

# The Mahabharata of Duryodhana's Clan

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## Abstract

Historically, individuals have constructed myths to elucidate the origins of the Earth, their convictions, or their immediate environment. Myths are narratives from a historical society that incorporate fantastical aspects. Folktales are transmitted between generations. The Mahabharata, a paramount epic of India, illustrates the evolution of modern society throughout time and space. This monumental epic focuses on the Mahabharata, a reflection of ancient Indian history and culture. Modern writers have reinterpreted ancient epics for various ideological and pragmatic motives, rather than regarding them as hallowed texts.

The Mahabharata extols several heroes, however the Kauravas are predominantly portrayed as malevolent and irreligious. This analysis explores AnandNeelakantan's "Ajaya: Roll of the Dice" through the lens of Duryodhana's viewpoint. To date, Duryodhana has been portrayed as the quintessential victor and a commendable character. AnandNeelakantan adopts a humanistic approach, demythologizing the characters instead of depicting them as deities or demigods. The author endeavors to subvert traditional character archetypes.

**Keywords:** Myth, Epic, Reinterpretation, Duryodhana, Kaurava

AnandNeelakantan authored the 2013 Indian mythological fiction. The narrative recounts the Kauravas and serves as the initial volume of the Ajaya series. The narrative is exclusively presented from Duryodhana's perspective, rather than that of the victor, which is the conventional viewpoint.

The novel proclaims the Mahabharata and its flawed antiheroes as more relevant to real life than the idealized heroes of classical epics. Popular culture and literature have historically lauded the victor. He expressed a profound aspiration to utilize the narratives of the vanquished to revive the heroes of the epics that have been forgotten.

Suyodhana, also known as Duryodhana, serves as the principal subject of this study paper, offering a novel view of the Mahabharata narrative. The narrative depicts Suyodhana as a benevolent ruler who opposed the caste system, asserting that an individual's potential should be assessed based on their capabilities rather than their lineage. The narrative is recounted by Crown Prince Suyodhana of Hastinapura. He is the most reviled and scorned antagonist in Indian mythology because to his struggle for the Hastinapura throne, which was rightfully his by birth. He is insultingly designated as "Duryodhana" instead of Suyodhana. He is resolute in safeguarding the authentic legacy of the Kuru lineage.

The narrative centers around a temple in Kerala dedicated to the worship of Duryodhana, accompanied with the author's commentary reflecting the perspective of an elderly peasant.

*"If our Lord Duryodhana was an evil man, why did the great men like Bhishma, Drona, Kripa and the entire army of Krishna, fight the war on his side"* (Neelakantan, 8).

He achieves this by establishing a tone of stark realism that allows viewers to perceive an aspect of Duryodhana that society has chosen to ignore. "Every situation has two facets," as he articulated with

eloquence. He further emphasizes that no individual fulfills the ambitions represented in ancient myths and narratives.

The prefix 'Dhur' carries negative connotations; therefore, the name Duryodhana is modified to the more positive Suyodhana. The author explicitly states in his letter —

*“One of the meanings of Duryodhana is ‘one’ difficult to conquer, in the other words, Ajaya(Unconquerable). Though named Suyodhana, the Pandavas used the derogatory ‘Dur’ to slander him as ‘one who does not know how to wield power or arms’”. (Neelakantan 8)*

The valiant and daring hero Duryodhana is shown as never permitting his caste to divide him from his allies. From an early age, he was shown as a compassionate and nurturing child. He once welcomed their uncle Vidhura, despite the Pandava cousins' hesitance due to their uncle's caste. Suyodhana was unsettled and perplexed by Bhima's treatment of his uncle Vidhura and by Vidhura's own embarrassment at Suyodhana's display of affection. Vidhura was subjected to humiliation by the erudite Brahmins in the court of Suyodhana's father. Their doubt regarding Vidura's ancestry and his ability to reference scripture results in his suffering injuries. To obtain solutions to the perplexing problems that his elders had evaded, young Suyodhana yearned for rapid maturation. Despite Suyodhana's solace in Shakuni's presence, he remains perplexed by the Gandhara prince's inquisitiveness, motives, and animosity. Drona manifests and endorses the succession of Yudhishtira. Shakuni, the uncle of Suyodhana, had cautioned him of this type of scheme.

