

Nature of Society in Kalidas's Rtusamhara and Abhijnanasakuntalam

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ABSTRACT

Kalidasa's early life is the subject of numerous legends. According to folklore, the poet was famed for his attractiveness, which drew the attention of a well-educated Princess, who eventually married him. However, according to mythology, Kalidasa was uneducated, if not a dunce, and when the Princess learned he fell short of her expectations, she was horrified. Through his works, Kalidasa mirrored society's social consciousness. His works were successful because they promoted the idea that the majority of the population desired to spread. We can witness Kalidasa's portrayal of women as meek and docile in Raghuvamsa and Abhijnanasakuntalam. Ecocriticism as a term first arose in the late 1970s during Western Literature Association (WLA) meetings, and it began to take shape in the 1990s, with a focus on the human-nature relationship. The issue of cultural and social norms based on Hindu religion's high ideals has been articulated by Kalidasa. He has highlighted that love cannot take precedence over our responsibilities. If there are any lapses on our duty front, we will be penalised.

Keywords: Life, Women, Empowerment, Play, Abhijnanasakuntalam.

1. INTRODUCTION

One of these legends deserves to be told for its own sake, despite the fact that it contains no historical reality and places Kalidasa in Benares, 500 miles away from the only city where we know he spent a significant portion of his life. Kalidasa was a Brahman's child, according to one legend. He was abandoned at the age of six months and adopted by an ox-driver. Despite his lack of formal schooling, he grew to maturity with extraordinary beauty and grace of manner. The Princess of Benares, it turned out, was a blue-stocking who turned down suitor after suitor, even her father's counsellor, because they didn't meet her high standards as scholars and poets. The rejected counsellor devised a terrible retaliation scheme. He plucked the dashing ox-driver from the street, dressed him in savant garb and surrounded him with an entourage of educated doctors, and introduced him to the princess after telling him not to open his mouth under any circumstances.

The princess was enchanted by his beauty and captivated to the depths of her pedantic soul by his persistent silence, which she took to be evidence of profound intelligence. She wanted to marry Kalidasa, so they went to the temple together. But as soon as the ceremony was completed, Kalidasa saw an image of a bull. His early upbringing was too much for him, and the bride was enraged when the secret was revealed. In answer to Kalidasa's pleadings, she gave in and encouraged him to pray to

the goddess Kali for study and poetry. The plea was answered; education and poetical power miraculously descended upon the young ox-driver, who took the name Kalidasa, Kali's servant, in gratitude. He pledged that he would always treat her as his teacher, with tremendous respect but no familiarity; because he felt he owed this joyous alteration in his whole nature to his princess. This was more than the lady had bargained for, and she erupted in rage, cursing Kalidasa to die at the hands of a woman. This curse was fulfilled at a later date, according to the narrative. A certain king had written a half-stanza of poetry and offered a big reward to any poet who could complete it admirably. Kalidasa breezed through the stanza, but a woman he adored discovered his lines and, anxious for the reward, killed him.

2. THE NATURE OF SOCIETY DURING THE PERIOD KALIDAS LIVED

Prior to the Gupta dynasty, Buddhism and Jainism were popular religions. Ashoka, the Mauryan king, was a fervent Buddhist devotee and propagator. During that time, the Brahmins had lost a lot of their power. Because animal sacrifice was a source of livelihood for the Brahmins, Ashoka's prohibition of ceremonial sacrifices harmed their interests. Buddhism fought Brahminical power, which had been steadily built up during the later Vedic period. People were rapidly losing touch with the later Vedic heritage as the essence of religion changed. The Brahmins rewrote the secular epics Mahabharata and Ramayana and added a religious twist to them.

Brahmin hegemony was bolstered after Mauryan reign by the practise of granting land to priests and temples. Instead of being paid directly, the priests and officials were given land grants and the authority to collect taxes on it. They were able to enjoy a wealthy and pleasant life for generations as a result of this. This technique eventually resulted in the formation of a feudal society. The Brahmins and officers took control of their properties and began exploiting the peasantry and labourers, most of who were from the lowest varnas. By redacting the Puranas and proclaiming their superiority over the other varnas, the Brahmins made the varna system more rigid. Religion was employed as a weapon to keep the peace. The importance of religiously doing the responsibilities assigned to the varnas was emphasised, and even a shudra could be saved through the service of the twice-born and devotion to God. Due to the great influence of Brahmins during the Gupta dynasty, Sanskrit became the primary language of inscriptions. This demonstrates the ties that existed between the ruling class and the Brahmins who backed them up. Classical Sanskrit was not a widely spoken language.

