



## ‘ABHIJNANA SHAKUNTALAM’: A JOURNEY OF LOVE VIA ‘TINTERN ABBEY’

**Prof. Krishnendu Das**

A literary work is enriched through the course of its journey, either inward or outward or both. A single state or position can make neither a magnificent plot nor an unforgettable character. ‘Abhijnana Shakuntalam’, the classical drama by Kalidasa exhibits some phenomenal examples of such journeys- journey of love, journey of identity, journey of knowledge, journey of from outer to inner Self. But my focus in this paper is only to scrutinize the journey of love. It is a journey from union to re-union of the lovers, and it gets over three stages of love- Infatuation, Commitment and Spiritualism. These three stages always remind me the three states of mind as stated in the poem ‘Tintern Abbey’ by William Wordsworth, where the poet discusses the journey of mind- from ignorance to maturity, from physical to spiritual, from subjective to objective, from local to the universal. According to Wordsworth, human beings are always in association with Nature, like a child with its mother or a devotee with God. Thus he forms his pantheistic view, where Nature is actually God in disguise, a guide of the mortals. And Nature becomes our spiritual guide only through the process of our understanding, where It remains always the same, and human beings achieve aestheticism only when their soul is attached with nature. And this attachment comes through a process of journey. My target in this paper is to make a comparative study between the poem ‘Tintern Abbey’ and the drama ‘Abhijnana Shakuntalam’ on the basis of the journey of the protagonists. "Tintern Abbey" typifies William Wordsworth's desire to demonstrate what he sees as the oneness of the human psyche with that of the universal mind of the cosmos. It is his pantheistic attempt to discover the essence of Nature's sublime mystery that often evades understanding. Moreover, "Tintern Abbey" echoes the ideas of Burach Spinoza to redefine late eighteenth century deism into a more personal revision of Nature. The poem's portrayal of the intimate connection with nature implicitly underscores Wordsworth's ideal of the universe as bound within the essence of all that is harmonious and natural -- a "Oneness." It sympathetically depicts the inseparability of "God" from nature, the "material-spirit" of energy that, as Wordsworth portrays it, imbues the life force with “. . . a sense sublime”.

Wordsworth’s boyhood and the formative years of his life were spent in the midst of Nature’s beautiful surroundings. It was a healthy boy’s love of the open air, sunshine and freedom of the fields. He loved Nature with a passion which was all physical without having any trace of intellectual or philosophical association. He haunted the hills and the vales for sports and bounded over the mountains like a deer. In youth which was a period of the senses, he was thrilled and enchanted by the physical beauty of Nature. His love of nature in this stage was purely sensuous and emotional. This was characterized by “dizzy raptures” and “aching joys” which replaced his earlier “coarser pleasures” of his boyhood. The beautiful sights and sounds of Nature, The colours and the forms of the objects of Nature roused his sweet sensations, and made him very passionate..In the mature years, the poet was blessed with an imaginative faculty and an uplift of his soul. Now he looks at Nature not with a painter’s eye, but as a translator who can explain its hidden meaning. Thus the poet has developed a philosophic mind which helps him understand the miseries and sufferings of mankind by seeing the natural phenomena. This experience of the miseries of the world makes him nobler and sympathetic towards the suffering humanity. Now he experiences a kind of spiritual uplift, a sublime state of meditation in which he feels within himself a presence of the Divine spirit that animates mystic thoughts in him. The Divine spirit is the Soul of the Universe or the Spirit of Nature that puts the

mind in motion and makes the body move. According to Wordsworth, this Divine Spirit is the source and the guiding force of all creations.

