

WOMEN IN MĀLAVIKĀGNIMITRA OF KALIDASA

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Abstract :

This study is intended to understand the diversity of the depictions of female characters in the play Mālavikāgnimitra by Kalidasa. This is Kalidasa's first play that features historical characters. The storytelling style is male-centric. But one thing that seems most interesting is the abundance and variety of female characters in this play. It also examines the relationship of female characters to the main character in the context of the social system of the time. It is an attempt to understand the personal and social life of women marked in Mālavikāgnimitra.

Key words :

Love, woman, relationship, Agnimitra, Mālavikā, Dhāriṇi, Irāvati, status.

Objective :

1. To understand how women's life in India is marked in Sanskrit literature.
2. To find out how much Kalidasa tried to see women's life through a woman's perspective.
3. To learn how to present gender relations in a polygamous society.

Research Methods :

The method used here is analytical. Both the primary and secondary sources are used.

Introduction :

The skill of characterization is an important criterion for identifying great writers. The panache of female characters in Kalidasa's plays are an example of this. In his works, though limited in number, Kalidasa has created female characters with different identities. Parvati in Kumarasambhavam, Sakuntala in Abhijnana Sakuntala etc., are some timeless female characters of Kalidasa. Mālavikāgnimitra, which is believed to be his first play, deserves attention with its abundance of notable female characters too. Characters such as Dhāriṇi Devi, Irāvati, Mālavikā, Paṇḍita kauśiki and Jayasena are some of them. The play

presents, albeit to a limited extent, the different living conditions of women. The female characters in Mālavikāgnimitra are all intelligent. They use their intellect for their own preferences and fulfillment of their desires. Mālavikāgnimitra is a romantic play which portrays how a man and a woman experience love and how it varies in the lives of one woman to another.

The characters of Ramayana like Kausalya and Kaikeyi might influence Kalidasa in the portrayal of Dhāriṇī and Irāvati. He portrayed Dhāriṇī in a favorable light. She is the embodiment of satva guna whereas Irāvati represents rajo guna. But Kalidasa did not portray the characters merely in black or white. He incorporates variant human emotions to the characters. Kalidasa's meticulous attention to the portrayal of the characters reveals their changing preferences.

Dhāriṇī is a woman who practically deals with different roles in life such as wife, queen and mother. As a partner, she is aware of her husband's libertine nature. So she desperately tries to thwart the king's attempts to meet Mālavikā. She opposes his indifference towards royal matters. She has a clear and honest opinion about her husband. Dhāriṇī is a proud female character who has no doubt in the sincerity of her stand even when she fails in it. An example of this is Dhāriṇī's attempts to prevent the king's move to arrange a dance competition in order to see Mālavikā in person. She is also a caring mother for her children. The charity she does for her son, Vasumitra who went to protect the wandering horse of the horse sacrifice proves it. Born and brought up in the comforts of the royal family and accessing the title of Paṭṭamahīṣī by marriage, she has a clear understanding of her rights and duties. She is a role model for queens with her pleasant and non - arrogant attitude. Her ability to understand the abilities of each person and to assign them accordingly in each case should be highlighted. An example of this is sending Mālavikā, who is receiving from her brother, to study dance under Gaṇadasa, the Nātyacharya. The scene in which Mālavikā assigns to perform dohada for Asoka tree indicates that Dhāriṇī had some doubts about Mālavikā. Dhāriṇī chooses Mālavikā for Asoka dohada instead of Irāvati and also promises that her wish will come true if Asoka blooms. This is an example of Dhāriṇī's open approach. Dhāriṇī is a character with a combination of acumen, inventive, aesthetical, respectable and lovable characteristics. Dhāriṇī is the mature and noble female character of Kalidasa. She is the representation of a

typical Indian house wife. Agnimitra's love for her was mixed with respect. This is evidenced by the maid's words that the king did not use his royal power to seize Mālavikā so as not to hurt Dhāriṇi. She protected, promoted and respected art and artists. An example of this is her acceptance of Gaṇadasa's compulsion to participate in the dance competition. She doesn't hesitate to exercise her powers whenever she feels the need. Mālavikā is imprisoned by Dhāriṇi after hearing the calumny and complaint of Irāvati. 'Give respect and take respect' is her stand. Her open mind helps her to adapt quickly to circumstances. One's past actions do not prevent her from loving and accepting them. Her treatment of Irāvati, Mālavikā, Gautama- the clown etc., shows this.

