

Illustrations for the Novel:

The Palace of Illusions

Submitted by

Madhuri Chandrasekhar

Guided by

Prof. Raja Mohanty

IDC School of Design, IIT Bombay

Approval Sheet

This Design Project-II titled 'Illustrations for the novel 'The Palace of Illusions'' by Madhuri Chandrasekhar Suresh is approved for partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Masters of Design in Communication Design.

Project Guide:

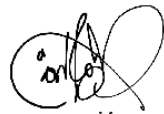

Prof. Raja Mohanty 5/7/23

Declaration

I have adequately cited and referenced the original sources.

I declare that I have adhered to all the principles of academic honesty and integrity and have not misrepresented, fabricated, or falsified any idea/ data/ fact/ source in my submission. I understand that any violation of the above will cause disciplinary action by the institute and can also evoke penal action from the sources which have thus not been properly cited or from whom proper permission has not been taken when needed.

Signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Madhuri', written over a circular stamp or seal.

Madhuri Chandrasekhar Suresh

Roll no: 216450005

Industrial Design Centre

Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay

Acknowledgment

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Abstract

This project is a humble attempt in bringing the visuals of the novel *The Palace of Illusions* to life through the same perspective the book is written in. This Novel is Mahabharata told from the perspective of Draupadi. Although the intend was to give visuals to the novel, along the process, the project developed into a stand alone set of illustration cards specifically showing what Draupadi, the central woman character of Mahabharata, felt and went through.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Motivation

‘I read Mahabharata when I was your age’, told my father, to a 12 year old me, when I was running around, doing my school homeworks. One day at school, a drawing exercise was given ;to sketch Coronation of Karna. The plot held the graduation ceremony of the Kuru princes; the Pandavas and the Kauravas, after their education of warfare from Dronacharya. The star of the day was Arjun, Drona’s best student, excelling in all the warfare skills. All of a sudden a stranger with blazing golden armor and ear rings, enters the field and exhibits every skill as natural and seamless as Arjun, making the crowd go mad. A before jealous Duryodhan is now glad and surprised to see someone who as good as Arjun. This stranger challenges Arjun to a duel, but his unknown lineage becomes a question with no answer. A charioteer from the crowd comes forward and greets this stranger and proudly calls him his son. The Pandavas calls him out for his arrogance, in just being a charioteer’s son and challenging a young prince to a Duel, and walks away. Duryodhan steps forward and congratulates Karna on his merit and skills. He declares Karna his new friend and crowns him as the new King of Anga. Karna is speechless in the actions of Duryodhan as no one has ever come into Karna’s defense and he felt indebted to him. That moment marked the promise of an eternal friendship, even if it lead to a doom. One cannot look at Karna and leave

this plot without feeling sympathy for him, without feeling happiness that Duryodhan came to his defense, wishing that if Pandavas were a little kind to him rather than dismissing him. This emotional investment in the story of these characters is what holds the listener of the story of Mahabharata hooked. The context of the story about the tales of Kings and Queens, battle fields and revenge, places the story in a traditional context. Some inevitable contradictions overtime with the unfairness or fairness in these stories when open to discussion, Retellings happen. Perspectives are discussed. New possibilities of looking at the story is opened. One such retelling is the book, ‘The Palace of Illusions’.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni’s *The Palace of Illusions* is the retelling of Mahabharata from the point of view of the central heroine of the tale, Draupadi. This retelling stands out for its portrayal of a well known story through the eyes of a woman, who is partly instrumental for the epic war, due to her birth destiny. The plot of this book works around the actual plot of Mahabharata and adding layers to Draupadi and her relationship with the rest of the central characters. My attempt is to capture the essence of Draupadi in this story, her fights, her thoughts, her relationships, her dilemmas visually, as an experiment to learn and explore the possibilities as a visual artist.

1.2 Personal Note on the Novel

Having grown up listening to the stories from the great epic Mahabharata, the characters and the well-known plots were quite familiar. Some stories from Mahabharata's plot were part of my school curriculum, especially in language subjects, and revolved around Karna or the Pandavas and Kauravas. Even in cartoons or medias, the story revolves around the men in the stories with women as supporting characters. As important as the men in the stories, and their character arcs, is the plot and relevance in understanding the range of human connections and emotions, of the characters.

After reading through Palace of Illusions, it portrayed Draupadi in a different light, giving her, the power of narration of Mahaharata as never seen before. The major plot points remains the same mostly and Draupadi's story is made around the existing plot. This book shows the possible rawness of Draupadi as a character. It explicitly shows her unfiltered thoughts and opinions about the world that she lives in. She is a strong character aware of her strengths and weaknesses as woman in a man's world.

One point in the plot of Palace of Illusions where you get a glimpse of her unfiltered thoughts is when Kunti asks Draupadi's father king Drupad to get her married to all five of the Pandavas. Sage Veda Vyasa has written her destiny, and since she was born out of sacrificial fire, she had

prophecy written long back that she will be married to five greatest heroes of that time.

Recounting that, she believes that she should go forth with the written destiny. Although, Vyasa instructs that in her married life, she spends each year with one of the brothers as their wife, in the order ;Yudhishthira, Bhima, Arjun, Nakul and Sahadev. Along with it, Vyasa gifted her a boon, which is, Draupadi will regain her virginity everytime she goes to her next husband after every year. To this, Draupadi's thoughts rages on how Kunti pushed her into this situation; how she hoped Arjun to stand up for her, after all he was the one who won her hand in marriage; how Vyasa's boon to her was just for the sake of her husbands and not her, and if she could ever ask for a boon, she would have asked for a boon which enables her to forget the memories with one husband before moving onto another the following year. These thoughts in her head gives Draupadi a character explanation on why she acted certain way in the already well-known plotline. Hence this woman point of view stands out as compared to other retellings of the same story.

2. Background study

2.1 Synopsis of the Book

The book starts with Draupadi persisting her maid whom she calls Dhai Ma, into telling her favorite story; of how she and her brother was born out of a Yajna fire. As a young fiery playful girl, she was always full of questions. She is the closest to her Dhai Ma, her brother Dhrishtadyumna (she lovingly calls him Dhri), and Krishna. Both Dhri and Draupadi had prophecies (Dhri will avenge his father by killing Dronacharya and Draupadi will change the course of history) at their birth, but unlike Draupadi, Dhri was constantly being prepared for it, with education in how to run a kingdom, justice and in warfare.

