



Love and Marriage in *Abhijnanashakuntalam* and *The Tempest*: A Social Affair.

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Much ink has been spilt on the dramatic geniuses of both Shakespeare and Kalidas who best represent in their plays literature, art and culture of the Occident and the Orient respectively. Of course, their plays deal with the various aspects of human life i.e. court life, country life, family life, love, beauty, romance etc. However, the dominant emotion pervading the texts of the abovesaid writers is 'Love'. It would seem that the treatment of love in the hands of these dramatic masters is not merely idealistic or fantastic; Rather it is deeply rooted in the heart and soul of love-lorn lovers doing and dying for each other. Moreover, 'Love' experienced here is life-transforming. It contributes greatly towards enrichment and sublimation of family life. The present paper is a modest attempt to explicate how these two greatest playwrights in their very plays elucidate the dominant emotion of love for laying and strengthening the foundation stone of family life. By analysing critically the role of 'love' in the two representative plays of their times and its essential contribution thereon towards family and social bonding this paper may prove rewarding for the researchers in the field of sociology and literature who wish to study love and marriage themes.



Thanks to the growing significance of Translation as a creative art, Kalidas and Shakespeare have been translated into various languages of the world thereby demanding the attention of both the critics and lovers of literature around the globe. As Kalidas and Shakespeare represent the cultural diversities of East and West respectively, the critical interpretation of diverse traditions and institutions of the globe along with the common denominators of love and marriage may benefit the emerging researchers in the domain of multicultural as well as inter-genre tapestries. Focus on the inter-cultural study of the East and the West will lead to the creation of 'ideal of unity' of the 'undivided humanity of the world'. (Tagore, 8-9)

There has been a plethora of critical interpretations of *Abhijnanashakuntalam*. Edwin Gerow focussed on 'persistent cultural verities' of the play (Gerow, P.I-564). He elaborated upon plot, structure and the Development of Rasa in the play. The crux of Gerow is on both the structural and rasa theory.

Another critic Raniero Gnoli, in *The Aesthetic Experience According to Abhinavgupta* discusses the varying mood of rasas/emotions as experienced by the characters in *Abhijnanashakuntalam*. He dilates upon the various moods and moments of the protagonists – emotional, heroic, pathetic, joyous, furious etc. (Gnoli,5).

Jonathan Bate, in *The Genius of Shakespeare* studies the peculiar geniuses of both Shakespeare and Kalidas and compares the dialogic and dramatic stance of their dramas with those of the Mahabharata. (London: Picador, 1997, Ch.5)

In the critical texts, Keith's *The Sanskrit Drama in its origin, Development, Theory and Practice* discusses the origin and development of Sanskrit drama in general. There is both epistemological and ontological aspects discussed here.

David Gitomer's *The Theatre in Kalidas's Art* edited by Miller Concentrates upon Kalidas's concept of theatre and its performative development as a genre.

Recalling Gitomer's concept of Kalidas's theatrical art, Goodwin in *The Playworld of Sanskrit Drama* focuses on four types of representations in Sanskrit drama – verbal, bodily, natural/emotive and costume. He remarks that all these are combined to produce language of drama as "Spectacle poetry" (Drsyakavya).

According to A.L. Basham, "Kalidas' *Abhijnanashakuntalam*' is comparable to the more idyllic comedies of Shakespeare, and Kanva's hermitage is surely not far from the Forest of Arden." (Basham, 440).

Gandharva marriage observed by King Dushyanat and Shakuntala as a result of their profound love for each other in *Abhijnanashakuntalam* and Prospero's having organised Miranda – Ferdinand's marriage with the introduction of 'Masque' is more of a social/communitarian affair than merely a love-marriage materialized through impulsive/etrotic fascination of lovers for each other. Through the very presence of signet ring on Shakuntala's finger, king Dushyant did get his Gandharva marriage with his dear beloved socially approved. Similarly, Prospero's



celebration of Miranda-Ferdinand's marriage with the combined participation of both worldly and supernatural elements shows marriage as a social affair. As geniuses of world literature, both these playwrights began the holy marriage mission with love but ends it with felicitation based on social conventions in their popular form – as an integral part of the general culture as Roland Barthes, Raymond Williams and Foucault and F.R. Leavis would make us believe.

