

***ABHIGYANSHAKUNTALAM: AN ANALOGUE WITH
THE GENRE OF INDIAN CLASSICAL DRAMA.***

Dr. CHEN CHOU
Department of History
Hindol College, Khajuriakata
Dhenkanal, Odisha
India, Pin- 759020
E-mail: kumardrmahendra@gmail.com

Abstracts:

Kalidasa probably lived and wrote at the close of the first millennium through a date later by some five centuries has been assigned to him by some scholars. He is regarded India's greatest Sanskrit poet and dramatist. Kalidasa is acclaimed as "Indian Shakespeare" who penned his masterpieces of plays, poems, epics, etc. in Sanskrit. Many Western scholars have attempted to translate his works but the beauty of the original Sanskrit works of Kalidasa, yet to be captured as worth exploring. The best work for study the Rasa Theory is Shakuntalam by Kavi Kalidas. The work has been written in not surely but between the 1st century BCE and 4th Century C.E. The title "Abhigyansakuntalam" means 'pertaining to token recognized- Shakuntala, could be of Shakuntala who is recognized as the recognition of Shakuntala', or the sign of Shakuntala.

The third play Abhigyanshakuntalam is the work by which Kalidasa is best known not only in India but throughout the world. It was the first work from which was made a German translation in 1791 that evoked the often-quoted admiration by Goethe. The raw material for this play, which usually is called in English simply Shakuntala after the name of the eponymous heroine is contained in the Mahabharata and in similar form also in the Padmapurana, but these versions seem crude and primitive when compared with Kalidasa's polished and refined treatment of the story. The recognition of Shakuntala or Abhigyanshakuntalam is Kalidasa's most popular play. The story of Shakuntala begins with a prologue. The prologue consists of benediction and a conversation between the director and an actress. Just as ritual was an integral part of Greek dramas rituals also a part of the ancient Indian plays. The "Benediction" is performed before the beginning of

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the paly. The Benediction is invocation to Lord Shiva for , the eight forms of Lord Shiva-

water, Fire, the priest , Sun, Moon, Space, Earth and Air are glorified. The director and the actress talk about the paly of the day. The readers are informed that a new play the recognition of Shakuntala going to be performed. The Actress performs a song on the present season-summer for the audience. The actress performs a song on the present season- summer for the audience. The whole plot of the story runs with the concept of forgetfulness and desire to meet.

Key Words:

Benediction, Conversation, Drama, Exploring, Eponymous, Forgetfulness, Prologue.

Introduction:

Abhigyanshakutalam, famously known as “ The Recognition of Shakuntala” was the first ever translation made of an Indian play into Western languages. The roots of the play are taken from the Indian epic “ Mahabharata” and several changes were made to derive dramatic effects and they all worked. As a result, most people consider the version of the origin of Bharata, misfortunes of Shakuntala and the story of Dusyanta by Kalidasa in Abhigyanshakutalam is authentic. The plot revolves around Shakuntala, the daughter of the great saint Viswamitra and the heavenly damsel Menaka. Viswamitra in order to gain great rewards gets into deep meditation and the lord of heavens, Indra gets worried about his predicament if the saint completes his meditation. To serve his position and be worshipped as the one with no equal, Indra sends Menaka to lure Viswamitra out of his contemplation to God. After many efforts Menaka successfully disturbs the firm mind of the saint and he fails in love with the beauty of the damsel. As a result, Shakuntala (the name is given by the Sage Kanva) is born and Viswamitra realizes what he has lost due to the union and rejects to be with Menaka and Shakuntala. Menaka is forbidden to enter Heaven with a human child so she leaves her daughter in a forest knowing well that the forest is under the protection of Kanva and he will take care of her. As expected by Menaka, Kanva finds the baby girl surrounded by birds called Shakunta, thus he names her as Shakuntala as she was seen with the birds who seem to enjoy playing with her. When the play Abhigyanshakutalam opens, Shakuntala is seen in her youth with grateful mind and body.¹

Abhigyanshakuntalam is an excellent drama by Mahakavi Kalidasa. It is a tragic love story presented in play. In this story, we witness immortal love between king Dusyanta, king of Hastinapur and Shakuntala, foster child of sage patriarch Kanva. Kanva had his hermitage in the forest in the foothills of the Himalaya on the river banks of river Malini. The actual parents of Shakuntala were Maharshi Viswamitra and his wife Menaka. They had the child before marriage this was the reason that they can't keep her. So they left her in the forest near the hermitage of sage Kanva. When Kanva saw the baby crying he brought her to his hermitage and he fostered her. With passage of time, Shakuntala turned into a beautiful young girl.²

