

## Exploring the Major Themes in Selected Works of Kalidasa (Abhijnana Shakuntalam and Meghaduta)

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### ABSTRACT

This paper aims at exploring the major themes of Kalidasa's prominent works. The two works discussed in this paper are Abhijnana Shakuntalam and Meghaduta. Abhijnana Shakuntalam is rich in its creative fancy. It is a masterpiece of dramatic skill and poetic diction, expressing tender and zealous sentiments with gentleness and moderation. The play Shakuntala revolves around attempt to seek for genuine love which is filled with challenges. Kalidasa has modified it by enhancing the serenity of nature, virgin beauty of Shakuntala and masculine authority of Dushyanta. Meghaduta deals with intense love affair between husband and wife even after their separation. The poem presents their typical love affairs which cannot be restrained in any circumstance. Kalidasa's depiction of mountains, cities, landscape, and rivers, over which the cloud must reach Alaka in Meghaduta targets at his vibrant imagination that adds to the musical meter and synchronization of verses that makes a lyric most fascinating the hearts. The importance of this study will also subsidize to comprehend the real meaning of life through the facets which found in numerous themes used in the drama. This paper shall also deal with the study of social, cultural and political upheavals comparing to the modern time, this paper shall follow the archetypal study.

**Keywords:** Kalidasa, Indian Classical Literature, nature, love, verse, ethics, Indian culture

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### INTRODUCTION

Kalidasa, a fifth century Indian dramatist and poet, considered to be the leading legendary symbol of the Sanskrit folklore. Kalidasa was a devout believer of goddess Kali and it was his believe that made him a learned scholar and a most renowned poet of all times. Kalidasa spent a part of his life in the city of Ujjain which one can trace from his writings. There are many other imprints of Kalidasa's life and persona that increasingly become opinions in the mind of one who recites and re-recites his poetry, though they are less easily inclined of exact evidence.

Abhijnana Shakuntalam is Kalidasa's greatest creation, composed in the 5th century CE. This literary masterpiece which was originally written in Sanskrit, have been translated into several languages around the world. Meghaduta or the Cloud Messenger is a lyrical poem by Kalidasa, considered to be one of his greatest works. It is a love poem in some 120 verses in total, composed in about 5th century

CE. In 1813, the poem was first translated into English by Horace Hayman Wilson which was originally written in Sanskrit. It is a poem full of a sincere, passionate and truthful love between husband and wife. The poem deals with deep and earnest love of Yakṣa, a servant of Kubera for his beloved wife. According to mythology Kubera is the Hindu god of wealth living at Alaka on Mount Kalidasa in the Himalaya. The poem is divided into two parts, Purva-megha and Uttara-megha. The first part of the poem i.e. Purva-megha recounts how Yakṣa, a subordinate of King Kubera, after being exiled for a year to the mountain of Ramagiri in Central India for overlooking his duties. In the second part of the poem i.e. Uttara-megha sways a passing by 'Megha' or cloud to take a message of his pain in exile, his sincere and deep love for her and his return to his spouse at Alaka on Mount Kailasa in the Himalaya Mountains. Yakṣa attains this by describing that he will see many attractive marvels, the cloud on its northward progression to the city of Alaka, where his wife wait for his return. Yakṣa also describes the unique qualities of his wife which would help 'Megha' or cloud to identify Yakṣa's wife too easily. 'Megha' or cloud accomplishes his duty bestowed to him seriously and honestly. The poem presents their typical love affairs which cannot be restrained at any condition. While men tries to restrain human love and emotion, and punish them giving exile, various agents of nature comes forward to fulfill their love.

Both Abhijnana Shakuntalam and Meghaduta by Kalidasa majorly focus on the similar grounds i.e. love, separation and reunion. These famous epics include the environmental aspects and how it becomes favorable to human beings in building the story of the characters of love and reunion. The plot is based upon love affair, secret marriage, separation of swearword and reunion of unforgettable love of Dushyanta and Shakuntala. The theme of the poem is based on the Indian philosophy that is "true love is immortal". Kalidasa has depicted that while love leads to failure, kindness reaches to its completion. In Meghaduta, the theme of love is presented not merely as union and separation between the lover and the beloved, or in other words, as human love and separation but also as cosmic love. In both the stories we find a strong imagery of women that is not to be ignored. This paper is going to focus upon such aspects.