An impatient Draupadi overhears of a fortune-teller and seeks him to know about her destiny and learns that she will be married to five great heroes of her time, will be the cause of the great war and the death of her brothers and children, but will be the beloved queen of the queens. A sorceress appears to prepare Draupadi for what is coming for her in her future.

The message of Swayamvar of Princess Draupadi is sent across Kingdoms. A series of portrait paintings of Kings and Princes, who might arrive for the swayamvar is shown to Draupadi, and she gets intrigued by the portrait of Karna. On the day of swayamvar, Karna is prohibited from the contest because of his unknown lineage and

Dhri goes forward to fight him. To stop a fight, Draupadi shoots Karna a question that humiliates him, which backs him down. Later, Draupadi is married off to a strange Brahmin who excels in the swayamvar archery contest. Upon realizing that her Brahmin husband is Arjun of the Pandavas, in disguise, she encounters the rest of the brothers and their mother, Kunti, at a cottage in the forest. Kunti insists all of the brothers marry Draupadi, which shocks Draupadi but recollects the fortune-teller's prophecy. After not getting a say in her wedding decision, and receiving an unwelcomed 'virginity boon' for the sake of her to-be-husbands alone, she gets married to them one by one.

Draupadi travels to the Pandavas' kingdom, Hastinapur, where she meets their grandfather Bheeshma and suggests the need for a new kingdom and palace, as Hastinapur is shared between the Pandava and Kaurava Princes, and she is the new Queen of Pandavas. Arjun and Krishna burn the forest land that was given to the Pandavas and one of the residents of the forest, Maya agrees to build them a Palace. Maya, an asura architect skilled in trickery and illusions build the Pandavas, the Palace of Illusions (Mayasabha) at Indraprastha, which eventually becomes a well-developed city. The Pandavas rule Indraprastha for

almost a decade in peace and harmony. Draupadi shows her skills in ruling a kingdom and justice by advising Yudhishthira whenever he feels lost. Eventually, Draupadi becomes the beloved queen of Indraprastha. A Rajasuya Yajna is planned to be conducted at the palace of Illusions, where finally all of the kings are finally welcomed to their palace, for the first time after its construction. The Kauravas stay back at the palace longer than they were welcomed, to look at the planning of the palace greedily, to replicate one for themselves. One day Duryodhan, the eldest of the Kauravas, accidentally falls in a pool of water, mistaking it for a shiny floor inside Draupadi's court. Draupadi and her maid end up laughing which triggers Duryodhan's ego. Later, rejecting Kunti's suggestion, the Pandavas and Draupadi leave for Hastinapur to reciprocate the Kauravas' invitation for returning their hospitality. The Kauravas invite Yudhishthira for a game of dice. Things go wrong for the Pandavas when they start to lose everything, as Yudhishthira keeps on losing the game and keeps on baiting what he has left. After Baiting their palace, he baits himself, his brothers, and finally Draupadi. Draupadi is dragged by her hair into the court by Dushshasan, he starts pulling off her saree. The saree however doesn't seem to have an ending, tiring Dushshasan. A furious Draupadi curses the Kauravas. Yudhishthira doesn't stop the game there. He plays again twice, and loses both times, to spend 12 years in exile and the 13th year incognito.

Draupadi comes to terms with the fact that, even though her husbands love her, there are other things that it is in their priority than her, after what happened to her at the court. She turns angry and vengeful and fuels the Pandavas with rage, thirsty for war for 12 years. During their 13th year, they take their disguised forms as servants in King Virata's court, not so far from Hastinapur. There, Draupadi encounters Keechaka, the queen's brother, who expresses sexual interest in her. The queen encourages her brother's behaviour and a helpless Draupadi seeks help from Bheem. Bheem kills off Keechaka and this news reaches Duryodhan. By that time, the last year of exile and disguise was coming to an end, and the Pandavas asks the Kauravas their promised land. After peaceful negotiations, they realise Kauravas are not going to give even an inch of land. They call for war.

The Pandavas and Kauravas battle against each other at the Kurukshetra land, with the elders of the kuru family and bigger armies, including Krishna's Yadava army on Kauravas side. Pandavas have Krishna on their side. Veda Vyasa visits Draupadi and offers her the sight; which allows her to see the important events of the battle in close proximity, so that she will remain the witness of the great war. With so many unfair moments, the Pandavas win the battle, with the bloodshed of Kaurava army. In revenge, Draupadi's children and her brother is killed as revenge. Women all over the kingdom comes around the battle-

field in search of their husbands' bodies. The horror of the amount of new widows shocks Draupadi and she comes in solidarity of them and speak to them on how and why they have live for the next generation kids, to build a better society.

The Pandavas gain Hastinapur again. Arjun and Subhadra's grandson, Parikshit is born and is brought up and loved dearly by Draupadia and the rest of the Pandavas. After Parikshit becomes an adult, Pandavas and Draupadi sets out for their last journey, to the gateway of heaven. While climbing the mountain, Draupadi falls first and sees Krishna. Slowly she dies and realises she is in heaven with her beloved ones.

2.2 Books referred

2.2.1 *'Jaya: An illustrated Retelling of Mahabharata'* by Devadutt Pattanaik

Jaya is a pure retelling of Mahabharata in the sense of story. It starts from the sequence of Janamejaya, the great grandson of Arjuna, hosting a yajna to sacrifice the nagas to avenge his father, Parikshit's death, by the naga Takshaka's bite. The predecessor of Takshaka comes to warn Janamejaya that if he go forth with the sacrifice, it will again disrupt the peace. The next generation of nagas will avenge their ancestors' death by coming for Janamejaya and his children. They say that this cycle of revenge and avenging has been happening throughout his ancestors' time, and its time to break the cycle. Thus they start reciting him the story of all the cycles of life that brought out the births of Pandavas, Kauravas and the great war till the cause of the death of his father.

