

An Overview on the Female Characters of Malavikagnimitra

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Abstract: Indian culture considers Sanskrit as “Devabhasha”(language of God). It was the dominant language of Indian writings. Kalidasa is the greatest Sanskrit poet. His all compositions are immortal. He shows a new path to the world literature. Kalidasa was a great scholar and he showed his genius through his works. His compositions show his knowledge on the Vedas, the Puranas, the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, the Alamkarashastra, the Vyakarana, Philosophy etc. In the drama Malavikagnimitra also the poet very beautifully delineated the female characters. This is about the love story of Malavika, princess of Vidarbha and Agnimitra, the King of Vidisa. The heroine of the nataka is princess of Vidarbha, Malavika. Queen Dharini is the symbol of ideal Indian woman. She is very chaste woman. She can understand the fickle minded king Agnimitra. Iravati is a beautiful woman. She is a conceited beloved. On Malavika, she is very jealous. Because of jealousy, She scolds Vidusaka and Malavika's friend. She becomes very upset when she sees that king is charmed by Malavika. Madhavasena's minister Arya Sumati's sister is Panditakaushiki. When her brother lost his life in the hands of dacoits, she feels very sad and becomes a 'sanyasi'. In this article we are going to discuss about the female characters of Malavikagnimitra.

Keywords: Kalidasa, Agnimitra, Malavika, Dharini, Iravati etc

I. INTRODUCTION

Indian culture considers Sanskrit as “Devabhasha”(language of God). It was the dominant language of Indian writings. Hence numerous writers composed different works in Sanskrit since ancient times and made it one of the richest literatures of the world.

Kalidasa is the greatest Sanskrit poet. His all compositions are immortal. He shows a new path to the world literature. He has to his credit several works. They are as follows:

1. Ritusamhara
2. Kumarasambhava
3. Malavikagnimitra
4. Meghaduta
5. Vikramorvasiya
6. Raghuvamsa
7. Abhijnanashakuntala

However there are many works which are said to be composed by Kalidasa. They are as follows- Ambastava, Kalistotra, Laghustava etc.

Kalidasa was a great scholar and he showed his genius through his works. His compositions show his knowledge on the Vedas, the Puranas, the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, the Alamkarashastra, the Vyakarana, Philosophy etc. His vast knowledge on History and Geography can be felt while going through his works. An important aspect of Kalidasa's compositions is his perfection on sketching the characters of his writings. Kalidasa was an ardent worshipper of Lord Shiva, as it can be felt in his compositions.

The main theme of Kalidasa's compositions is Vyanjana. Through Dhvani he expressed many thoughts. Indian scholars called him Kavi of Upama-“Upama Kalidasasya”. He employed Upamalamkara very beautifully, but he also showed genius in employing other Alamkaras also. Kalidasa perfectly delineated “Rasa” in his compositions. The great poet Kalidasa

applied Riti in his works very beautifully. Kalidasa picturised every character so perfectly as if he could read the human mind. All his characters are very lively. But it can be seen that his women appeal more strongly than his men. In his plays also it can be felt. All his women, such as – Shakuntala, Malavika, Dharini, Urvashi are individual but selfless tender and truthful.

In the drama¹ Malavikagnimitra also the poet very beautifully delineated the female characters. This is about the love story of Malavika, princess of Vidarbha and Agnimitra, the King of Vidisa. This consists of five acts. The play opens with a dance competition between Malavika and another dancer. King Agnimitra is charmed by Malavika's beauty and talent. Dharini and Iravati, the two Queens are displeased at being forsaken for his maiden. Iravati gives Agnimitra the sharp edge of her tongue. Dharini with her royal power confines Malavika and Vakulvakika in the Patalagriha. But Vidushaka frees them. At that time someone gives the news that Vasulaksmi, sister of Agnimitra is attacked by a monkey and all of them go there. In the last act, it can be seen that Pusyamitra's and Virasena's victories and Madhavasena's release. As parts of the booty Agnimitra receives some gifts which include two girls who recognize their princes Malavika. It is also revealed that she is a cousin of queen Dharini. They agree to have Malavika as their co-wife. The play ends in merriment. The female characters are very strong in this drama. All the female characters are discussed in this paper.

II. MALAVIKA

The heroine of the nataka is princess of Vidarbha, Malavika. In the drama she is disguised as a maiden. In the last act we get the real introduction of Malavika. In this drama it is seen that Malavika is not fully grown up or aged. She is still a 'Balika'. So in this drama she is introduced as a "darika" or "bala", she is the idol of perfect beauty and expertise in singing and dancing.

In the first act we can see that the king is charmed by her beauty by watching a picture of her. We come to know this from the two maidens Bakulvalika and Vakulavalika.

The king says- "*devi, apurveyam darika tavasanna likhita kiminamadheyeti.*"

When King Agnimitra watches her dance he is attracted by her. King Agnimitra also praises her beauty by expressing that she carries the beauty of moon of Autumn season.²

Malavika's teacher Ganadasa also praises her. He says that she is '*paramanipuna medhavini ceti*'. And he very beautifully explains her excellence.³

Ganadasa thinks- "*akrtivisesapratyayadnamanunavastukam sambhavayami*". He also praises her.⁴ and He compares her talent with a pearl. According to Ganadasa a competent disciple carries the teachings and ideas of a teacher to a much higher scale and widespread just as a conchshell in the sea turns raindrops falling from the clouds into gems.