Starting the paper with one of its striking themes and that is nature. Human being and Environment are directly interconnected and mutually dependent just as the two sides of the same coin. The human beings prosper in its lap. In the gigantic field of Sanskrit literature, start from the Vedic up to Classical, environment as well as nature plays an important role towards human development. As it is known as common sense, environment means our surroundings, i.e. the surroundings where we live. In Sanskrit, environment is termed as Paryavarana. Although the notion of Environmental alertness has become a very serious subject and a matter of great debate in the contemporary time, it did capture the attention of the ancient Indians since the early phase of civilization. In order to attain sustainable growth of human life, constructive environment is crucial.

Wordsworth, Byron, Shelley and Keats all known British Romantic poets have used nature in their poems. William Wordsworth is the high priest of environment. He has praised nature in his well-known poem Tintern Abbey and many other.

Meghaduta is full of references of natural science. The best notion recommended by Kalidasa is the choice of cloud as a main disposition though it is a part of nature. Kalidasa has suggested the pathway

of cloud from Ramagiri to Alaka through Yaksha's instruction to cloud. The descriptions of rivers, mountains, cities and villages stretching from Ramagiri in Central India up to Alakanagari in the Himalayas are very attractive in Kalidasa's poem Meghaduta. On the basis of ecological speculation we can describe the various part of environment as shown in the kalidasa's Meghaduta. Kalidasa has used attractive imagery in his poetry from ecological viewpoint and effect on human civilization. In Meghaduta every stanza represents the relationship between man and nature with the Yaksha's instruction to cloud. The closeness between cloud and Yaksha is depicted. Thus direct and indirect remarks of poem show the existence of parts of nature in Meghaduta. The story of Meghaduta itself is the result of its consequence on human being. The conversation between Yaksha and cloud, his instructions to cloud, his conduct with cloud and how he narrates the core to cloud show melodious alteration between nature and man. In Meghaduta, we come across a variety of names of clouds which are addressed by Yaksha. They all are significant and figurative e.g., Kamacharin (wonder at will), Sadho (good one), Jimuta (the refuge of those that are oppressed), Saumya (gentle one), Subhaji (fortunate one) Sakhya (brother), Jalada (water giver) Jaladhara (one who holds water), etc. Thus the aspect of melodious relation between nature and human being- is well articulated here.

Yaksa was banished to the mountain of Ramagiri, the hill of Rama. According to the great epic Ramayana, in his exile, Sri Rama along with his brother Laxmana and his wife Sita lived there. In Meghaduta Yaksa was banished in Ramagiri Ashrama in order to spend twelve months of his seclusion from his beloved wife. When Yaksa was in exile, he was not able to do anything better than lamenting for her, recitation their magnificent days of love, knowing that there was nothing he could do for her.

According to Hindu calendar in the month of Asharha, rainy season sets in. There were a lot of clouds moving in the sky. Here Clouds were described as wild elephant. When, at the start of monsoon season, a cloud perched on the Peak of Ramagiri Mountain, Yaksa asks the cloud to deliver a message to his beloved wife in the Himalayan city of Alaka. In a sense the "megha" or cloud was a noticeable appearance of the intangible and insubstantial nature.

The "megha" or cloud was a mediator in their effort to make their love fertile by transmitting the message of the good news.

When Kalidasa view the great epic Mahabharata, story of Shakuntala through the prism of natural world, it was altered into a rainbow colored story of love, parting and reunion. Nature intervene in the lives of the characters at every point in the play and love, parting and coming back to each other were brought about by forces of nature. There is an attempt to see how Kalidasa's work could set a replica for the world literature to return from a human centered system to a natural world centered system and how Kalidasa was considered as a romantic poet with romantic philosophy about nature with its attractive, biologically diversified natural scenery. Nature comes lively in the text and the onlooker and the reader could never break out from the ravishing prettiness of the dense forest with jasmine, flowers, birds, wild bucks, mango trees, and brooks. The diverse seasons played a noteworthy part in the play. The preface, praised summer as the time of love. The play begins in the season of summer and ends in spring season. Kalidasa described the aesthetic beauty of the seasons and the forest with meticulous care and taken the observer straight into the captivating beauty of the backwoods.

