrained biases and consider alternative perspectives.

Amba's narrative takes this critique a step further. After centuries of seeking revenge, she defies societal expectations and chooses love with Zafar. This act of defiance highlights the power of individual choice in matters of love and marriage, particularly for women who might be pressured into conforming to societal norms. The novel suggests that true happiness can lie outside the boundaries of tradition, encouraging readers to reflect on their own values and priorities.

While the novel presents a unique form of displacement with these celestial characters, the underlying themes resonate with the broader experience of diaspora. Individuals who migrate often grapple with similar feelings of disorientation, loss of identity, and the need to adapt. Just like Kunti, Draupadi, and Amba, they must confront unfamiliar environments, navigate new social norms, and redefine their place in the world. They may struggle with feelings of alienation and grapple with the expectations of their new home while still holding onto their cultural heritage.

*Ms. Draupadi Kuru* transcends the fantastical by offering a relatable portrayal of the human spirit's ability to overcome challenges and find purpose even in the face of displacement. The characters' experiences mirror the resilience and adaptability shown by individuals navigating diaspora situations in the real world. Whether it's a celestial being encountering a modern metropolis or a person migrating to a new country, the core themes of identity, belonging, and personal growth remain universal.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, "The Celestial Journey to New Delhi" offers a nuanced exploration of diaspora through the lens of its celestial characters. The novel delves into themes of displacement, loss of identity, and adaptation, demonstrating how these experiences can lead to personal transformation. By confronting the unfamiliar and challenging societal norms, the characters embark on a journey of self-discovery. They find new purpose and forge a path forward in this strange, new world, enriching their lives and leaving the reader with a sense of hope and the possibility of finding belonging even in the face of displacement.

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