Jaya—is the sequenced story of the Mahabharatha. It focuses on the actions and dialogues that directed the plot, staying true to the original epic, paying less attention to the arcs of the characters in detail. The rough and delicate pen illustrations done by Pattanaik himself brings life to this book. This book was read to understand the original storyline, context, family tree and the situations that lead upto the birth of Draupadi and Dhrishtadyumna (which is where the story of Palace of Illusions start). Also the following events after, followed the same plotline, but it was taken out of a first person perspective unlike in Palace of Illusions. Also the way Draupadi speaks in both the books is quite different, giving a different character attitude in both books.

2.2.2 '*Yuganta: The end of an epoch*' by Irawati Karwe

In this collection of essays on the characters of Mahabharata, Irawati Karwe brings out the comparison of similarities and differences between Draupadi and Sita from Ramayana. Both epics have these women as the central heroine. Although it starts with comparing Sita and Draupadi, the essays focus on humanizing Draupadi, reasoning with her rage and thirst for revenge. A word describing Draupadi quite often that pops up in this essay is 'Earth' or 'Earthy'. Draupadi's outspoken and brash nature was unconventional for a woman of that time, which can be described as an earthy character. 'Her sensitive pride, her willingness to sacrifice herself, and her faithfulness to her husbands were qualities appropriate to her country, time and clan' says Karwe in the essay. More Quotes from the essay:

1. 'Draupadi was the true daughter of the earth because her feet firmly planted on the ground, her heart was in the world defined by her marriage and family, within the Boundaries of her father's house, father in law's house and her own palace.'

2. What she had done was the result of her earthy, violent, but basically simple nature'

3. 'Greedy Bhima, rough, tempestuous Bhima, always railing at Dhritarashtra and Gandhari. In the same sense that Draupadi was earthy, so was he. She was a daughter of the earth, he was a son'.

Karwe doesn't shy away from calling out Draupadi's at times showing off behaviour and foolishness. The raw vengeful nature displayed by Draupadi at the same time is celebrated by the writer as being the true daughter of the earth.

A look into this essay gave an opening to look at Draupadi as a human with flaws, which could be related to the Draupadi in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's Palace of Illusions. In the later, since it's told from the first person perspective of Draupadi, we also realize that she is as brash and earthy as she is calm, quite and a hopeless romantic wishing for eternal love.

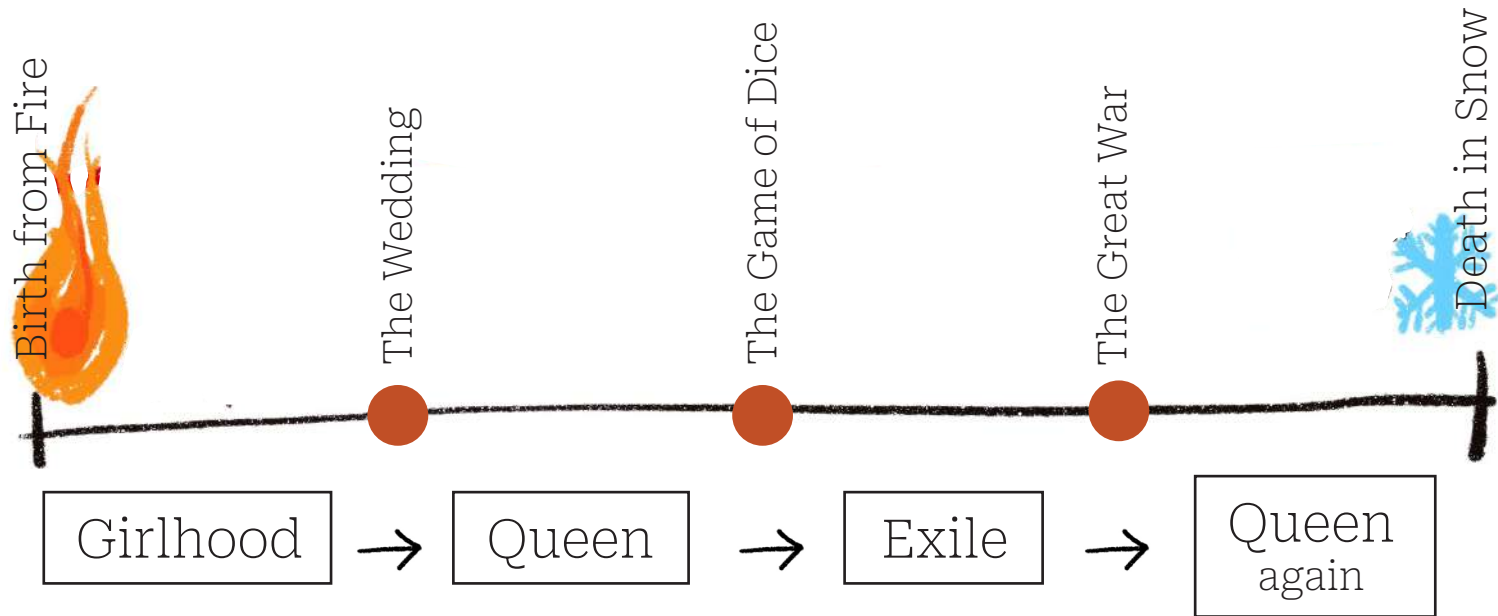
2.3 Draupadi's Timeline

As I tried to understand Draupadi, it became clear that her life has four important eras marked by five significant moments:

- ~ Girlhood
- ~ Queen of Indraprastha
- ~ Exile
- ~ Queen of Hastinapur

These four phases are also marked by her:

- ~ Birth
- ~ Wedding
- ~ Game of Dice
- ~ The War
- ~ Death



As a disclaimer for the descriptions ahead, whenever it refers to a book, it means the novel 'The Palace of Illusions'.

Birth:

King Drupad conducted a Yajna (fire-sacrifice) with all the known saints to grant him a son to avenge Drona, King Drupad nemesis. This ceremony had months and months of preparation, and finally when the King's son rose from the fire, he was not alone. Dhrishtadyumna came out of the fire and clutched his sister's hand protectively. Draupadi was born as an addition to what King Drupad has asked for, and she was born as a catalyst for the Great war. Her story was pre-written by the author of Mahabharatha epic, Vyasa Maharshi, who will later appear in this story as Draupadi's fortune teller in the book. She was born out of Fire and was hence called the 'Yajnaseni', and her skin was as dark as the clouds, hence also she was named 'Krishnaa' by her dear friend and Lord Krishna. Draupadi shares a close bond with her Twin brother Dhrishtadyumna, whom she lovingly calls, *Dhri*.