The character sketch of Irāvati is particularly noteworthy. Apparently she was a young, beautiful, lustful, voluptuous and beloved second wife of the king. There is another side to this. By all means she is merely a second wife of a libertine king. She is afraid that another beautiful woman will take her place. This is the conflict among women's lives in a society where prevailing polygamy system. The king's first wife has the authority and status of a queen, so she is busy with her affairs. Kalidasa indirectly points out that Agnimitra ruthlessly ignores and avoids Irāvati when he lusts after a new woman. The tension and turmoil caused by Irāvati's insecurity is part of her personality. Although the court dancer became the king's wife, the courtiers considered her secondly. It is clear from the words of the clown himself. The rhythm of her life is love for Agnimitra. With the arrival of Mālavikā, she is losing the joy of the rhythm. Jealousy towards king's new girlfriend Mālavikā and the king's neglect make her a dangerous woman. Irāvati is a female character who is wounded by love. Kalidasa portrays Mālavikā as a rival to the dancer and lover Irāvati. At the beginning of the play, Bakulāvālīka and in the middle the clown indicates that Mālavikā will surmount Irāvati. The fragile nature of her life is an important factor in moulding her character. Irāvati's life goal is not the position of paṭṭamaḥiṣi . Rather it is to be in Agnimitra's heart. She fears that someone else will become the king's love interest, making her condition worse. Irāvati's zeal for survival is the basis of all her actions. Despite being jealous of Mālavikā, Irāvati is a loving character with personal qualities. Irāvati's reaction when she learns of Vasulakṣmi's accident reveals motherly feelings she has. It is because of children, Dhāriṇi became busy and diverse in her thoughts. Whereas Irāvati don't have a child and hence her thought process is rolling around the king.

Mālavikā, who had to flee amidst the uncertainties of the palace due to internal problems, could not move forward without practical wisdom. Whichever country she started her journey to, she got there. But the journey ended in a completely different way than expected. Mālavikā is dragged from the safe life of the princess to the uncertainty of the slave. In eloquent silence, Kalidasa has casted the character of Mālavikā. The play depicts her journey from the Vidarbha Palace to Vidiśa, the tragic events she goes through on her journey to Vidiśa, and the impact those events had on her, through the hint of the shock she feels when she hears the description of past events. Her frightened demeanor reveals the intensity of the trauma that the passing tragedy had inflicted on her. Throughout the play, Kalidasa portrays Mālavikā as the beautiful, artistic and king's beloved. Because the story progresses through the eyes of the king. It is not possible to directly understand Mālavikā's mental state through the drama. But the great poet leaves many clues to be read between the lines and beyond. Mālavikā's extraordinary courage is something that deserves special attention in the story.

Her experiences have given her the courage to accept Agnimitra's love and the suffering she has to endure for it. Mālavikā, who has to go to jail in lieu of her love, arrives at the sea house from there. During her meeting with the king there, Mālavikā also shows the courage to mock the king who did not dare in her love affair. Mālavikā's character is not that of an innocent heroine. Rather, that of someone who has matured through the intense experiences of life. Mālavikā combines the qualities of beauty, artistry, practical intelligence, courage and endurance. When marking Mālavikā's life, the affiance between her and Agnimitra reveals the connection between power and marriage.

The love of three women, the love of three generations, and the love of those in three states of life is the kernel of this romantic play. For Dhāriṇī, the responsibilities and duties that are a part of her love life come to the forefront and the big journey of marriage makes their love mechanical. In Irāvati, the eternal lover even the thin lines between her love and lust are disappearing. Mālavikā's love is like a falling stalk for someone who relies on a pillar for survival. The king interacts with each of his lovers differently. The king has love and respect for his first wife, Dhāriṇī. He ignores the desires of his second wife and makes her angry. He adopts policies that put Mālavikā in dire straits without adopting a reasonable way to acquire her. The king's actions are inappropriate, such as grabbing his

wife's maid in the wilderness, trying to kiss her, and saying that it's just a pastime when another wife comes in.

Kalidasa portrays many minor characters who help to complete the love story of Mālavikā and Agnimitra. Paṇḍita kauśiki, Jayasena and Bakuḷāvālika are such important minor female characters. Paṇḍita kauśiki a nun who resides in the palace of Dhāriṇi was respected by both the king and the queen. Paṇḍita kauśiki is actually the widowed sister of Sumati, Mālavikā's brother's minister. Paṇḍita kauśiki and her brother were with Mālavikā when she escaped from Vidarbha. Paṇḍita kauśiki becomes a nun when her brother is killed after tragic events. Paṇḍita kauśiki, who is loyal to Mālavikā, plays a major role in the first meeting of Mālavikā and Agnimitra. Paṇḍita kauśiki's life is a perfect example of how life's crises can lead to strange and courageous decisions. Paṇḍita kauśiki, remains a pleasant memory who approaches life in a positive way, even if she has lost hope.

Jayasena, particularly being good at keeping and executing the most secretive things, is a key player in the clown's efforts to free Mālavikā from prison. Because of her mastery devotion the king has faith and respect in her efficiency. Like any person in the shadow of power, Jayasena does not cherish anyone. Her devotion is to the king. She sees it as her duty to obey the king. A shrewd, loyal, secretive and efficient Jayasena is an intelligent servant in the corridors of power.