As Abhijnanshakuntalam is a romantic comedy, love is essentially the vital force dominating the main characters. As **W.J. Johnson** states: "The dominant emotion present in the play is erotic i.e. love of Dushyant for Shakuntala." (Johnson, XVI). In the Prologue, Actor-Manager, tells us, "We're giving them a romance with a new plot, sung together by Kalidasa – 'The Recognition of Shakuntala'. (Abhijnanshakuntalam, 5). The announcement by the 'Actress' and 'Actor- Manager' also inform the audience of the romantic imagination of the playwright towards evolving plot and characterization based on love.

Actress (sings) :

The mimosa has a blossom – dedicate, exquisite –
A stamen gently brushed by black woodland bees'
And lovely youthful women – so dedicate, exquisite
Wear its blossoms in their ears
Where they tremble in the breeze. (Abhijnanshakuntalam, 6)

Actor – Manager :

What would I do you, darling ! just for a moment
I'd completely forgotten that. But only because :
Your captivating, full-impassioned song
Ravished me with force, and carried me away –
Just as the headlong rush of a spotted deer
Carries this king, Dushyant, into our play. (Abhijnanshakuntalam, 6)

Shakespeare's romantic comedy, like that of Kalidas, opens on the melodious note of songs and music. As the opening of his play 'Twelfth Night' tells us :

"If music be the food of love, play on" (Twelfth Night, I, I, 01)

And the love-lorn heart that sings must love. As Congreve would say "Beauty is the lover's gift". (Congreve, Act II, Sc. I, 91). Like Orlando in *As You Like It*, Dushyant cannot but respond to Shakuntala' beauty :

If such beauty thrives in the realm
Beauty rare in courtesans' of trees –
Wild creepers have qualities, that with ease private room –
Surpass our cultivated garden bloom. (Act I, 11)

As she is born in the lap of nature and brought up under the mystic fostering of the Sage Kanva, there is something angelic about her graceful charm. Like Wordsworth's Lucy, Shakuntala, Miranda, Rosalinde are creatures of Nature. Nourished in the lap of nature, they are prepared physically, mentally and spiritually to face and respond to the music of the outside world, be it family or society. There is, therefore, a wonderful fusion of landscape and cityscape in the romantic comedies of both Kalidas and Shakespeare. The enamoured King truly describes it:

Indeed, the seer, who would put to duty
And penance this supreme natural beauty
Tries to shape mahogany or metal
With the rim of a dark lotus petal. (Act I, 11)

There is a unique blend of the Shakespearian and Keatsian arabesque of sensuousness by which the king feels excited while gazing at the bewitching beauty of Shakuntala:

Her lower lip's as red as a fresh young bud,
Her arms are tender shoots, supple yet trim,
And like a longed – for blossom, gathering strength,
Youth pushes up through all her limbs. (Act I, 12)

In fact, Dushyant is beside himself and speechless at the superb charm of the damsel:

How could such beauty stem from mortal birth?
Does lightning strike upwards out of the earth? (Act I, 17)



The King wonders at the masterly creation of Shakuntala when he bursts out:

Did the great creator first draw her in a masterpiece,
_____ considering her singular perfection
And her maker's true omnipotence,
I suppose her some quite unique creation
In femininity's treasure house. (Act II, 26)

Shakuntala is an embodiment of innocence, simplicity and gaiety. She is as flawless as Miranda, as resourceful as Rosalinde. Cupid's rays coming from Shakuntala's supreme beauty enchant even the king of Hastinapur :