In 'Abhijnana Sakuntalam' two protagonists, Duhsanta and Sakuntala fell in love at their first sight. They spent times with each other and enjoyed one another's company, they made love, and they married. But as Sakuntala's father Kanva was away from home he could not take her with him and returned alone to Hastinapur. One day, Sakuntala all alone being sunk in her husband's thoughts ignored an ill tempered sage, Durvasa, unintentionally, who came to her cottage and asked for hospitality. The angry sage gave her curse that he, for whom he was insulted, would not recognize her. But when Durvasa was told that her mistake was unintentional and he was asked for mercy he subdued the curse by saying that an ornament would help her to be recognized. When Kanva returned and saw his pregnant daughter he suggested her to go to Hastinapur. Sakuntala started her journey taking the ring with her given by Duhsanta as a token of love. But through her voyaging she lost the ring and a fish swallowed it, and by effect of the curse of Durvasa Duhsanta could not recognize her and she had to return home morose, morbid, broken hearted. One day at Hastinapur a fisherman was arrested for the charge of stealing a royal ring. It was the ring that was swallowed by a fish and he found the ring in its belly. Seeing the ring Duhsanta understood what the blunder he had made. He, grief-stricken, searched for his wife, but only in futility. After few years when he was returning home from heaven after winning a dreadful war between Gods and Demons he landed his chariot in a forest and saw a small child was playing with lion cubs. He came to know that this was Sakuntala's son and so of his. This time he recognized Sakuntala, and the lovers reunited.

Now, if we minutely observe the story-line we can see how two persons, unknown to each other, unite to be an unified whole through a process of transformation in love, and this transformation happens in three steps. In Wordsworth's theory of pantheism the first stage of the development is marked by a simple delight, freedom and the open air, where the poet found pleasure in roaming about in the midst of Nature. Like a deer, he leaped about over the mountains, by the side of the deep rivers, and along the lonely streams. He wandered about wherever Nature led him. He felt more like one who flees from something that he dreads than like one who seeks the thing he loves. His wanderings in the midst of Nature are described by him as "glad animal movements" and the pleasure he enjoyed in the midst of Nature is called a coarse pleasure. 'Abhijnana Shakuntalam' too starts with that 'animal movement', literally as well as metaphorically. Duhsanta was chasing a deer in a forest. The connection of Nature and Man is established at the very beginning of the drama. Chasing an animal for hunting itself indicates the 'animal movement' of the lover-hero. The first confrontation of the hero and the heroine took place in the forest, on Nature's lap. Very interestingly at that time Sakuntala was sprinkling water on the plants in her garden. It symbolises the budding love which would sprout soon, and both, Sakuntala and Duhsanta at their early stage of love watered their emotions. They are attracted merely by each other's outward beauty. It is the first stage of their love- the stage of Infatuation. The King-hero utters- "My body moves forward,/my restless heart rushes back/like a silken pennon on a chariot's standard/borne against the wind." They both feel sexual urge for each other and come closer and closer, much physically, less mentally; and this closeness is like touching leaves or plucking flowers while roaming in a garden, or feeling the water-bubbles with utmost joy, sitting beside a river bank. Though their love was not fulfilled yet, but they were getting pleasure by their 'mutual longing'. Thus the first three acts depict the first stage of the journey of Love.

The second stage of their love is the stage of Commitment, that led them to their marriage. Now the lovers were much more matured. The childish infatuation was evaporated and a sense of responsibility came into existence. They married according to the Gandharva rituals. Gandharva marriage is a method of marriage where the woman chooses her own husband. They met each other of their own accord, consent to live together, and their relationship was consummated in copulation born of passion. This form of marriage did not require consent of parents or anyone else. According to Vedic texts, this is one of earliest and common forms of marriage in Rig Vedic times. As Kanva, the father of Sakuntala was not present in the marriage ceremony, so, their only guide was Nature. Etymologically Gandharvas are male nature spirits and the masculine counterparts of the Apsaras. They are passionate lovers of women and arouse erotic and romantic passion in women. As in the second stage Wordsworth's Nature appealed chiefly to his senses, so did the Nature-spirit in the hearts of Sakuntala and Duhsanta. The poet in 'Tintern Abbey' felt pleasure in seeing the colours, in smelling the fragrance, in touching the objects and in hearing the sweet sounds of Nature. The colours and shapes of mountains and wood to him were an appetite. The noisy waterfall haunted him like a passion. Thus he loved Nature with an unreflecting, or thoughtless passion. He experienced 'aching joys' and 'dizzy raptures' in his contact with Nature. It was the external, outward sensuous beauty of Nature that delighted and gladdened him.