It is this we can also notice that Kalidasa's *Shakuntala* and Shakespeare's *The Tempest* are inspirational literary works of unparalleled poetic vividness and great knowledge of life. Both are exceptional dramas expressing natural world and nature of human beings. They are devoted to man's relationships with nature and especially to the sacredness of parenthood. The heroine is fundamentally a child of nature, gorgeous as a blossoming flower, cheerful as the dew-washed leaves of the forest, lively as a deer.

The *Abhigyanashakuntalam* and *The Tempest* contain distinguishing human sentiment and value of natural world which appeal to one and all. Both the plays rejoice righteousness, human values, and eliminate the bold and wicked disagreement of wickedness.

Talking about the theme of love, both *Abhijana Shakuntalam* and *Meghaduta*, portrays love as a central theme. *Shakuntala* is a drama that contains the narrative of well-built and true love of the Indian king, Dushyanta and *Shakuntala*.

The original part of the drama begins with instant love of the king Dushyanta on *Shakuntala*. *Shakuntala* was abandoned by her parents at her birth and becomes adult in the care of Sage Kanva, in a small hermitage. Karlene McLain argues the ambiance in which *Shakuntala* grows up that, ". . . in this remote environment, surrounded by her animal companions and a couple of girlfriends". The subject matter of the drama is based on the Indian philosophy, "true love is immortal", but the utmost form of love is the peaceful that was stridently followed and got achieved by *Shakuntala*.

Kalidasa piercingly depicts the critical condition of true love and how the destiny changed through the discovery of the ring in the belly of fish by the fisherman that *Shakuntala* lost in the river Ganges. Here Kalidasa also portrays another critical state of affairs in the drama is that when the king comes to know all about his true love for *Shakuntala*, he is engaged in war unluckily. Even though it is a life-threatening circumstances at the moment, it offers a chance to her true love to exhibit the power through the representation of King Dushyanta who overcomes his enemies in the war. Kalidasa highlights the power of true love in the manner how it succeeds from all the hurdles. Kalidasa used these sorts of situation to outbreak the final power of true love in all apprehension in this drama. Dushyanta is presented a tour of the Hindu heavens for a number of years. After the king got back to his kingdom, he has the chance by the genuine sake of true love to come together with *Shakuntala*. Finally she becomes his queen and bears a son. Finally Kalidasa conclude with assertion of *Shakuntala*'s life as a formation of realistic love, of outer beauty that resolute true love as everlasting.

Kalidasa's identification as a trendsetter in the history of Indian classical Sanskrit literature is unquestioned in his *Meghadutam*. As in Kalidasa's various other works, here also love is the central emotional style. What gives power to Kalidasa's lyrical art, among other stuff, is his depiction of love in all its aspects; accentuate the fulfillment of love and the sorrow of separation that should escort it. Kalidasa presents love as it goes through a variety of stages. It is chastened through pleasing and unlikable experiences of life. The similar is accessible in the circumstances of the lovers in *Meghadutam* and the arrangement is explicit and practical. In this paper I have attempted to make a study of Kalidasa's handling of love after going through Chandra Rajana's transformation of

Meghadutam in his book by Kalidasa: The Loom of Time, published by the Penguin Books.

### **MEGHADUTAM**

In Meghadutam, the subject of love is obtainable not merely as separation and coming together between the lover and the beloved, or in other terms, as human love and partition but also as a cosmic love. It is interesting to note that Rajan points out, “Human love and union (for all practical purposes the Yaksha and his beloved are human) are placed in the larger frame of the cosmic union of the heaven and the earth”. In order to discover the theme of love fully, the bookworm must draw its source or beginning in a Vedic text or in supplementary words, one must be conscious of the mythic relationship of the association between the cloud and the hill. According to this fable, the early winged mountains were born out of the inventor. The winged mountains produced hazards in the in-flight and so, Indra detached the wings which started hovering in the air. Now, these once again severed the clouds and again, seen to be joint in the second stanza of the verse, where the cloud is introduced as “embracing the crest of the hill”. The cloud and the hill are trapped in the progression of love-making. The representation is that of a lover and his beloved who are maintaining an association of close understanding. The Rama’s Hill expresses the desire of being combined with the cloud: “breathing out / burning sighs born out of long separation” as depicted in

Infidelity in love is not only an observable fact of today’s world but it was practiced even in Kalidasa’s time. In stanza 41, the philandering husbands return to their suffering wives at dawn. Indian women are well-known for their unbelievable patience and courage and the society is portrayed as patriarchal, a male- chauvinistic society and women wait long for their husbands even though unfaithfulness is writ large on their forehead.

