



Treatment Of Love And Supernatural Elements: A Comparative Study Of Shakespeare's The Tempest And Kalidasa's Abhijnanashakuntalam.

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Abstract

William Shakespeare, often called England's national poet, is considered as the greatest dramatist of all time. Kalidasa, known as the Shakespeare of India, is regarded as the greatest of the Sanskrit dramatists of India. Though Shakespeare and Kalidasa belonged to different age, culture and language but as great literary luminaries they both shared many things in common. Both the writers had a deep understanding of human nature. Their writings capture the range of human emotion and conflict. In this paper an attempt has been made to bring out some of the similar concepts used by both the writers in treating love and supernatural elements in the plays The Tempest and Abhijnanashakuntalam.

Keynotes: William Shakespeare, Prospero, Miranda, Ariel, Supernatural, Kalidasa, Shakuntala, Dusyant

Introduction

English drama had its origin in religion, religious rites and practices. In fact it was the creation of the church. The effort of the church to bring about the spiritual uplift of the uneducated folk by means of representation of scriptural tales laid the foundation of the native drama in England. English drama took its rise from the mysteries or sacred plays by the medium of which the clergy in the Middle Ages endeavored to impart a knowledge. Indeed, from the mere scriptural scenes the drama has attained a highly developed composite form.

The origin of dramatic performance in Indian subcontinent can be traced back to as early as 200 B.C. Sanskrit drama is part of Sanskrit literature, the classical literature of India, which flourished from about 1500 B.C to 1100 A.D. Sanskrit is an Indo-Aryan language and also primary religious language used in Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism. Sanskrit as a language holds an important place in India. In terms of execution Sanskrit drama is highly stylized. The themes are borrowed from Indian religious epics. Nature and Supernatural beings play an important role

in Sanskrit plays. The other important characters come from the middle class and lower classes including soldiers, merchants, hermits and sages. Dialogue of Sanskrit drama contains both verse and prose. Within a single unified speech any character may slip into verse and vice versa. The verses are replete with figurative speech and indicate the playwright's poetic skills. For instance Kalidasa's verse in his play *Abhijnanashakuntalam* has made him immensely popular as a poet.

William Shakespeare is regarded as the world's greatest dramatist of all time. Born on 23rd April, at Stratford-on-Avon, he was living in a world which idealized self realization, self respect and boldness of thought and action. His dramatic situations are precipitated by powerful impulses. He had great sympathy for all manner of men.

Born during the Gupta Empire, Kalidasa is regarded as the greatest dramatist in Sanskrit language of India. Though the exact time of his fame is not known, Kalidasa probably lived in the 5th century A.D. He wrote several classical Sanskrit poems with an epic proportions. His creations were used for fine arts like music and dance.

The *Tempest* is one of the best works of William Shakespeare. In the same way *Abhijnanashakuntalam* is one of the great works of Kalidasa. Both as poets and dramatists they dealt with universal themes. Both the play that is *The Tempest* and *Abhijnanashakuntalam* are marked by the universal values of life like Truth, Love, Purity and Forgiveness. Both the plays project a very comprehensive and profound vision of life. William Shakespeare and Kalidasa had similar concept of love-that is love at first sight. Miranda is the only female character in the cast of *The Tempest*. Miranda symbolizes the lower passions of mankind attempting to violate and besmirch the purity of art. She is the woman with whom Alonso's son Ferdinand falls in love at first sight. Miranda's physical beauty and loveliness, her cheerful temperament, her simplicity and innocence, her sympathetic and gentle nature makes of her a most loveable person. She has been regarded as one of the most charming female creations of Shakespeare. In Ferdinand's opinion, she has been created of every creature's best. The romantic character of the play is enhanced by the passionate love-affair of Ferdinand and Miranda. Ferdinand falls in love with Miranda as soon as he saw her; and she too falls in love with him at first sight. Their love for each other is intense and ardent. Ferdinand willingly undergoes the labour of piling up logs in order to be near Miranda; and she tells him that she would become his wife and if she fails she would become his life long servant. There are some striking realistic elements in the play. The human creature apart from Prospero, have been portrayed in such a way that they seem to us to be real persons whom we have actually met.

Kalidasa presents Shakuntala as an embodiment of beauty, feminine charm and womanhood. She is the daughter of the sage Viswamitra and the celestial nymph Menka who had abandoned her to be discovered and raised by sage Kanva amid the beautiful natural surroundings and ascetic hermits. Shakuntala, an extraordinary, almost unearthly being alone can be capable of evoking sensation of love at first sight. She is blessed with the heavenly grace and benediction. Both Dushyant and Shakuntala falls in love with one another at first sight, their hearts submitting completely to the power of love and passions. But the path of love is not always smooth. As lovers often encounter many difficulties and obstacles before they become one so in the case of Shakuntala also we see that she has to go through various obstacle. Dushyant and Shakuntala marries in the hermitage by a ceremony of mutual consent. Obligated by affairs of state to return to his place, he gives his signet ring to her, promising to send for her later. But when Shakuntala comes to the court for their reunion, pregnant with his child, Dushyant fails to acknowledge her as his wife because of the curse. Unknowingly or by force of destiny, she becomes the victim of the curse of Rishi Durvasa. She emerges as the embodiment of Indian womanhood who is ready to make sacrifice when society turns indifferent and hostile. She never lose hope and it is only because of the love, patience and trust of Shakuntala that they are able to reunite. Shakuntala possesses ideal beauty and grace. She is a child of Nature. She has been brought up in the lap of Nature. The flowering season of Nature is a great festival to her. Brought up in the hermitage where peace and love reigned supreme, she had learnt to love the entire creation. She treats the deer as her own children. In her own hands, she holds out the wild rice for the deer to eat. But Shakuntala's love of nature is not one sided. Nature too in her turn,

