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A Brief Discussion on Kalidas

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Abstract: Kālidāsa (Sanskrit: कालिदास, "Servant of Kali "; 4th–5th century CE) was a Classical Sanskrit author who is often considered ancient India 's greatest poet and playwright. His plays and poetry are primarily based on Hindu Puranas and philosophy. His surviving works consist of three plays, two epic poems and two shorter poems. Much about his life is unknown except what can be inferred from his poetry and plays. His works cannot be dated with precision, but they were most likely authored before the 5th century CE during the Gupta era.

Keywords: Ujjain, Meghaduta, Poet, Dramatist.

I. Introduction:

In secular Sanskrit literature, the biggest name is that of Kalidasa (5th century AD). Of his two epics, the longer Raghuvamsha describes the dynasty of Rama, and the shorter Kumarasambhava celebrates the wedding of Shiva and Parvati and their union in their lofty picturesque abode, "the divine souled Himalayas. " His masterpiece is the play Shakuntala, a romantic tragicomedy involving a tenderhearted forest maiden and a king who then goes away and under a curse forgets her. But perhaps the most original and popular work of Kalidasa is the Meghaduta (The Cloud Messenger), in which a banished newly-wed lover sights a likely cloud on the exhilarating first day of the monsoon and begs it to carry a message to his beloved wife pining in their fabled city of Alakapuri in the Himalayas . The first half of the poem gives an enchanting cloud's eye-view of the changing landscapes of central and north India, and the second half describes in sensuous and glittering detail the pining lady, still ravishing in her attenuation . Though he mainly wrote epics and plays, Kalidasa's genius was essentially lyrical . He delights constantly with his apt similes and he isthe master ofsweet elaboration of the softly unfolding sentiment . Many readersincluding Western orientalists have regarded him as the greatest Indian poet ever, and the one who expresses best the characteristic Indian sensibility . In colonial times, in proud patriotic counter-assertion, he was often claimed by Indian scholars to be the Shakespeare of India. Rabindranath Tagore wrote a marvellous humorous poem on Kalidasa.

Research Methodology: In this paper qualitative research methodology is applied with secondary data books, article etc.

Early Life Of Kalidasa: It is still important that we try and place Kalidasa, and locate him in some time frame so, let's try and do that. Since Kalidasa belonged to the ancient period and much of information about it has been lost over centuries, it is difficult to gain the required details. In fact, dates alluding to his time of birth span centuries. Scholarship on his probable dates varies.

It is believed, for instance, that Kalidasa was a court poet of Agnimitra Sunga (second century BC) who lived during the years of the Sunga Empire 184 BC to 78 BC. According to the belief, Kalidasa made Agnimitra Sunga the protagonist of his first play Malavikagnimitran. Another view of Kalidasa's period places him in first century BC during the reign of Vikramaditya of Ujjain, around 57 BCT. Thus, Kalidasa was associated with King Vikramaditya who was the poet's patron. A third opinion establishes Kalidasa's date between the fourth and fifth centuries AD—the age of Chandra Gupta II who assumed the title of Chandra Gupta Vikramaditya after his winning spree in western India.

The lack of knowledge about Kalidasa works both as an advantage and disadvantage. The disadvantage is that it leaves us completely in the dark about the writer's ethos. We cannot take help from his surroundings to correlate them with events that take place in his works. It restricts us to the text per se. However, the advantage is that knowing little about Kalidasa's time frees us from the binds of historicity and we are constrained to delve deeper into his texts.

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The City of Ujjain and its Relevance in Kalidasa: It emerges from the settings of Kalidasa's works that he was greatly inspired by the natural beauty of the Malwa region in central India. His fondness for Ujjain particularly comes to the fore in the way he describes the city. Chandra Rajan has keenly delineated how the topography of Malwa might have shaped Kalidasa's imagination. Kalidasa has depicted with immense pride scenes from Ujjain in his works. It has made Kalidasa's imagery highly evocative. Ujjain with its picturesque sights was also a cultural and commercial hub. It was the centre of learning and intellectual movements where music and the arts were given primacy. While living in Ujjain, Kalidasawas directly in touch with the harmony of nature and the world of art associated with the court. The latter also lent high aesthetic appeal to his works.