Kalidasa, thus, sensibly presents the subject matter of love in all its varying aspects, combining human love with cosmic love in an extraordinary way.

In this section, an outline of the major female characters by Kalidasa is portrayed. Shakuntala, the heroine of Kalidasa's famous play Abhijnana Shakuntalam is a character determined by fate, in distinction to Parvati. Her life is a disappointment from her birth. She could not adore the adequate privileges in her life. She was born as an illegitimate daughter of the celestial nymph Menaka and magnificent sage Vishvamitra a fighter turned into sage. This birth is an amalgamation of mystical and heavenly powers and provides knowledgeable, social, economic facilities and high status. But regrettably, unrestrained by parents she was protected by birds, then saved and taken care of by Sage Kanva. Though she was grown and brought up in a house of puritans, she gained the warmth of a mother from Gautami and of brothers and sisters from the residents of the hermitage of Kanva. She lost all heavenly glory and delight, which she might have had, if she subsisted with her parentages. Then in youth, she got married to king Dushyanta by the ceremony of consent. The king, who came to the forest for his hunting expedition happened to visit the hermitage. He met Shakuntala in the hermitage and fell in serious love with her. Defeated by obsessed love, he wedded her under gandharva form of marriage, convincing her that it was not in contrast to the rule, without even waiting for the homecoming of sage Kanva, who was considered as a father figure to the children of his hermitage. He was away for carrying out remedies for the hardships in the married life of Shakuntala king Dushyanta then returned to the palace likely to take her within three days. When he reached his

kingdom, he forgot this in the middle of pleasures enjoyed in the palace life. Shakuntala, who completely forgot herself in the thoughts of the king, did not notice the presence of frantic sage Durvasa in the hermitage, who cursed her that the beloved could not remember her as she did not paid attention on his arrival properly. This inattentiveness and quickness is explained as a denial of dharma. When Kanva sent her to the King's court, the King could not recognize her. He disallowed the arguments of the disciples of Kanva as well as Shakuntala. Motherly Gautami blames both Shakuntala and Dushyanta for getting married without the consensus of elders. Kalidasa explained the reason for taking her to the palace. Even though she is chaste, if lives with her kinsmen when her husband is alive, people would become doubtful for her being chaste. But the king as well as puritans abandoned her. The priest proposed the king that he would keep her in his residence because she was pregnant. If she delivers a son the king can take him as his descendant and acknowledge her in his harem with felicitation or else send her back to her father. Shakuntala who was thus cheated and abandoned, resorted to take away her life as she thought it was the only cure. Then her mother Menaka appeared in the form of lightening and took her away for her security. Thus, the second and most famous stage of wifehood became not only a disappointment but also an awful one. The recommendation of priest demonstrates that Shakuntala can either be recognized or rejected conferring to the need of the man, which indicates to the concept of chastity that is a creation of masculine mind. In the third stage of maternity also she could not lead a passive life. Due to her hard luck, her son Sarvadamana also lost his life in palace in his magnificent childhood. At last on the retrieval of token-ring the king recalled her and regretted on his fault of delay in dharma. He also had to recompense much for it. He thought that the infirmity caused by him to Shakuntala by cheating her was the cause of his grief. Finally, Shakuntala could meet her partner, who was changed for want of offspring to carry on his lineage; otherwise his empire would become heirless. However the poet made the play having a blissful conclusion after all the miseries. She lost all the traditional defense. She was a child without blood relation, a queen without protectors and a wife without partner. But it is important to note that she possessed the intrinsic worth of a traditional wife not cursing or even condemning her affronted husband, but cursed herself repenting of the doings in her preceding birth.