Within this context, Shakuntala has been an extremely important contributor. The protagonist of this play is her lover, the king of Dusyant. If Shakuntala is a stunning example of a woman's potential, then Dusyant is the epitome of a noble hero. A young woman between the ages of fifteen and eighteen plays the role of the play's protagonist. It would appear that the play's hero is somewhere between the ages of thirty and thirty-five. Shakuntala possessed a stunningly divine appearance. It was something that she had received as a gift from her mother, Menaka. In addition to being young, handsome, and majestic, Dusyant had a charming manner of address. Shakuntala's stunning good looks won king Dusyant's affection, and he became besotted with her.³

This play has a very interesting story line throughout its entirety. It is a wonderful illustration of how a plot should be constructed. It is eventually revealed to him that Shakuntala is Kanva's biological daughter. Once king Dusyanta was out on hunting in the forest and during chasing a deer he came near the neighborhood of the hermitage. The members of the Ashram extended a warm welcome towards king Dusyanta. There he happens to see Shakuntala and he falls in love with her. King Dusyanta was deeply in love with Shakuntala and decided to declare his emotion to her so that he could marry her soon. As Shakuntala was also in love with him but finds it difficult to suppress her love towards king Dusyanta. Shakuntala was in so much of confusion, so one of her friends Anusuya says, "Listen dear Shakuntala, he cannot enter your mind and your thoughts, but feel that the state you are in is like that of persons experiencing the pangs of love".

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Shakuntala confirms her love to him by sending a love letter. King Dusyanta proposed to

marry her by Gandarava made because this was only the method to make a quick wedding. Then a quick wedding took place in ‘ Gandharva Vivah’ mode. Goutami was matron of the hermitage she saw everything that happened but kept quite. King Dusyanta happens to return to his kingdom due to same kind of unrest but promised her that he will be back to take her with him and gave her a ring of him.⁴

Once the sage with the fiery temper, Durvasa, has arrived at the hermitage of Shakuntala. At that time, Shakuntala was quiet engrossed in the thoughts of king Dushyanta. At that very time Rishi Durvasa arrived and gave a call but Shakuntala failed to notice the arrival of Rishi Durvasa. Such response enraged Rishi Durvasa. Such response enraged Rishi Durvasa and he showered curses on Shakuntala and he says- “ You shall be lost in this thoughts, though you goal his memory hard, he shall fail to remember you.” The curse made every one scared, Shakuntala friends requested him for mercy. At this rishi Durvasa says if the king sees any souvenir that he gave her, he will remember everything. After all this incident Rishi Durvasa departed from the Ashram. Now after this everyone was relaxed Shakuntala did not received any message from the king. After months of waiting, sage Kanva arranged for the visit of Shakuntala to the royal court of Hastinapur. She left for the royal court being scouted by a few member of ashram. On her way she stops by a lack of drinking water. Unfortunately, the ring slips out her finger in the lack and a fish swallows the ring. She reaches the royal court and shows him his son and reminded him about their marriage but the king fail to remember her due to Durvasa curse. She searches for the ring but could not find it and had to return back to the ashram. After some day an angler finds the ring in the stomach of the fish. He tries to sell the ring but was caught by the soldiers of Hastinapur. He was brought to the royal court and the ring was handed to the king. On seeing the ring he remembered everything and realized his mistake. He immediately, rushed in the forest to meet Shakuntala. There they reunited and he took them to Hastinapur with him. He then made Shakuntala the chief Queen and Bharata, son of King as crown prince and thus he fulfilled the promise made by him.⁵

The natural world is very important to the plot of this play. The entirety of the story takes place in the midst of natural settings. The4 author Kalidas, who had a deep

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reverence for the natural world, did a wonderful job of capturing its allure. In point of