Another important feature of this play is its portrayal of a group of maids. Even the heroine Mālavikā enters the scene as Dhāriṇi's maid. Among the maids, Bakuḷāvālika and Nipuṇika nika deserve special mention. Bakuḷāvālika, who plays the maid of Dhāriṇi, is later portrayed as Mālavikā's best friend as the story progresses. Bakuḷāvālika is the clown's assistant in the love affair between the king and Mālavikā. Bakuḷāvālika informs Mālavikā of the king's interest and understands Mālavikā's mind. Bakuḷāvālika then gives her full support to Mālavikā and stands by her joys and sorrows. As part of that, she has to endure imprisonment. Bakuḷāvālika's character is a combination of eloquence, reproducibility and credibility. Nipuṇika, Irāvati's maid, has empathy in the joys and sorrows of his mistress. These maids are all following their masters. In order to be able to do the masters' things, to do the things that are assigned to them, and to please the masters by doing things that seem to please them, the maids spend their time and practical wisdom. Maids of single master share a warm relationship with each other and they used to share

gossips. Kalidasa presents maids in a restrained and moderate manner. They express practical wisdom and realize that their future lies in the happiness of their masters.

Findings :

The play is a true picture of the life of a woman inside a royal palace. It exposes the insecurity of women's lives in polygamy system. It is a play in which women from different walks of life are portrayed. Kalidasa documents the conflicts in women's lives to some extent.

Conclusion :

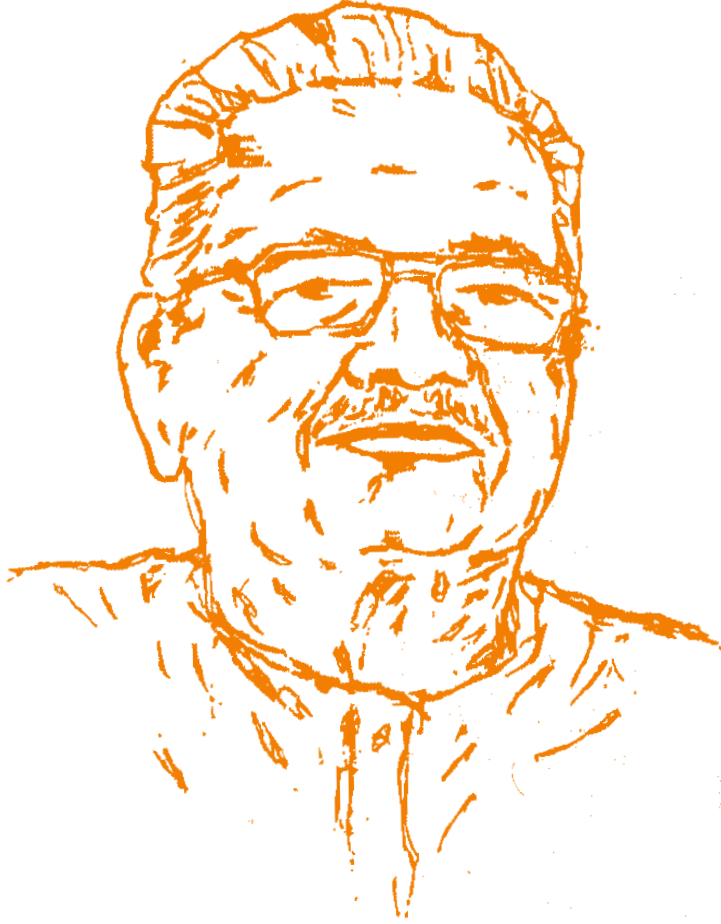
The status of women in a society can be understood by analyzing literary works written on those days, especially in a society where women's lives have gone through ups and downs, as in India. The female characters in Mālavikāgnimitra are from different social and emotional backgrounds. Therefore, the play addresses the plight of women who lived in polygamy and led only domestic lives.

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हरिद्रा

(सांस्कृतिक शोध का अन्ताराष्ट्रीय उपक्रम)

आग्रह लेखकों से :-

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- शोध पत्र के प्रारम्भ में कम से कम 50- 100 शब्दों का सारांश दिया जाये।
- मुख्य शब्द सारांश के नीचे रहना चाहिए।
- शोध पत्र में शोध पद्धति तथा शोध में प्राप्त तथ्यों का विश्लेषण किया जाना चाहिए।
- शोध पत्र में निष्कर्ष और अंत में संदर्भ ग्रंथ सूची दी जाये। संदर्भ ग्रंथों का विवरण पूरा दिया जाये।
- लेखक का नाम, वर्ष, पुस्तक का नाम, प्रकाशक का विवरण, प्रकाशक का स्थान और पृष्ठ संख्या आदि का विवरण दिया जाना चाहिए।
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