Yaksapatni, the heroine of Meghaduta, is a beautiful young girl newly married and having no knowledge. She is the companion of Yaksha, who is in refugee for one year on an account of a curse of his master. To them every movement and everything is incorporated with love, which triggered the spirits and sentiment during parting unbearable. The poem is a mistreatment of emotions of Yaksha on the vision of the cloud, which is expressed through his own words. The female protagonist Yaksapatni was not accessible in the poem in person, but remains all persistent. Kalidasa has drawn a full draft of Yaksapatni through a word image in a stirring manner. She is the epitome of love. Yaksapatni fit in to the group of Yaksha, a semi heavenly being. Meghaduta mentions in Sabhaparva of millions of Yaksas involved in the provision of Kubera. Yaksinis are portrayed as goddesses, adoring whom one releases from the immorality of brahmahatya. According to prevalent tradition, yakshi or yakini is the romantic soul residing on trees in forests and having unusual beauty and are seductive in character. Yaksapatni in Meghaduta is also designated as made up by a amalgamation of the best accessible things in the world and having no contrast. As a virahini, she is portrayed as in a state of undertaking vrata, escaping entertainments and individual and ancestral decoration and thinking and requesting for the wellbeing of her husband. She was involved in counting the remaining days of separation by putting flowers on the dehali. She was visualized as not living in Meghaduta. But only prevailing or

nourishing. The Yaksha, on separation from his lover could find pleasure in all the things in nature like rivers and clouds. In all these, he tried to designate the physical form of the attractive maid, seeing different facets of beauty moving lama according to KdamaSastra, which defines the ways for arousing erotism. But Yaksapatni had to remain mournfully evading all decorations and pleasure in her house.

Social ethics form a significant part of the culture of the society. Ethics account for the constancy of social order. They provide the general strategies for social comporment. Ethics such as fundamental rights, individuality, equality, patriotism, , rationality, sacrifice, democracy, respect for human dignity etc. guide our conduct in many ways. Ethics are the principles, people use in evaluating their daily lives; position their priorities and selecting between unconventional courses of action.

From the above argument, we see that a man of a developed class was permitted to marry, besides a girl of his own class, a girl of lower class. If she is of Brahmin foundation, on both the sides, he could not wed her, nuptial relation with a woman of the higher class being strictly prohibited. It means that caste system prevailed since then. Women can't have freedom of action under any conditions. They are not easily or self-sufficiently allowed to do anything that she wishes for. There are certain communal and religious taboos which functioned as social authorisations. To stand entirely by the wishes of her husband and to be dedicated to his well-being only, is considered to be the utmost duty of a Hindu woman. There is an enduring faith in the foundation of marriage as not just a private concern but as a ceremony, a spiritual unifying force that shapes the society. One deserving punishment in the matter of another's wife an adulterer and the custom of restricting the women to their inner apartments are also found. The widow could not inherit her husband's property in those days; she was simply entitled to maintenance. It shows that there is no more importance of women at the time of Kalidasa. Women are strictly limited in every sphere to breathe an autonomous life. They are recognized as the oppressed class of the society and merely a puppet in the hands of male dominating society.

## **CONCLUSION**

As discussed earlier in this paper, it can be said that Kalidasa, one of the most celebrated author, poet who had tried to bring up the emotions, depiction of nature as well as the picture of a woman in his works, so that their significance should be known by the humans in contemporary society. Many of his lines from his famous verses have been converted into proverbs in Sanskrit. His excellent creativity, sense of imagination and wonderful poetic fluency etc. have established him in a front row of the great poets of all ages. The poem as well as the drama by Kalidasa presents the typical love affairs which cannot be restrained in any circumstance. The knowledge which he had about nature is commendable, as in those days technology was not having any existence, Kalidasa's being a knowledgeable scholar had proved his stand about nature and its consequences. To sum up, it can be said that Kalidasa was a vibrant scholar who had given us a variety of works, and has contributed brilliantly in Indian Classical literature, which is praised not only in India but in the entire world. As a fact it is known that his works are been translated by Western writers so that their beauty could also be witnessed by the people in west with a different sort of way of thinking. Kalidasa had made his culture flourish in the entire world by his dramas and poetries. One of the reasons that how the people in west are attracted to the culture of India is because of the literature that Indian scholars had produced.

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