Girlhood:

During her girlhood period, she was a vibrant and mischievous young girl. She was extremely curious about the world and she yearned to go outside, but was prohibited to go unlike her brother who has started preparing for his life purpose already. She was restless as a flame; Studying and reading Dhri's books, observing

Dhri's fighting lessons and getting frustrated on why she isn't taught the same things, crashing into Dhri's lessons on the world and getting scolded by his teacher etc. She was very close to her caretaker *Dhai Ma* as mentioned in the book. She have spent a significant time wondering about her brother/sister Shikhandi and what made him/her act on his/her life choices. . She shares a very close relationship with Lord Krishna as a child, teenager then an adult all through her life. Draupadi very much aware of the dramatic story of her own birth which stated that she will 'Change the course of history', she one day out extreme curiosity about her own future sets out to find a fortune teller. He tells her that she have a bright and dark future and there comes three instances in her life where she have to make a choice, which will actually determine her future and the later history.

Wedding:

At her wedding, she meets Karna, the King of Anga, and dear friend of the Kaurava Prince Duryodana. He is shunned by her and the rest of court for his 'arrogance' to compete in Draupadi's swayamvara which was only conducted for the Kshatriyas, as he belongs to a lower caste. Draupadi, who admits in the book, that she is drawn to him immediately, regrets her actions but never gets a chance to apologize for it. After her wedding to an anonymous brahmin extremely skilled in archery who won her swayamvara, she briefly gets a moment with him, after realising he is Arjuna, the third of the Pandavas. Later as

we all know Kunti says her word and Draupadi is forced to marry all five of the Pandavas. As a woman, all she wishes for is a normal wedding to one person and fall in love with him and live the rest of her life in peace. Here she is married to five of them. Draupadi is the most popular example of a woman in Hindu literature who is polygamous (meaning married to more than one man). When you look at the moral state of the people involved in Polygamy in ancient times, its usually the man who wants to marry or get to marry more than one woman at his own will, and he was allowed to too. Here, even though Draupadi has married five men, it was not according to her own will. It was very much not what she expected. On top of that, she was given instructions on how she should spend time with each husband: she could spend only one year with one husband, in the order of their age. She was also given a boon where every newyear, before she goes to her next husband, her virginity grows back. The Draupadi from The Palace of Illusions does make commentary on how it was a 'boon' that never helped her in anyway. She adds on to how it would have been more convinient boon if it let her forget the memories created with husband that year before moving on to the next one or something similar which reduces her mental pain.

Queen of Indraprastha:

As the new Queen, she helped and designed the Pandavas' new home, The Palace of Indrapastha, The Palace of Illusions, designed by the Asura Maya. For more than a

decade, Draupadi was the beloved Queen of Indraprastha, and the beautiful Palace that reflected their Pride and wealth. Maya was a master in creating illusions and the Palace was an architectural wonder. The Palace breathed in with nature and the book describes of how it had interior fountains, courtyard with large trees where birds live, climbers creeping in and out of the palace. 'Water! I want water everywhere!' this is the line Draupadi blurts out in this book, when the Pandavas asked what were her wishes when they build a new palace. Maya even creates repeated illusions in the palace where the floor is so reflective, that it looks like its a water body.

As a way of showing off their Pride to the world, they conduct a Yajna yaga, where the Pandavas and their Queen Draupadi invites their rivals, The Kauravas. Upon arriving, the Pandavas finds a joy in the cluelessness of the Kauravas exploring their Palace which is full of illusions, which evidently tricks the later's mind to believe the existence of something but in reality it doesn't. The well known story is of the event that triggers the Kaurava Prince Duryodana is when he thinks that the flooring looks like a water body, and he walks carefully over it, to realise that it was infact hard flooring which just looks like water, then confidently walking over it only to end up falling in a real water body. Apparently this happens in the Private ladies court, and one of the ladies Laughs behind a screen, also prompting Draupadi to let out a laugh. Duryodana feels insulted.

The Game of Dice:

Duryodana takes this insult very seriously, and after some incidents, the Kauravas decide to host the Pandavas at their Hastinapuri Palace as a thank you for their hospitality at the Palace of Indraprastha. But a dirty game was planned ahead in getting the Indraprastha Palace into their hands through a game of dice. The Kauravas uncle Shakuni gives them his magical dice, which will always favour its owner in any game. Yudhishtira, the eldest of the Pandavas fond of gambling, he kept on betting everything that belongs to him at the game with the Kauravas. He ends up losing everything and he continues to keep bet, which is; their Palace, all of his brothers, himself and then finally, Draupadi, and loses all of them to Kauravas. According to the game's rules, now everything belongs to the Kauravas. Duryodana misuses this event and immediately orders Dussasan to bring Draupadi to the court. A half clothed Draupadi, on her periods is dragged to the court brutally by Dussasan, and her saree is pulled off. Her saree never sees the end as she goes into a meditated state thinking of her dear friend Krishna. Krishna protects her at her most lowest, when she expects her husbands and the elders in the family to protect her. Once that moment ends, she gets up furious and curses the Kauravas for harming a defenseless woman, and how it will mark the history of the shame of the Kuru men in the room. She vows to court that she wouldn't tie her hair unless it is washed in Kaurava prince's blood.

The Pandavas are relieved of their bets from themselves, and Draupadi, and they are exiled for 12 years to live in the forest, and live one year of anonymity and return.

Exile:

Draupadi is again no longer a Queen. She decides to burn herself in the heat of her wish for revenge against the Kauravas. She keeps nagging her husbands, polishing their minds never letting down their flame of revenge all through these years of Exile. During their period of exile she realises and admits as she narrates in the book, about her revenge is consuming her not for the good, but how she still can't help it. Her husbands take care of her lovingly as they feel guilt and regret for not standing up for her when she needed them.