The growth of Kalidas as a poet-kalidas poet: The Kalidas biography is also an inspirational one. A court's minister's son gets rejected for a marriage proposal by the princess. Then the frustrated minister sends the most eligible Kalidas shepherd to the princess. The Kalidas poet was not able to digest the insult and started learning Sanskrit.

A Great Scholar and Poet: Who is this Kalidas ? When did he live and where in India was he residing? Much discussion has taken place for a long time now about his life and times. Not many queries on this score have elicited definite answers. Several legends have sprouted around him. According to one such popular legend, Kalidas wasn't always so wise and learned. In fact, there was a time he was considered to be one of the stupidest people in the kingdom! One sunny day, Kalidas was sitting on a branch of a tree, trying to saw it off. But the dimwitted man was sitting on the wrong end of the branch, so when he finally sawed through the branch, down he tumbled! This act of sheer stupidity was observed by some shrewd pundits minister passing by. Now these pundits wanted to play a trick on the arrogant princess, to teach her a lesson. She was determined to marry someone who would defeat her in a debate about the scriptures. The princess had heaped considerable abuse on them over a period of time, and they were determined to extract their revenge. So, when they chanced upon Kalidas, they decided to present him to the queen as a suitable match for her. In order to conceal his stupidity, the pundits asked Kalidas to pretend that he was a great sage, who was observing a vow of silence. Kalidas readily agreed, and they presented him to the queen, saying that Kalidas would only communicate by way of gestures. When the queen asked Kalidas a few questions to test his intelligence, Kalidas gesticulated wildly and the astute pundits 'interpreted' these gestures as extremely witty answers and retorts. The princess was suitably impressed, and the couple was married without much delay.

Kalidas's stupidity could be concealed for only so long, and the night of the wedding Kalidas blurted out something inane. The princess realized that she had married a prize fool. Furious, she threw him out of her palace, and her life. The dejected Kalidas wandered around, till he came to the bank of the river. He contemplated taking his life when he suddenly saw some women washing clothes on the edge of the river bank. He observed that the stones which the women were pounding with clothes, were smooth and rounded, while the other stones were rough and ragged. This observation hit him like a thunderbolt, and it dawned upon him that if stones could be worn through and change their shape by being pounded upon by clothes, then why couldn't his thick brains change, by being pounded upon by knowledge!

Kalidas thus grew determined to become the wisest and most learned man in the country, and to achieve this end he started indulging in intellectual pastimes, reading, meditating and praying to his goddess Kali to grant him divine knowledge. His wish was fulfilled. This is one of the most popular legends about Kalidas. There are several other stories but they lack authenticity. It appears Kalidas was at the court of emperor

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Vikramaditya. The place and time of this king are also not definite. But it can be said with some certainty that Kalidas lived before the 6th century A.D., i.e., about 1400 years ago. But when exactly he lived before the 6th century is not firmly established. Though a deep affection for the city of Ujjain is discernible in his works, it cannot be said with certainty that he lived there. But we can assume that, wherever he may have been born, he had lived at Ujjain. Kalidas, however, had good knowledge of the whole of Bharat. In his poem 'Meghaduta', his descriptions of mountains and rivers and cities and villages stretching from Ramagiri in Central India up to Alakanagari in the Himalayas are very beautiful. In another epic poem 'Raghuvamsha', Kalidas, while portraying the conquests of emperor Raghu, describes the places and peoples, their modes of living, food-habits and trades and professions, rivers and mountains in almost the whole country — Assam, Bengal and Utkal in the East; Pandya and Kerala in the South and Sind, Gandhara and other places in the North-west. Reading these pen-pictures, one cannot help but conclude that the poet must have had a personal knowledge of these areas. In short, he must have traveled widely across the length and breadth of the land, seen those places, talked to the people and studied their modes of living. Kalidas possessed that distinct intellect which makes one a great poet. He was a scholar and his works display his poetic genius as well as scholarship. Also they are marked by a belief of what is good in life and people's noble goals of life. He could describe the rich and wealthy life of a royal palace and the serene, simple and peaceful life at a hermitage with equal understanding. He could, likewise, describe the joys of the marital life of a man and his spouse as well as their pangs of separation. He creates scenes of a serious and thoughtful nature as also hilarious scenes of light comedy. In his works is found an excellent combination of art-consciousness, unmatched wordpower and an unparalleled capacity for vivid portrayals.