Bewitching lady, soul of my soul:
You give the final thrust to one already felled –
By Kama's dart, if you suppose
My wounded heart could be impelled
To break your trust
And love another.(Act 3, 39)

Hence they fall in love and conduct a Gandharva marriage (a secret love-match' by mutual consent). Dushyant gifts her a ring as the token of their mutual good faith and departs for Hastinapur leaving Shakuntala in the forest. When Kanva comes to know about his forster-daughter's secret marriage with the King of Hastinapur, he starts making all preparation for her warm send off. The holy sage bids Shakuntala a happy but touching farewell:

A daughter's never really ours –
And now I've sent her to her husband's home,
I feel that inner calm a debtor feels
when he's repaid a loan. (Act IV, 56)

The same supreme beauty of Miranda Ferdinand admires and love :

The mistress which I serve
Quickness what's dead. And makes
My labours pleasures. O, she is
Ten times more gentle than her
Father's crabbed; my sweat Mistress
weeps when she sees me work,
and says such baseness/Had never like executor.
I forget : But these sweet thoughts do even
refresh my labours, /Most busy, least
when I do it. (Act III, Sc. I, 14)

Like Rosalinda and Shakuntala, Miranda's character is a rare blend of innocence, charm, grace, attraction, wisdom which easily convert Miranda into an epitome of humanity:

Admir'd Miranda!
Indeed the top of admiration; worth several virtues/Have I lik'd several women, never any/
with so full soul, but some defect in her / Did quarrel with the noblest grace she O you, /
so perfect ow'd, and so peudless, are created of every creature's best! (Act III, Sc I, 15)

Miranda equally surrenders herself to Ferdinand and vowes to make him her life-partner :

By my modesty,
The jewel in my dower,
I would not wish
Any companion in the world but you;
Nor can imagination from a shape,
Besides yourself, to like of (III, I, 15)

Ferdinand, like Dushyant is equally drawn to Miranda at first sight and he also takes solemn oath to be hers :

Hear my soul speak :
The very instant that I saw you, did
My heart fly to your service; there



Resides/ To make me slave to it; (Act III, I, 15)

When Miranda says to Ferdinand, “Do you love me?” (III, I, 15), the later prays to God to be immortal witness of their true love:

O heaven, O earth, bear witness to this sound,
And crown what I profess with this kind event,
If I speak true! If hollowly, invert.
What best is boded me to mischief!
Beyond all limit of what
Else i'th' world, /Do love, prize, honour you. (Act III, I, 15)

When Prospero is convinced of their (Miranda & Ferdinand) profound love for each other willing for marriage, he exhorts them some priceless moral and social rites to be observed for their happy married and future life ahead. He wishes to approve of their sincere devotion to each other. So as a man of wisdom and a custodian of social norms, Prospero suggests Ferdinand some unavoidable moral and social practices to be followed before marriage:

Then, as my gift, and mine own acquisition worthily purchas'd, take my daughter. But if thou dost break her virgin-knot before. All sanctimonious ceremonies may with full and noisy rite be minist'red, No sweet aspersion shall the heaven lot fall
To make this contract grow.....
Therefore take heed
As Hymen's lamps shall light you. (Act III, III, 19)

Ferdinand as a good son and a better would be son-in-law follows the sound advice of Prospero in letter and spirit. Ferdinand tells Prospero that his love for Miranda smacks of holiness, intensity and sincerity rather than lust and pomposity:

As I hope
For quiet days, fair issue, and long life,
With such love as is now, the murkiest den
The most opportune place, the strong'st suggestion
Our worsen genius can, shall never melt
Mine honour into lust, to take away
The edge of that day's celebration,
When I shall think or Phoebus' steeds are founder'd
Or Night kept chain'd below. (IV, I, 19)