She notices how Bhim, the second eldest of the Pandavas loves her deeply, and she never faces any kind of hardship when she is with him, he wouldn't let anything happen to Draupadi. By that time she admits that she doesn't love Bhim the same way he loves her. Infact, she doesn't love any of her husbands, but she is a devoted wife and wouldn't leave their side in the face of any hardships.

Once the hard 12 years have passed, they live one year in anonymity at King Virata's court. If they let out their secret identity, they will be forced to go on exile for another 12 years again. Draupadi takes up the role of new servant for the Queen Sudheshna. Draupadi dreads this one year living like a servant, along with that Sudheshna's brother

Kichaka, who is notorious for luring other women servants is after Draupadi. Kichaka harasses her so much to the point that she realises that the women working in her court when she was the Queen live hard lives if not protected by the Ladies in charge. Out of anger and intolerance, Draupadi seeks solace in Bhim and he ends up killing Kichaka. By this incident, the 13th year is over, and the Pandavas and Draupadi seek their rightful land to be returned to the Kauravas. They decline, and war is declared.

The War

During the preparations of the war, Draupadi gets back with her sons and her brother, who took care of them all the years while they were in Exile. Draupadi is gifted a Vision by Vyasa before the war, so that she will be the one who sees every important moment in the war, and live to tell the stories of the Kurukshetra War.

Some moment after Bheeshma's fall, Draupadi while trying to visit him, accidentally overhears two of the most unexpected truths from Karna and Bheeshma. The conversation reveals that Karna was infact Bheeshma's grandson, a.k.a Kunti's eldest son of all. He is her husband's brother. The other truth being, Karna was always in love with Draupadi from the moment he saw her, and that he was the most guilty in all the wrongs that he had done to her. All these details of her overhearing this conversation is an added detail in the book which is the crux

of this story of Draupadi, apart from Mahabharata, which stands alone, undisturbed in the book.

Anyway, during the war, it pains her the most to see the death of Karna and the helpless Abhimanyu, Arjuna's and Subhadra's son, who was killed by Karna.

A cursed gift, as she sees, she watches every painful vision to its core detail, crying and dying with her loved ones in the war. The war results in millions of widows dying to jump into their husbands' pyre and their helpless children. Draupadi stands tall after the war and speaks to the women, as a woman who lost her kids and dear brother to the war, promising that she will be a responsible Queen standing up for the women in the future.

Queen of Hastinapur

Draupadi orchestrates the introduction of a separate all women court just for women's issues. She takes care of their only hope of future, Abhimanyu's son Parikshit, as he runs around the Palace, to all his grand parents. Due to the Trauma after the war, they barely act strict with Parikshit, and openly showers him with love all the time, unlike how they were treated in their childhood. Draupadi becomes the only one who manages to be strict with him on a regular basis. Until the last journey with her husbands, she remains a loyal Queen to Hastinapur, a good wife to her husbands and a good grandmother to Parikshit.

Death

The Pandavas set out again for their ultimate travel to the mountains. In typical Draupadi fashion, she also accompanies them, again leaving behind, this time her grand child, to be with her husbands, as they are always together. While climbing the mountain, Draupadi is walking behind everybody, she falls down first. She is devastated when none of her husbands stay back for her, or be with her till her last breath. She hears their conversation though. Bhim asks Yudhistira why she fell first, and he responds hesitatingly that she never loved the Pandavas, hinting that he knew she was always in love with Karna. Krishna appears in front of her, and they chat on after-lives, and how she is stepping into that realm and none of the pain she went through will matter from now on. As she sees the golden light flashing, she sees everyone who died up there, and one man in a Gold armour takes her hand, and they embrace.

These are the important details of Draupadi's plot in the book. These details brought out as a different point of view to look at the character Draupadi never really disturbs the plot of the Mahabharata epic.

Draupadi's death is mentioned a little different in Yuganta, by Iravati Karwe, where Bhim is the one who shows up running back to her while she is laying in the snow as she takes her last breath, and she confesses her apologies for not paying him his attention and requests him to be born as the eldest brother in his next life.

3. Visual Style

This section looks into the visual development journey of this project.



The following diagrams were drawn as an exercise as one illustration for each chapter in the book *The Palace of Illusions*. A rough look of these drawings were inspired by the drawings made by Devadutt Pattanaik in his book 'Jaya: An illustrated Re-telling of Mahabharata' which was looked into as reference for the project out put.



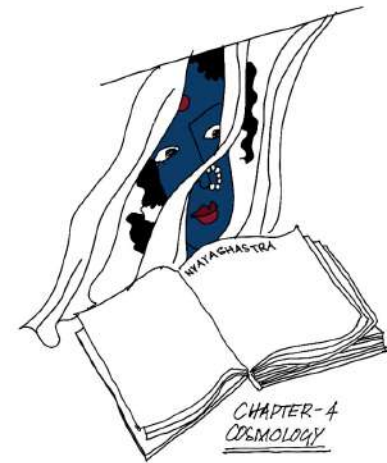
CHAPTER 1 - FIRE



CHAPTER 2 - BLUE



CHAPTER 3 - MILK



CHAPTER - 4
COSMOLOGY



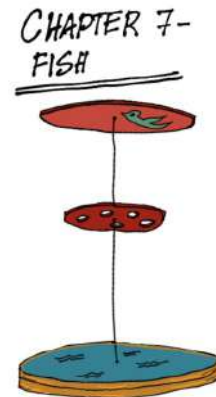
CHAPTER - 5
SMOKE



CHAPTER 6 -
INCARNATIONS



CHAPTER - 7
SORCERESS



CHAPTER 7 -
FISH

3.1 Devadutt Pattanaik's Illustrations:

In *Jaya*: An illustrated retelling of Mahabharata by Devadutt Pattanaik, he himself has illustrated in line art for the purpose of visual storytelling. His illustration style gives the reader a mystic, divine context of the story. They are one line hand drawn illustrations, in various level of detailing. There are intensely detailed and plays with organic and angular lines which gives it a unique character reminiscent of ancient mural paintings (for example: Egyptian and Indian Murals with predominant side and front profile of people).

