

Virtues and Vices Women of the Indian Epics through Lens of Matsari Tyaga Pragalbha

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Abstract: *The Mahābhārata, one of India's greatest epics, offers a vast moral and psychological landscape where human virtues and vices coexist in dynamic tension. Within this intricate web of dharma and desire, the women of the epic emerge as complex embodiments of emotional intensity, moral resilience, and internal conflict. This paper examines these female figures through the lens of matsarī—a Sanskrit concept often translated as envy or jealousy, yet deeply rooted in emotional comparison and moral ambivalence. By interpreting matsarī not merely as a vice but as a catalyst of human action, the study reconsiders how emotions conventionally labeled as destructive may, in fact, reveal ethical depth and agency in the epic's women. Characters such as Draupadī, Kuntī, and Gāndhārī are re-evaluated for how matsarī shapes their choices, relationships, and sense of justice. The paper argues that their so-called “vices” are intertwined with virtues of loyalty, endurance, and moral perception, thus challenging the binary framework of good and evil. Through this emotional lens, matsarī becomes both a mirror of patriarchal constraint and a mode of self-assertion within an epic deeply concerned with dharma and destiny. Ultimately, this study situates the women of the Mahābhārata as moral agents whose virtues and vices alike illuminate the epic's nuanced vision of human nature and ethical consciousness.*

Keywords: empathetic, exploitation, tendencies