Prospero wished to “Bestow upon the eyes of this young couple some sanity of art” (IV, I, 19) to attain promised marital bliss. He calls upon his supernatural attendants to celebrate their marriage with solemn and strange music, gentle actions of salutations and merriment. There seems to be something primal and eternal about the music enjoyed by these spirited natural and supernatural participants. It is something like *Nietzschean* spirit of music coming out of Dionysiac urge. (Nietzsche, 117) The spirits – Ariel, Iris, Juno all happily take part in the celebration. Iris asks Ceres, Juno and other spirits to help him create a purely natural and holy ambience to celebrate “a contract of true love” (IV, I, 20). He says :

You nymphs, call'd Naiads, or the wind'ring brooks,
With your sedg'd crowns and ever harmless looks,
Leave your crisp channels, and on this green land
Answer your summons; Juno does command.
Come, temperate nymphs, and help to celebrate..... (IV, I, 20)

There seems to be something like ‘Carnival’ in the uninhibited mirth and laughter being enjoyed by the spirits, the authority (Prospero) and other attendants. The interaction of various voices of various speakers lends this stance something dialogic and polyphonic’ to use *Bakhtin's* terms. This is how Miranda is offered a warm send off by the whole community of the humans/Prospero, Miranda, Ferdinand, Trincuto, Gonzalo) and spirits (Ariel, Iris, Ceres, Juno, Nymphs). During Shakuntala's valediction, Kanva (forester-father) also calls upon all the Hora and Fauna, all the natural and supernatural elements to give her the happiest send off:

..... Give her your blessing now.
Ah, through the cuckoo's song the true respond



The departure of Shakuntala, their forest friend,
Is blessed.
May her path be charmed by
May trees grow lotus-coloured lakes, shadows in the midday heat
May the dust of the road be pollen
Beneath her feet, and the breeze blow auspiciously
For Shakuntala's state – (Act IV, 51)

It makes crystal clear that the concept of love both in *Abhijnanashakuntalam* and *The Tempest* is reinforced by lovers' mutual devotion and dedication, undefiled by lust or animal instinct. The foundation of such love is too puissant to be shaken by mundane conditionings, material trials and tribulations. The love which paves the sure path for social bonding of marriage is far from skin-deep. Rather, it is perennial and timeless. And why not? This love is based on mutual self-sacrifice and immortal purity. The matrimonial alliance issuing from such a holy bonding is bound to stand the test of times as it is morally, spiritually and socially justified. A noted critic **Dr. Sarup Singh** also appreciates the daughters' allegiance to their parents in seeking filial approval for marriage. The daughters may sometimes reject the arranged marriage as forced by father/parents, but then the former is hardly seen in their open rebellion against their father. He aptly observes:

The distinguishing feature of Shakespeare's plays is what even when the daughter rejects the arranged marriage, she never gives us the impression of open rebellion against her father or of violating the sacred bond that exists between parents and children. (Singh, 49)

Things are other way round in the Restoration Comedy of Manners. In the comedies of Congreve, Etherege and Wycherley, both love and marriage are marked by lust, greed, licentiousness, profligacy, immorality, pomp and show. In the 'Proviso Scene' in Congreve's *The Way of the World*, the terms and conditions regarding the personal liberty and extravagance, extra-marital pleasure as mutually agreed by both Mirabel and Millamant are hollow and carnal enough where we cannot imagine the trace even the grace, grandeur and chastity in the concept of marriage as established by the characters of both Kalidas and Shakespeare.