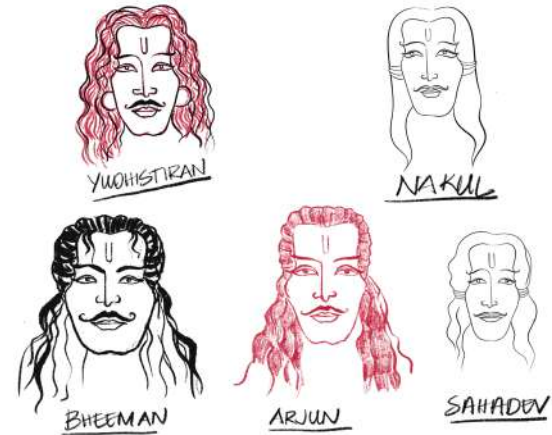


* All images in this page taken from : <https://devdutt.com/>

3.2 Initial sample sketches



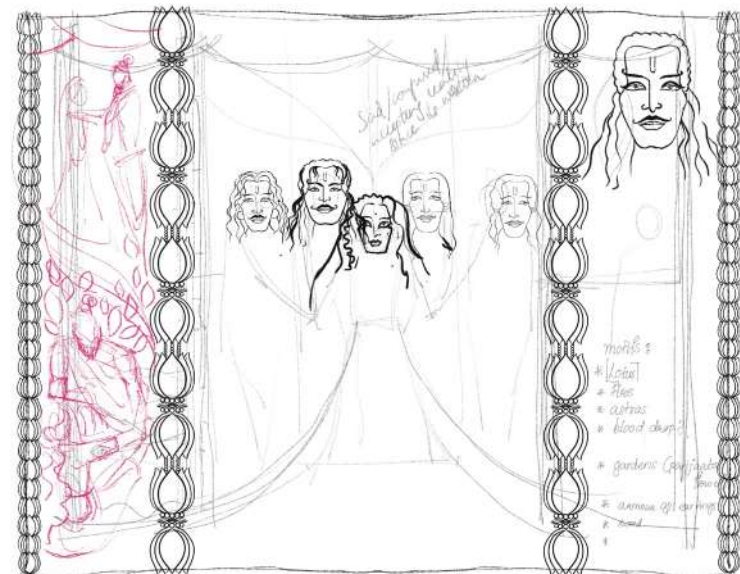
Yajna saga that lead to the birth of Draupadi and Dhrishyadhumna



Pandavas sketches



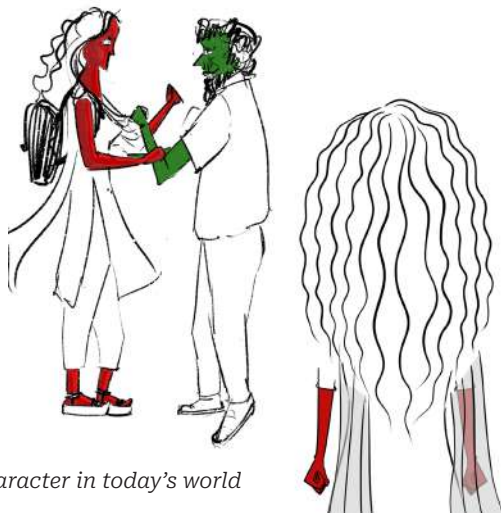
Draupadi



Draupadi's Wedding to Pandavas

3.3 Contemporary Draupadi

After referring to Pattanaik's mural inspired illustrations, and further inputs, some iterations of an idea of a contemporary Draupadi was born. The Aim of the project was to make illustrations for the Novel, 'The Palace of Illusions'. But if the same imagery described in each scene in the book is going to be illustrated, that will cause a redundancy. If a different visual of different context is put along a scene from Mahabharata, forexample, if a tale of a modern woman is shown through visuals along side the story of this book, it conveys the story in a different way, or may more universal in relatability factor. This idea was later scrapped due to time constraint.



Draupadi's character in today's world



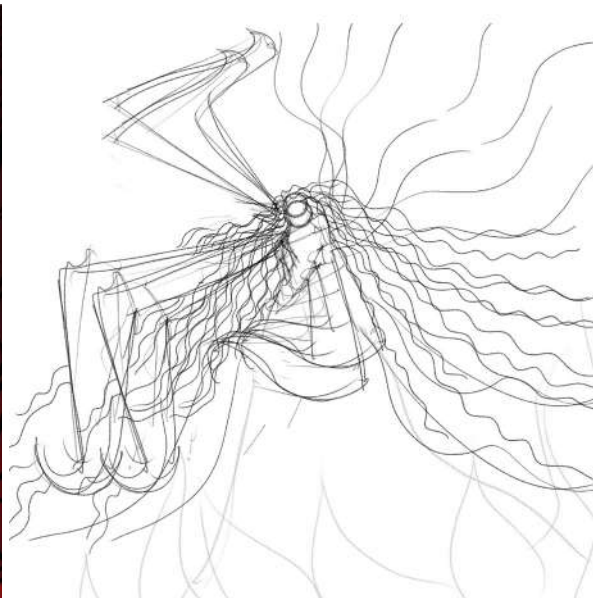
3.4 Collage Exercise



Collage of Draupadi

As a way to break off of a long mental block during that time following the previous idea, I tried an exercise to get a different aspect of Draupadi in a different medium. The reason Draupadi is such a Household name is because of her popularity of her hot headed character in the Mahabharata epic. The Tale of her Disrobe during the Game of Dice with Kauravas is also very popular story. (If one google the name 'Draupadi' the most generated images are paintings/ adaptations of TV serials depicting the Disrobe scene.)

Following this incident, Draupadi is at her most traumatised and angriest ever and she curses the Kaurava clan and she promises that she will never tie her hair until she washes her hair in Kaurava blood. Inspired from this moment, and after she washes her hair in Kaurava blood, the collage on the left was made. It is an inhumane figurine with a bulbous red head with tentacle-like red hair. She is wearing a black saree, which is flying in the wind, and a skirt, with three huge hand like structure. This was visualised as Draupadi half way through the process, and it provided me a new way to approach the project.



On the left, are the digital drawings of the Collage in the previous page. More nuanced textures, and form sizes to convey it into an illustration was explored.