• His Works

According to Marx, a person's consciousness is determined by his social existence. Kalidasa's writings, too, can be seen as a mirror of the culture he lived in. His works were written in Sanskrit, and they all have two things in common: they're comedies, and upper and lower caste people don't speak the same language. Prakrit was spoken by women and shudras. Kalidasa discusses faithfully upholding the varna system in Raghuvamsa, and how going against it would not bring happiness to society. He mentions Rama chopping off the head of a shudra for practising penance, which is believed to be a Brahmin's prerogative. Shudra varna characters do not appear frequently in his works, which are primarily on Brahmins and the ruling elite. He also mentions the Brahmins receiving land endowments in the form of villages.

The use of Sanskrit in his writings suggests that the intended audience was made up of political elites and individuals who were conversant with the language, such as poets and courtesans. Women and shudras were not allowed to participate. Through his works, Kalidasa mirrored society's social consciousness. His works were successful because they promoted the idea that the majority of the population desired to spread. We can witness Kalidasa's portrayal of women as meek and docile in Raghuvamsa and Abhijnanasakuntalam. In contrast to Valmiki's Sita, who is assertive and a woman of dignity and self-respect, Sita as portrayed by him speaks badly of herself and her fortune when abandoned by Rama. When she takes her kid to Dushyanta's court, Shakuntala is a fearless character who firmly confronts him; however, Kalidasa presents her as a damsel in distress when she is left alone by her companions in Dushyanta's court. Through religious legends, his writings contributed to the upper varnas' superiority and women's servitude. Because of the enormous impact of religion in society, he drew his characters from religious scriptures.

3. INDIA'S SHAKESPEARE, KALIDASA

The rule of one Vikramaditya was related and was claimed to be tied to Kalidasa's reign. However, as most of the rulers were given the title Vikramaditya, such as Chandragupta II and Skandagupta, the dispute arose as to whose king it was. It was also suggested that Kalidasa lived in the first century B.C., under the reign of another Vikramaditya of Ujjain, but it is now widely believed that Kalidasa lived between the fifth and sixth centuries CE. In a stone inscription dated 634 CE unearthed at Alhole in modern-day Karnataka, his name is listed alongside that of Bharavi. When Vikramaditya reigned at Ujjayini in Central India, Wilson believes Kalidasa was one of the "nine diamonds" that decorated King Vikramaditya's court; this warlike Vikramaditya who vanquished the hordes of Scythians and launched the magnificent Vikram era. However, Bhan Dhaji and many others appear to suggest that Kalidasa's Sanskrit masterpieces were written during the reigns of Chandragupta II or even Harshavardhana, both of whom bore the title of 'Vikramaditya.'

Kalidasa's early life is the subject of numerous legends. According to folklore, the poet was famed for his attractiveness, which drew the attention of a well-educated Princess, who eventually married him. However, according to mythology, Kalidasa was uneducated, if not a dunce, and when the Princess learned he fell short of her expectations, she was horrified. Kalidasa, a famous devotee of Goddess Kali (his name literally means "slave of Kali"), is reported to have prayed to her for knowledge and wisdom. According to legend, Kali, the Divine Mother, wrote on his tongue and changed him into the world's finest Sanskrit poet and dramatist. Another legend describes Kalidasa as an ignorant shepherd from a poor family who is married to Vidyotama, a learned Princess, through a plot. Vidyotama banishes Kalidasa after finding that she has been duped, requesting that he obtain scholarship and fame if he wishes to continue their relationship. She further demands that when he returns, he responds to the query 'Asti Kashchit Vagarthan'.

4. READING OF KALIDASA'S RTUSAMHARA FROM AN ECOCRITICAL POINT OF VIEW

Ecocriticism as a term first arose in the late 1970s during Western Literature Association (WLA) meetings, and it began to take shape in the 1990s, with a focus on the human-nature relationship. William Rueckert developed the term "ecocriticism" in his essay "Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism" in 1978. "The application of ecology and ecological themes to the study of literature" was his goal. As a result, the most significant notion in ecocriticism will be the link between man and the environment. This method is now part of literary theory in literature; modern literary texts deal with the environment and literature, both of which are intimately linked to men and nature. Other literary theories, on the other hand, deal with issues like as class, racism, and gender. However, ecocriticism represents nature and the environment; it discusses everything that is directly related to the earth, such as water, sky, soil, plants, and so on. All of these characteristics generate magnificent surroundings in a literary work, making it cute and making us feel enormous affection due of their appealing nature. Ecocriticism is regarded as a movement for environmental protection, in addition to the enjoyment of natural beauty. "Ecocriticism...is a study of the relationship between literature and the environment performed in the spirit of devotion to environmentalist praxis," says Lawrence Buell (430). Ecocriticism, according to Estok,

is more than just the study of Nature or natural things in literature; it is any theory dedicated to bringing about change by analysing the function—thematic, artistic, social, historical, ideological, theoretical, or otherwise—of the natural environment, or aspects of it, as represented in documents (literary or otherwise) that contribute to material practises in material worlds (16-17).