Ultimately, at the third stage, Wordsworth's love for Nature becomes spiritual and intellectual. Now he needs not to go to nature for the appetite of his soul. Sitting in a room, reminding the scenic beauty, the touch, the fragrance is now enough for him. He has now seen the sufferings of mankind and heard "the still, sad music of humanity." He now finds an inner meaning and a hidden significance in Nature. The external beauty of Nature he still appreciates; but it is the inner or hidden significance of Nature which chiefly attracts him and quickens him into thought. He now finds a living presence, or a divine spirit, in all objects of Nature. He can see that 'living presence' in the light of the setting sun, in the round ocean and in the blue sky. At this stage, he also realises the educative influence of Nature, and the power of Nature to mould the human personality and human character. He looks upon Nature as the nurse, the guide, the guardian of his heart, and the soul of his moral being. Thus, at the third stage, Wordsworth becomes a "pantheist" and a believer in a spiritual communication between man and Nature. This communication is established between the lovers too in 'Abhijnana Sakuntalam' at the final stage of their love-journey and it happens only after a certain period of oblivion. This oblivion is highly symbolic. In 'Tintern Abbey' there is no such oblivion from the poet's part; rather he is very much attached to Nature's sweet memories. It is because, in spite of his physical retreat from Nature his mind does not return. Even in the din of the urban life he always thinks of it. His mind becomes the fertile ground where Nature can put its seed to sprout. Nevertheless, he has to come to Nature again and again to re-fill himself and re-feel the Nature, because our mind wants palpability for better connection and communication. Though forgetting is a common human nature, but Duhsanta's forgetting of Sakuntala is the result of a curse. Forgetting is an important mechanism of human mind. What our subconscious wants to forget, it goes gradually to oblivion. But Did Duhsanta really want to forget Sakuntala? Consciously, no. But one thing is noticeable that whenever the protagonists underestimate Nature's presence and leave Nature for material gain they suffer---- one fails to be recognized by the lover, another cannot recognize the beloved. So, the curse is not what sage Durvasa utters, but the actual curse of human being in general and Duhsanta and Sakuntala in particular is to ignore Nature, to take Nature for granted. That's why when they go back to Nature again they are reunited. As Wordsworth says as a pantheist:

"Nature never did betray  
The heart that loved her"

The couple reunited after at least four or five years from the departure of Sakuntala from Hastinapur, It can be guessed because when she left Hastinapur she was pregnant, and when they met again their son was grown up enough to play with lion cubs or to speak full sentences. Interestingly enough the revisiting of the poet in 'Tintern Abbey' happens after five years. And after five years the poet revives his half-lost memory:

"And now, with gleams of half-extinguished thought,  
With many recognitions dim and faint,  
And somewhat of a sad perplexity,  
The picture of the mind revives again."

For Duhsanta the lost memory revived after seeing the ring which was the symbol of their love and became metonymic to Sakuntala. So, even, before going to Sakuntala for the second time and meeting her physically, the ring connected the souls. Though, after realizing his fault Duhsanta became grief-stricken and searched for his wife in vain, but like Wordsworth he also felt his love in the blood, and along the heart with tranquil restoration. And this became, as Wordsworth describes, the 'best portion of good man's life'. Now the lovers and the poet both are matured. They know very well that this connection is not going to be broken. This is not an outward bridging, not a momentary excitement, but an aesthetic connection of souls of "more deep seclusion". They are now become living souls. The power of harmony, with Nature and the beloved, make them learn to see the "life of things", not the things of life. The curse is broken and they are fed with such lofty thoughts and elevated to such a stretch that

"...neither evil tongues,

Rash judgments, nor the sneers of selfish men,

Nor greetings where no kindness is"

can ever prevail against them or disturb their cheerful faith. And now after many wanderings and many years of absence their love is more dear to them. Duhsanta's embracing his son, who is the epitome of their love, shows his deep rooted inclination. Now their love-journey is reached to the pick and fulfilled by the touch of Green spirituality.

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