3.5 Jeffrey Thompson's Illustrations:

A Washington based visual artist/ illustrator. The following black and white illustrations gives a rough edge to the visuals, conveying the feel of the characters in it. Unlike the delicate drawings of Pattanaik, Thompson's illustrations are heavy on the contrast with various textures and imperfect shapes, not following a symmetry. They are bolder, expressive and unafraid lines.



3.6 'Panchaali's Curse'



From the Collage exercise and the reference of a bolder Illustration style, the following image called 'Panchaali's Curse' was made.

In the book, Draupadi makes a remark on how naming was her given the least thought. Unlike her brother Dhrishtadyumna which means 'the courageous and splendid one', Draupadi means 'Daughter of Drupad'. However, when she met the fortune teller to know about her eventful future, he gives her the name 'Panchaali', spirit of the Land Panchal, which she accepts proudly.

This illustration was an experiment in the worms-eye view of Panchaali cursing the Kauravas, her saree torn and loosely draped around her, but long and flying in the air of her anger.



3.7 Character Design



Based on the Illustration above, the character was designed once again, only Draupadi alone this time. The lines grew more bold and dark texture compared to the previously smooth lines. Draupadi's skin is as dark as the night and that is never accurately represented. Here in the limited color scheme, which is black, white and red, Draupadi here has shiny Black-grey skin, where she is also the most beautiful woman.



3.8 Building the Frames

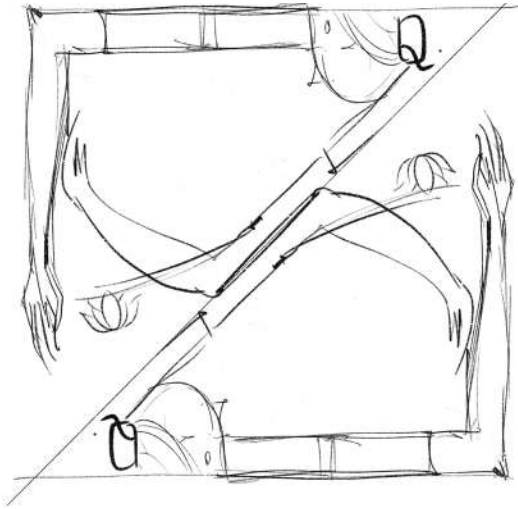


fig (a)

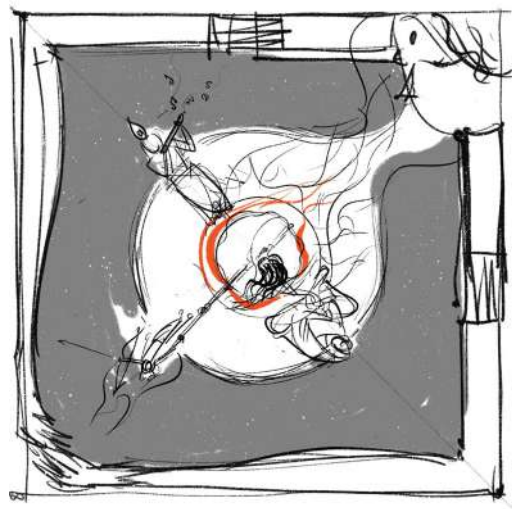


fig (b)

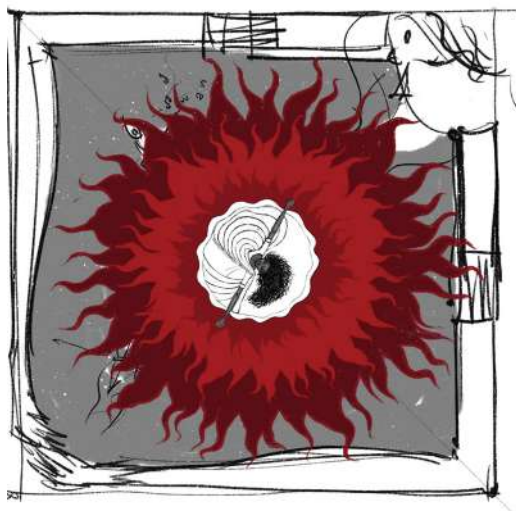


fig (c)



fig (d)

These are 4 frames, showing the development of a frame.

fig (a) is a model of cards, which was intended to show Draupadi's worlds.

fig (b) is a model with Draupadi holding her inside her arms, which is the border of the square frame.