This study presents an intriguing perspective on the romantic relationship between Suyodhana and Subhadra. The union was sanctioned by both Dhritrashtra and Balarama. The event did not occur because Krishna incited Subhadra, prompting her to elope with Arjuna.

Suyodhana is upset and discontented due to Subhadra. Similar to the Pandavas, who collectively share Draupadi, or Bhishma, who abducts a woman for his half-brother Vichitravirya, he continues to nurture sentiments for his former beloved despite the elapse of time. Suyodhana resolved not to engage in combat due to her or utilize his nation's resources to resolve a personal obligation. In her book Sexual Politics, Kate Millett asserts

*"Implicit in all the gender identity development which takes place through child-hood is the sum total of the parents', the peers', and the culture's notion of what is appropriate to each gender by way of temperament character, interests, status, worth, gesture, and expression. Every movement of the child's life is a clue to how he or she must think and behave to attain or satisfy the demands which gender places upon one. (Millett, 31)*

Suyodhana perceived himself as exploited and devoid of self-worth. The credulous man who mistakenly believed that his cousin would secure his bride's hand.

*"Son of blind parents I too, did not have the vision to see subhadra was making a mockery of my love. I have been blind." (Neelakantan, 341)*

In the book Ajaya: Roll of the Dice, Shakuni, the sovereign of Gandhara, offers a compelling perspective. His singular objective in life is to annihilate the Kaurava family and their realm. Shakunji, the Grand Regent of Hastinapura, took great pride in his ability to deceive others. After mastering the art of intrigue and strategically placing his associate in pivotal positions inside Hastinapura, he assigned him the objective of annihilating India. Suyodhana is important to this game of dice. Shakuni will deceive everyone, except for his sister. In his own articulation:

*"It did not matter that she had chosen to be blind like her husband. She still saw through him. The silken bands covering her eyes notwithstanding. She could strip his soul naked with just a tilt of her head." (Neelakantan, 137)*

Shakuni orchestrates the construction of the Palace of Lac and then accuses Suyodhana of conspiring to burn down the Pandavas. This illustrates Shakuni's utter disregard for Suyodhana and his other nephews. Shakuni's singular aim following the demise of his family is to dismantle the Kuru empire. In his perception, all individuals were simply pawns in his vast game of chance. Shakuni used his cunningness to orchestrate a dice game in which Yudhishtira forfeits his kingdom, brothers, and wife.

Karna, the charioteer's son, serves as another significant narrative voice in Ajaya: Roll of the Dice. Notwithstanding his remarkable prowess as an archer, he was loathed by Dhaumya, Drona, and the five Pandava siblings. He contemplates abandoning his wretched and purposeless existence as a suta. He journeys to the Deep South to train with the esteemed Parasurama to enhance his martial skills. Suyodhana selects the suta because of his potential. Suyodhana appoints him the king

*"Duryodhana's personality comes alive when he makes Karna the king of ange at a crucial movement in his life, when he is being humiliated because of his caste. The Kaurava princess challenges orthodoxy by making a Suta a king."* (Neelakantan, 7)

Karna is not only exceptionally talented but also remarkably gracious and compassionate. He embodies Suyodhana's response to the third Pandava prince, Arjuna. Suyodhana persists in his allegiance to Karna despite the Pandavas' disdain and mockery. Duryodhana conferred the titles of Kshatriya and ruler upon him, as he was worthy of them. When Draupadi is subjected to public humiliation in her father's court, he demonstrates exceptional composure. He selflessly assists the impoverished and marginalized by bequeathing all of his invaluable diamonds, jewels, and assets to charitable causes, demonstrating his nobility and magnanimity. He was willing to forfeit his life for his cherished friend, who had bestowed upon him a title and prestige while the rest of society ridiculed him for his Suta lineage.

AnandNeelakantan's Ajaya: Roll of the Dice reinterprets the history of the Kuru clan through the viewpoints of several social groups. Neelakantan mercilessly dismantles the concepts of dharma and the ideal. He offers insight into an alternative reality that may have been disregarded, repressed, or suppressed in culturally sanctioned interpretations of the grand epic. Ajaya: Roll of the Dice aims to explore the Kurukshetra War from the viewpoint of the vanquished, particularly focusing on the supporters of the fabled antihero "Duryodhana," who is esteemed for his bravery, loyalty, integrity, and honor.

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