fact, the specialty of the art of Kalidasa is the compounding of internal and external aspects of nature. Actually, Nature has always been one of the main inspirations and chief repositories of poetic thought and constitution. Kalidas is no exception. He is not only highly sensitive to nature, but for him it comes across as a living presence, almost riven by a keen and actual consciousness of its own. It is humanized to a degree that it plays a role as a distinct dramatic persona. This is not uncommon in Sanskrit literature, but Kalidasa takes this literary legacy to a new level of expertise, and nowhere is it better displayed than in *Abhigyanashakuntalam*. The first four acts of *Abhigyanashakuntalam* are enacted in the hermitage of Kanva. The plot unfolds in the very lap of nature. Ears of corn are found fallen around the trees, disseminated by birds who perch on them alongside the banks of Malini. Here deer move forward and backward freely in the forest, run away from chariots which drive through the gradual stream. The path is from the water that drips off the rocks from their bath. It is amidst such abundance of nature that Shakuntala was brought up, her fraternal love encompassed the trees, creepers and every animate entities within the hermitage. The trees call her the deer invite her to stroke them, the creepers hold her back. It appears that a supreme consciousness embraces the natural existence and the humans together as part of the same lived reality. Kalidas also excels in the description of nature. His description of the runaway deer, afraid of Dushyant's arrow, is immortal. The third act alone takes place in the hermitage of Kanva. Here the Sringara Rasa dominates the proceedings.⁶

In the IV Act of *Abhigyanashakuntalam*, the introduction of the curse of the irritable, vengeful and caustic sage Durvasa is one of those departures that Kalidasa carried out from the original narrative of the Mahabharata. This is an excellent dramatic move, that has enriched the plot in many ways. The diversion was necessitated by Kalidasa's intent to present Dushyanta not as beautiful and irresponsible scion of a royal family like we see him in the Mahabharata but as a heroic character. Therefore, some mitigation was necessary to account for his forgetfulness his inability to recall what transferred between himself and Shakuntala in the ashrams of Kanva in the past Durvasa's curse clouds his memory in such a way, that even the physical presence of Shakuntala with claim of bride-hood also fails to rouse remembrance of the fact, despite Dushyant's

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repeated attempts to dose. This clearly arouses in the mind of the audience a sympathy

for Dusyanta. His amnesia is here affected by menas which are beyond his control. At a deeper loved the curse of Durvasa appears as perfunctory. The love for Shakuntala that Dusyanta displays in the early part of the drama, beginning from Act-I itself is of a physical displays in the early part of the drama, beginning from Act-I itself is of a physical even voyeuristic nature. Although consummated, this love is flawed and does not guarantee a permanence of emotion.⁷

As a result, division and separation becomes the inevitable test by fire through which the truth of this rather instantaneous love can be tested. Durvasa's curse provides precisely that occasion. He separates the lovers, poses them, through trials and tribulations, so that when they resurface their love shines like a diamond, carved clear of dross and impurities. Another interpretation of the incident may be to look at it as a natural consequences, and therefore as necessary, in accordance to the doctrine of Dharana or cosmic law that governs both the macrocosm as the universe and the microcosm as the human beings and their sympathy to one another.⁸

Any emotion that makes one forgetful of one's responsibilities is narration and self defeating. Enamored by the passion for Dusyanta, Shakuntala forgets her duty as a hostess in Kanva's hermitage when Durvasa arrives. This is an occurrence within the hermitage of Kanva himself, who has been known for and wide as the very paragon of hospitality. Thus, the curse is something that Shakuntala invites as most natural consequences of her action. What this entails is of even deeper consequences, what is easily got is easily forget, there is easily got is easily forget, there is neither glory in such acquirement nor shame or sorrow in its loss. Dusyanta secured Shakuntala's love easily being both gallant and a king. That same would hold true for Shakuntala as well of the king recognized her at the very moment of her arrival to the capital if Durvasa's curse delayed not the process, deferring it so much so that each understands the other's love. There passion gets purified through the trials of delay, separation and mistrust which successfully overcomes. From a more applied point of view, there is a subtle invocation towards a successful grihasta ashram, which will ratify the somewhat radical, Gandhari's mistaking that the couple perpetuated earlier. The curse provided an opportunity for the play to reach its natural conclusion, through an exploration of multiple rasos to finally

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rest in presenting or Mystic tranquility which in Indian Philosophy's always propounded

as the ultimate goal, and which is available only after deep experience and understanding of the rest.⁹

Thus, the story of the drama *Abhigyanashakuntalam* and *Dushyanta*. The plot is based upon love affair, secret marriage, separation of imprecation and the reunion of immortal love of Dushyanta and Shakuntala,.. The theme of the drama is based on the Indian Philosophy, true love is immortal'. Kalidasa has shown that while love leads to failure, kindness reaches the completion. The curse plays a vital role which makes Dushyanta to forget everything about Shakuntala. But the supreme form of love is the serene that was sharply followed and got succeeded by Shakuntala.¹⁰ Kalidasa concludes this drama with declaration of Shakuntala's life is a creation of factual love and external beauty that determined true love is immortal. In a nutshell, *Abhigyanashakuntalam* is an outstanding presentation of both human love and the love that exists between animals.

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