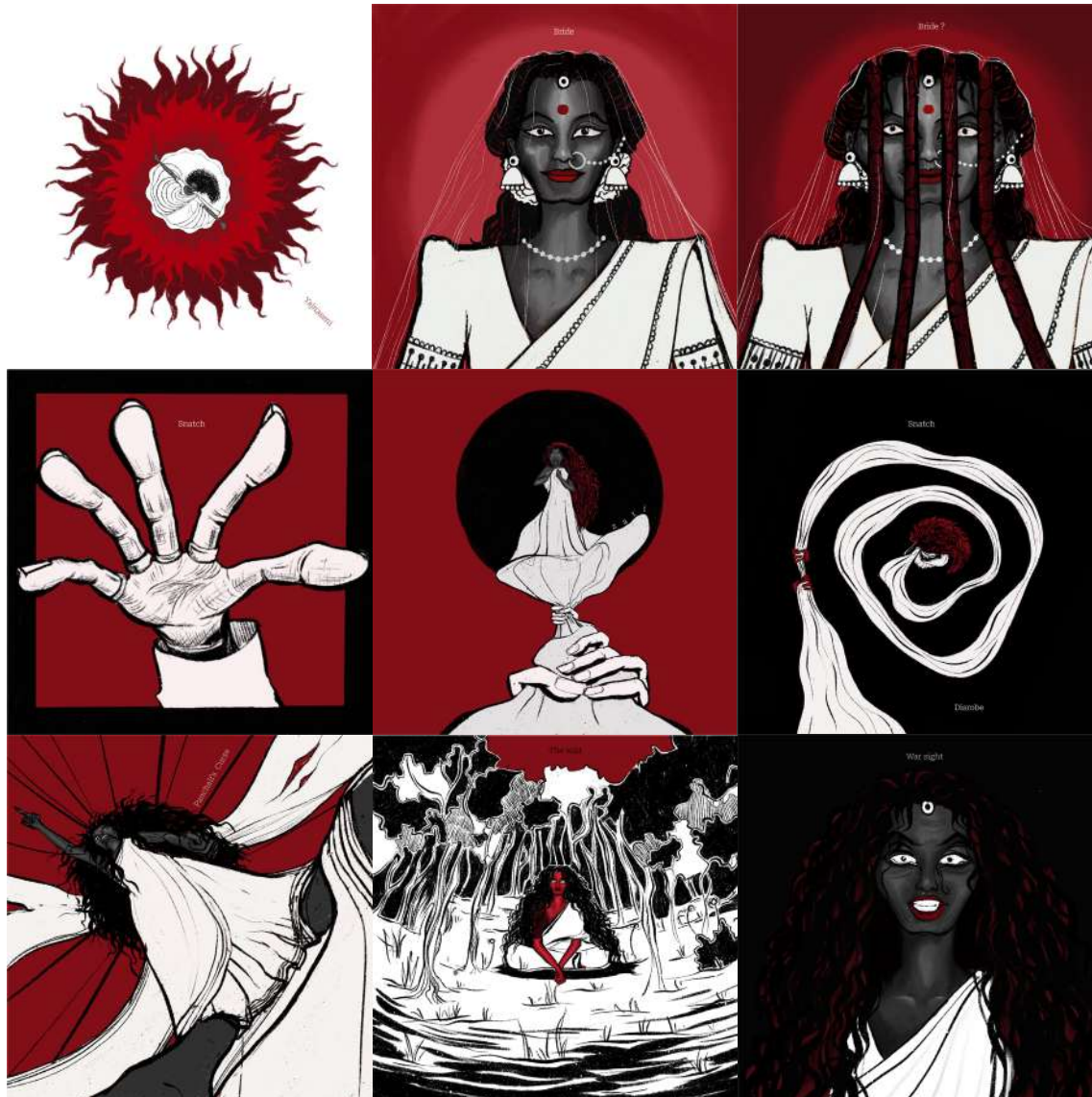
Inside the frame is a fireball, with Krishna, Dhristadyumna, Dhanush, and burning fire pointing to top right corner, with younger Draupadi at the centre twirling on the flame.

fig (c) was just a sample to see how just Draupadi alone would look in the frame.

fig (d) was finalised as the first frame when I realised two Draupadis (one inside and the other outside as a frame) isn't needed. This over the top shot is repeated at different instances.

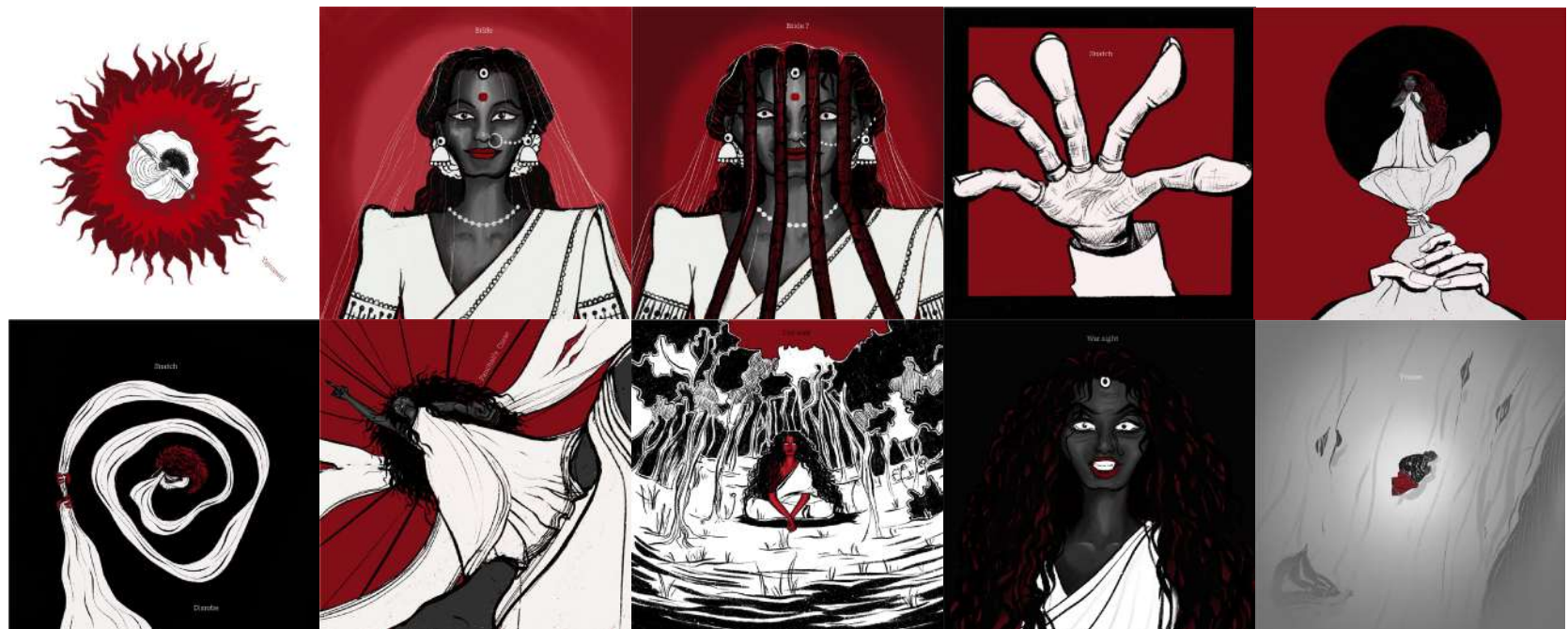


This over the top shot is repeated at different instances, which is, her birth, game of dice, war, death.



Rest of the Frames.

4. Final Output



Printed Illustrated Cards.



5. Image Credits

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Devadutt Pattanaik Illustrations:

All images taken from

<https://devdutt.com/>

Page no: 21

Jeffrey Thompson Illustrations:

All images taken from

<https://www.jefthompson.com/>