The earlier work of Kalidas poet: He started with a writing on his insult- "asti kascit vagvisesa?"

Major works of Kalidas : Kalidas wrote seven works. 'Kumarasambhava' and 'Raghuvamsha' are his two epic poems. 'Malavikagnimitra', 'Vikramorvashiya' and 'Abhijnana Shakuntala' are his celebrated plays. 'Meghaduta' and 'Ritusamhara' are also poetical works of great distinction.

Minor works of kalidasa: Kalidasa wrote some khandakavyas along with the major works. Khandakavyas are the smaller poems. He wrote a khandakavya on Ritusamhara which describes about six seasons . Another notable work of kalidas poet is Meghaduta which is also a khandakavya. The most popular plays of ancient times are the plays written by Kalidasa. Abhijnanasakuntalam: It is one of the works of Kalidas poets which were translated into English. This work of Kalidas revolves on the meeting of dushyanta with sakuntala.

The Indian Shakespeare : Many people believe that Kalidasa poet is a one of the nine gems of Vikramaditya. Since kalidas works revolve around the following things:

1) Expressing the love on nature.

2) Praising the seasons and monsoons.

3) Glorifying the field and sky.

4) Illustrating mother earth.

All of the above things are in his works which demonstrates his works are majorly on nature. His works include soul-satisfying peace. Along with those his Kalidas works have the sincerity which exemplifies the truth of his nature. His works are almost similar to the works of Shakespeare. Hence is also called Indian Shakespeare.

Translations of his works: Many works of Kalidas' poetry are translated into various languages.The major script of Kalidasa Shakuntala was translated by Arthur Franklin. It is named Cloud Messenger. Sir William also translated the Shakuntala which is a marvelous thing. Dasgupta also translated his Sanskrit writings to English. These translations are exact and are classics. Apart from these works many books are now available in the market which showcases the works of Kalidasa poets.

Facts of kalidasa: 1) Kalidasa is considered as the Indian Shakespeare and the Prince of Indian Poets.

2) Ritusamhara is Kalidasa's first poetic work.

3) Raghuvamsa and Kumarasambhava are Kalidasa's two epic poems.

4) Gupta King Chandragupta II ruled during Kalidasa's reign. In Chandragupta II's court, he was one of the Nine Jewels who are also known as Navaratnas.

5) Aihole Inscription and Hanamkonda Inscription are two inscriptions that reference Kalidasa.

Legacy of Kalidas:

With his simplistic and lucid style of writing, he brought Sanskrit poetry to a level that has rarely been surpassed in Indian history.

The oldest paleographical evidence of Kalidasa is a 473CE inscription from the Sun Temple. His name was stated in a 634 CE inscription found in present-day Karnataka.

Later Kalidasa Sanskrit plays inspired European literature in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Sir William Osler, the Father of Modern Medicine, had a poem by Kalidasa on his desk at all times.

Further Reading on Kalidasa:

Kalidasa's works have been translated numerous times. Kalidasa: Shakuntala and Other Writings, translated by Arthur W. Ryder (1912), is the most practical. Franklin and Eleanor Edgerton's, The Cloud Messenger (1964) is a comprehensive translation of the Meghaduta with accompanying Sanskrit text. Sir William Jones's (1796) outstanding translation of the Sakuntala is a classic.

In Arthur Berriedale Keith's two works, The Sanskrit Drama in Its Origin, Development, Theory, and Practice (1924) and A History of Sanskrit Literature (1928), whose critical commentary on the poetry and drama is still of interest, various arguments concerning the dates of Kalidasa and other biographical points are critically examined.

Influence: Kālidāsa's influence extends to all later Sanskrit works that followed him, and on Indian literature broadly, becoming an archetype of Sanskrit literature.

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Notably in modern Indian literature *Meghadūta* 's romanticism is found in Rabindranath Tagore 's poems on the monsoons.