The formation of the area of ecocriticism was aided by the organisation for the study of literature and the environment. Ecocriticism is essential in the study of human interaction with nature because it calls for a greater understanding of nature and the natural world. Ecocriticism is a literary theory that has only recently emerged in the field of literary criticism. Critics examine literary texts with environmentally conscious eyes, looking for evidence of writers' environmental concern in a work of art. The majority of environmentally concerned literary works address a common concern: environmental degradation caused by a variety of human activities. As a result of crossing the age of environmental boundaries, man has harmed the planet's ecological (basic life cycle) system. Ecocriticism includes everything relating to human and nonhuman components such as earth, water, and sky dwellings, agriculture, caves, hills, plants, trees, oceans, seasons, animals, wind, ancient architecture, rocks, and soil, and so on. All of these elements are based on social and environmental science (ecological, zoological, social, psychological, and botanical) that examines the human-nonhuman world relationship. "There can be no history but natural history," Thoreau once remarked, "if one accepts that by "nature" we mean both the human and non-human universe." It also concentrates on the rhetoric of cultural texts as well as environmental material actions. The Vedas, Brahmanas, Aranyakas, Upanishads, Puranas, Ramayana, Mahabharata, and ancient sites are all represented in ecocriticism. "Do not cut trees because they eliminate pollution," the Rigveda advises.

The Yajur Veda mentions pollution and urges people not to "disturb the sky or contaminate the atmosphere."

5. WOMEN IMAGES IN ABHIJNANASHAKUNTALAM AS WOMEN EMPOWERMENT ROLE MODELS

Hero and heroine descriptions abound in the epic literature of the Sanskrit language, whether they're part of the main storey line or separate stories and episodes. When Kalidasa and his contemporaries lived in the fifth century of the Christian period, the city of Rome was on the brink of collapse due to barbarian invasion. Aristotle has always been considered by Hindus as the finest Sanskrit poet. Kalidasa left seven works: three dramas, two epics, one elegiac poetry, and one descriptive poem. Abhijnanashakuntalam is the pinnacle of Sanskrit literature, and it's one of the others. Sanskrit literature's epics, poetry, and plays feature numerous depictions of women.

Kalidasa wrote his works to fulfill the curiosity of specific audiences and readers which points to the absence of innocence in the storytelling. The fact that Kalidasa's female characters resonate more powerfully with current readers than his male characters may be an unavoidable consequence of his subject matter. The general features of the women in the play were their compassion and kindness, their tenacity and patience spirit, their love, true allegiance and the desire for happiness which are recognised as "the golden rule". It's not uncommon to see female characters who have reached marriageable age portraying themselves as wives or loved ones. But the commonality in most of the female characters in the works of Kalidasa is the benevolence and mercifulness, the persistence and patience, the longing for joyful love. However, despite women's lack of influence and status in society, they served as a spiritual pillar that bolstered the fortitude of both individual heroes and communities as a whole. With her own noble bearing and genuine concern for others, these women were able to arouse the heroic dreams of men everywhere. A woman who exudes faultless beauty on the outside is equally endowed on the inside with admirable virtues. In Abhijnanasakuntalam too we notice active and autonomous role of woman. Sakuntala's character is shown as a humble hermit girl who worked tirelessly to achieve her aim. The Mahabharata's love narrative between monarch Dushyanta and the young Sakuntala is the inspiration for this seven-act play. Kalidasa utilised his pen in Abhijnanashakuntalam to celebrate pure, genuine love, the innocent soul, and the rightful ambitions of mankind in the life that is love, while criticising doctrines that repressed the fluttering heart of humans.

Kalidasa allowed his characters to emote and exhibit their personalities in these partnerships in order to discuss issues of love and caste in his work. This has contributed to the success of the drama Shakuntalam, and has elevated Kalidasa's thought above that of his contemporaries and later authors. To set the scene for the girl's beauty, Kalidasa used the beauty of nature to contrast with the beauty of mankind. In the context of women's development, the phrase "empowerment" is frequently employed.

6. CONCLUSION

The issue of cultural and social norms based on Hindu religion's high ideals has been articulated by Kalidasa. He has highlighted that love cannot take precedence over our responsibilities. If there are any lapses on our duty front, we will be penalised. This was the situation with Shakuntala, who unwittingly failed to discharge her duty by refusing to welcome rishi Durvasa. The purpose of Kalidasa's painting was to show that shirking one's responsibilities is penalised. Shakuntala, on the other hand, is a strong woman

with a positive self-image and self-confidence who is able to maintain her dignity in an oppressive atmosphere.

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