In her paper, "Marriage in Shakespeare : A community Affair", **Prof. Lisa Hopkins** talks about the central role of marriage in building up the foundation of society. In Shakespeare's plays, esp. in comedies, the concept of marriage is marked by harmony, cohesiveness, commenting bond for establishing family life. If unsupported by community/society, marriage proves terribly disastrous for the couple. The same crux is brought to the fore when Claudius tells Lucio in *Measure for Measure* :

Thus stands it with me: upon a true contract
I got possession of Julietta's bed.
You know the lady. She is fast my wife
Save that we do denunciation lack
Of outward order. This we cannot to,
Only for propagation of a dower
Remaining in the coffer of her friends,
From whom we thought it meet to hide our love.
Till time had made them for us
But it chances the stealth of
Our most mutual entertainment.
With character too gross is writ on Juliet. (Act I, II, 144-54)

In the Renaissance Age, marriage was based on love. Even having sex was knowing the partners. Even in the problem play, 'All's well that Ends Well' – "Do you know this woman? – Carually, she says" ()
But then if the knowing was in the carnal sense, it was attacked. As in *Middleton and Rowley's The Changeling* , the deflowering of the heroine Beatrice – Joanna instantly changes her into a much more streetwise person. In *A Midsummer Night's Dreams*, the marriage of Theseus and Hippolyta is celebrated, but then love devoid of marriage is far from normal and practical : Theseus defines mere love :

Lovers and Madmen have such seething Brains,
Such shaping Phantasies, that apprehend



More than Cool Reason ever comprehends. (Act I, I, 106-112)

The role of father is much more dominant than that of mother in Shakespeare. As *Mary Beth Rose* in her article, "Where Are the Mothers in Shakespeare?" points out, "There are very few mothers in Shakespeare's plays, the reason for this is technical, rather than ideological – his Acting company of 10 men and 4 boys simply did not allow for the creation of parts of mothers..." It is when heroines are converted into women after marriage that they cooperate their counterparts in strengthening social bonding.

In *Abhijnanashakuntalam* too, the role of King (Dushyant), the father becomes important when he forgets and fails to recognize Shakuntala (as she lost the ring – the king had gifted her as love – token for 'Gandharva marriage' I, but when he recognizes her, the family reunion takes place. The king then announces :

When a man dies,
Untouched by crime,
Dushyant will take his place,
And guarantee his family
The entire state. (Act 6, 85)

Marica, the charioteer also glorifies their reunion and matrimonial bliss :

Fortune unites faith, wealth and order:
Shakuntala the pure, her noble son, the king. (Act 7, 102)

The king then bids farewell to all by expressing his best wishes for humanity and paying his glowing reverence to the Almighty for having blessed the great playwright to have composed such an immortal verse in *Abhijnanasakuntalam* :

May the King work for the good of nature,
May we honour those versed in revelation,
And may the universal power
Of self-existent siva,
Free me from rebirth and death Forever. (Act 7, 105)

In *The Tempest* too, through Prospero Shakespeare offers a salutary farewell to humanity. There is something philosophically eye – opening and soul-stirring in the sublime poetic dictions employed by the 'Bard of Avon'. In depicting the final valediction and liberation which Prospero offers to the world-stage, his bonded spirits and himself :

Our revels are now ended
These our actors, As I foretold you,
Were all Spirits, and are melted into air, into then air;
And, like the baseless fabric of this vision,
The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself;
Leave not a rack behind.
We are such stuff
As dream are made on: and our little life/
Is rounded with a sleep. (Act IV, I, 21)

On the basis of these lofty poetic lines readers and viewers of Shakespeare and Kalidas's plays cannot but experience "the class of truly excellent poetry from the great masters and apply them as a touchstone to other poetry". (Arnold, 242)

To sum up, philosophy of love as embodied by the characters of both Kalidas and Shakespeare is far from being idealistic/utopian. It is deep-rooted in the unified personality of lovers guaranteeing them a solid foundation-stone for a happy and prosperous married life. Really, studying the vision of love and marriage in the plays of these two world classics is a prelude to all the lovers who wish to begin a new life after marriage based on true love, mutual understanding, ordeals, trials and tribulation. For profoundly and holistically treating these two subjects as two aspects of the same coin, both the texts under study are the immortally enlightening body of writings of world literature as these great masters establish the theme of love and marriage as a social affair true to humanity at large.



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