Later culture: Many scholars have written commentaries on the works of Kālidāsa. Among the most studied commentaries are those by Kolachala Mallinatha Suri, which were written in the 15th century during the reign of the Vijayanagara king, Deva Rāya II . The earliest surviving commentaries appear to be those of the 10th-century Kashmirian scholar Vallabhadeva. Eminent Sanskrit poets like Bāṇabhaṭṭa , Jayadeva and Rajasekhara have lavished praise on Kālidāsa in their tributes. A well-known Sanskrit verse ("Upamā Kālidāsasya...") praises his skill at *upamā* , or similies . Anandavardhana, a highly revered critic, considered Kālidāsa to be one of the greatest Sanskrit poets. Of the hundreds of pre-modern Sanskrit commentaries on Kālidāsa's works, only a fraction have been contemporarily published. Such commentaries show signs of Kālidāsa's poetry being changed from its original state through centuries of manual copying, and possibly through competing oral traditions which ran alongside the written tradition. Kālidāsa's Abhijnanasakuntalam was one of the first works of Indian literature to become known in Europe. It was first translated into English and then from English into German, where it was received with wonder and fascination by a group of eminent poets, which included Herder and Goethe .

Kālidāsa's work continued to evoke inspiration among the artistic circles of Europe during the late 19th century and early 20th century, as evidenced by Camille 's sculpture Shakuntala.

Koodiyattam artist and Natya Sastra scholar Mani Madhava (1899–1990) of Kerala choreographed and performed popular Kālidāsa plays including Abhijñānaśākuntala, Vikramorvaśīya and Mālavikāgnimitra.

The Kannada films Mahakavi Kalidasa (1955), featuring Honnappa Bagavatar, B. Sarojadevi and later Kaviratna Kalidasa (1983), featuring Rajkumar and Jaya Prada , were based on the life of Kālidāsa. Kaviratna also used Kālidāsa's Shakuntala as a sub-plot in the movie. V. Shantaram made the Hindi film Stree (1961) based on Kālidāsa's Shakuntala . RR Chandran made the Tamil film Mahakavi Kalidas (1966) based on Kālidāsa's life. Chevalier Nadigar Thilagam Sivaji Ganesan played the part of the poet himself. Mahakavi Kalidsu (Telugu, 1960) featuring Akkineni was similarly based on Kālidāsa's life and work.

Surendra Verma's Hindi play *Athavan Sarga* , published in 1976, is based on the legend that Kālidāsa could not complete his epic *Kumārasambhava* because he was cursed by the goddess parvati, for obscene descriptions of her conjugal life with Śiva in the eighth canto. The play depicts Kālidāsa as a court poet of Chandragupta who faces a trial on the insistence of a priest and some other moralists of his time.

Asti Kashchid Vagarthiyam is a five-act Sanskrit play written by Krishna Kumar in 1984. The story is a variation of the popular legend that Kālidāsa was mentally challenged at one time and that his wife was responsible for his transformation. Kālidāsa, a mentally challenged shepherd, is married to Vidyottamā, a learned princess, through a conspiracy. On discovering that she has been tricked, Vidyottamā banishes Kālidāsa, asking him to acquire scholarship and fame if he desires to continue their relationship. She further stipulates that on his return he will have to answer the question, *Asti Kaścid Vāgarthaḥ* " ("Is there anything special in expression?"), to her satisfaction. In due course, Kālidāsa attains knowledge and fame as a poet. Kālidāsa begins Kumārsambhava, Raghuvaṃśa and Meghaduta with the words *Asti* ("there is"), *Kaścit* ("something") and *Vāgarthaḥ* ("spoken word and its meaning") respectively.

Bishnupada Bhattacharya's "Kalidas o Robindronath" is a comparative study of Kalidasa and the Bengali poet Rabindronath Tagore .

Ashadh Ka Ek Din *is a Hindi play based on fictionalized elements of Kalidasa's life.*

II. Conclusion:

Kalidasa is widely regarded as the greatest Sanskrit poet and dramatist of all time. All of his admirers in India, including post-dated poets and critics such as Mammta, Anandavardhancharya, and Abhinav Gupta, praise him. His poetic style impacted all subsequent poets, as well as current poets of the twentieth century. In recognition of Kalidas' work, the Indian government gives Kalidas Samman in Madhya Pradesh who performs well in classical dance, poetry, classical music, plastic arts, and arts.

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