has the same deep affection for Shakuntala. The young deer, pulling her garment stops her from leaving the hermitage. At her departure, the female deer drop down their half eaten grass; the peacocks give up their dancing; and the creepers, with their yellow leaves falling off, seem as if they are shedding tears. The affection between Nature and Shakuntala is so profound that on the request of Kanva to Mother Nature to permit Shakuntala to go to her husband's house, Nature too, on her part indicates her acceptance through the sweet note of a cuckoo.

Supernatural elements figured prominent in the plays of Shakespeare and Kalidasa. By the presence of divine and semi-divine characters, Shakespeare as well as Kalidasa have aroused the feeling of wonder in their dramatic compositions. The music of supernatural is highly ornamental device which embellishes the plays of both the dramatist. This music serves various dramatic purposes in the play. They use supernatural elements through magic and curse. In Shakespeare's time, the belief in the presence and power of supernatural touched life at every point. The use of the supernatural is perhaps the most conspicuous feature of *The Tempest*. The use of supernatural in *The Tempest* differs from supernatural in the other plays of Shakespeare. Supernatural in *The Tempest* is something which is used for purpose that are entirely benevolent and beneficent. The supernatural powers are significantly shown to be under the control of a natural power, Prospero. In *The Tempest*, Prospero is credited with the power of a medieval magician. He uses his magic for the beneficent purpose of bringing the sinner to repentance, of furthering love and good will. Prospero does not use his supernatural powers for an evil purpose but only to bring about the best result. The magic of the play is so developed that it becomes the major reason for the play's enchantment. It humanizes the external universe. The comic life of ordinary life also contains enchantment through intoxication. In the early of the play we see that Ariel lures Ferdinand to Prospero's cell by means of his music. And then he uses his singing powers to lure Caliban and his new-found companions into a stinking pond of water in order to punish them for the wicked plan to murder Prospero. Owing to intoxication, the constantly grumpy Caliban is converted into a worshipper. Prospero's self discipline as a magician is the self discipline of a prince, whose aim was to make his people virtuous by his own efforts. His use of magic is symbolic. It is the kind of world which is closed to Caliban and in fact a world closed to every evil. We see that evil is co-existing timidly with bold moral terms. Prospero does have the powers to control nature for virtuous reasons. Even the storm ordered by him does not harm anybody in the least if as a magician he controls nature. It is significant that Ariel refuses to use his supernatural powers for Sycorax, but uses them with joy for Prospero. Sycorax is the epitome of evil in the play whereas Prospero symbolizes virtue. Ariel exercises his supernatural powers wholly under the orders of Prospero. He uses a storm on the sea, he saves the ship and keeps it intact, he saves all the passengers and the crew. He foils the conspiracy hatched by Antonio and Sebastian against Alonso's life. He makes the necessary arrangements for Prospero and all the others to embark upon voyage to Naples. Ariel does all this in Prospero's service. There is no selfish motive behind any of Ariel's doings. Ariel is a spirit of the air, having vast supernatural powers; and as a spirit, he has absolutely no interest of any kind in human affairs.

Kalidasa has used some supernatural element or other in every single of the play *Abhijnanashakuntalam*. In the very first act, Shakuntala is shown as a semi divine, being born of the union of Menaka, a celestial nymph and the great Vishwamitra. A hint of supernatural is given in the second and third act by reports of demons threatening the hermitage. The fourth act begins with the curse of Durvasas which initiates the tragic part of the action. Because of the supernatural machinery, the character suffers but later in the end, there is a great recognition and reunion. At the end of the fifth act, we notice that a celestial light in female shape suddenly comes and carries away Shakuntala to the *Apsara-tirtha*. In such circumstances, Sanumati, a nymph serves to bring the necessary news. Sanumati plays the role of a communicator between Shakuntala and Dushyant. The last act of the play takes place at the heavenly abode of the Rishi Marich. Shakuntala is observing the vow of a 'Virahini', and on the other hand, Dushyant is lamenting over his past deeds for repudiating Shakuntala. At this crucial situation, Matali's intervention prepares an inevitable step towards the reunion of Shakuntala and Dushyant. As Shakuntala is already in the divine region, and cannot climb down to meet Dushyant, so he must be lifted up to her. The message which Matali has brought accomplishes the purpose by giving Dushyant an opportunity to go to heaven.

Conclusion

Shakespeare and Kalidasa have introduced the supernatural elements to serve a dramatic purpose and to bring a dramatic relief. They intervene very often in the play when the human beings are very helpless, face critical situation and are unable to find a natural way to overcome it. Shakespeare and Kalidasa believe in the theory of happy endings of their plays and the happy endings are made possible by the supernatural overriding the ordinary laws of nature. The supernatural occurrences serve to accomplish all significant turns in their plays. The supernatural events transform the tragic course of life into an instrument of good and thereby suggesting the idea of providence or destiny which shapes human life. We find on examining the movement of the action at the respective plays that supernatural occurrences provide the impetus for all significant things of the events in each play.

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