The maiden thinks that Malavika is much talented than Iravati.⁵ So Iravati's disliking for Malavika is quite natural.⁶ "*sakhi! na me caranavanyatah pravartete, mano mamvikarayati. asankitasya tavadantam gamisyami, sthane khalu kataram me hradayam*"

Malavika loves king Agnimitra from the core of her heart. So, when she goes in the garden to perform the 'dohada' of the 'Asoka tree' and comes to know that Agnimitra is also there, she feels very excited. But in case of lovemaking, she is very nervous. The king delineates her situation very beautifully.⁷

In the third act Malavika is very much afraid of queen Dharini. She is also very introvert by nature. She reveals her mental condition only before her friend- "*paridevisye tavad visraddham muhurtakam,*"

Malavika is a young girl. So she does not have that much of confidence of a princess in her. According to scholars the soft touch of the character of Malavika can be felt everywhere.

III. DHARINI

Queen Dharini is the symbol of ideal Indian woman. She is very chest woman. She can understand the fickle minded king Agnimitra. So when the king asks about Malavika, she utters nothing and she did not want to take Malavika before Agnimitra. She never wants the performance of the dance before everyone, because she knows that Agnimitra will be attracted by her. Queen Dharini tries her best to stop the dance competition before the king. She even says to Acarya Ganadasa- "*aciropanita te sisya tadapariristhitasya upadsasya punaranyayam prakasanam*".⁸

But Vidusaka creates such a situation that she has to agree to this point. Earlier Agnimitra was attracted by Iravati and when we go through this drama we can understand that Dharini is not very much pleased with the king. In fact she is hurt

by such acts of Agnimitra and Iravati. Iravati was expertise in singing, dancing and fine arts. So Dharani wanted to make Malavika more expert than Iravati. And Malavika passed in the examination. In this aspect Dharani was proud of her.

But in performing 'dohada' in the Ashoke tree, Dharani appoints Malavika instead of herself. She does not appoint Iravati for this work. When Dharani confined Malavika in the patalgrha she also opens another path to rescue her. And by such act queen Dharani also wants to please Iravati but as it seems that her such acts are not done from the core of her heart.

When Vidusaka comes and says that a snake has bitten him and without her 'nagamudrasanathamanglika' he will not live, Dharani believes him and gives him the ring. In such cases we can see that Dharani is very simple. She says- "*idam sarpamudritam anguliyakam. pascata mama haste dehi etat*".⁹

Dharani always keeps her words. She promises Malavika that, if flowers bloom within five days of 'dohada' of Asoka tree, she will fulfill Malavika's wish. She keeps her word in the last act and also tells Iravati to accept Malavika as co-wife. Paribrajika rightly praises her for her qualities.¹⁰

Queen Dharani is intelligent, self-respected, selfless and courageous enough to face any kind of situation. Dharani has a beautiful personality, for which everyone loves her and respects her.

IV. IRĀVATI

Iravati is a beautiful woman. She is a conceited beloved. On Malavika, she is very jealous. Because of jealousy, She scolds Vidusaka and Malavika's friend. She becomes very upset when she sees that king is charmed by Malavika.

Iravati wants to go to the garden with the king but there when she sees that king Agnimitra is keeping his eyes on Malavika she cannot resist herself and says- "*puraya puraya asokah kusumam nanu darsyati./ ayam punah puspati phalati ca*".¹¹

She also tells the friend of Malavika- "*tvaya sadhupakrantam. Idanim saphalabhyarthanam kurvaryaputram*".¹² She also expresses her grief to the king. When the king says he is just passing time with her, she does not believe him fully. ¹³

Even if the king tries to console her by telling some lies, she does not believe the king and goes to another place. In the drama Iravati goes to Dharani and tells her about Malavika and the king.

In the last act she becomes happy when she hears that prince Vasumitra conquers the 'Yavanas' she becomes very happy and congratulates the king and also agree to take Malavika as another wife of the king Agnimitra.

It can be said that Dharani and Iravati are two important characters of this drama. The grace and dignity of queen Dharani is appreciable. Passionate impetuosity is an important feature of Iravati's character, and for this nature sometimes she forgets about the rank and rights of the king.

V. PANDITAKAUSIKI

Madhavasena's minister Arya Sumati's sister is Panditakausiki. When her brother lost his life in the hands of dacoits, she feels very sad and becomes a 'sanyasi'. Actually they are coming to king Agnimitra to seek help from him. But it cannot happen because of the dacoits. Panditakausiki is very intelligent and she knows diplomacy. Only she knows that Madhavasena wants to give Malavika with Agnimitra. When she knows that Agnimitra is also interested to marry Malavika she becomes very happy and does everything to unite them. Because if they are united, Agnimitra will help Madhavasena to rescue.

She is a very good natured and modest lady. She is an artist also. So, in the first act the king makes her the judge of the dance competition. He tells her- "*bhagavati! atrabhavatorharadatta – ganadasyoh parasparam vijnanasamgharso jatah tadatra bhagavatyah prasnikapadamadhyssitavyam*".¹⁴ But from her answer we come to know about her modesty. She says- "*alamupalambhena, pattane vidyamane api grame ratnapariksa*".¹⁵

Not only the king but also queen Dharani respect her. She also has good relation with queen Dharani. Panditakausiki is a well-wisher of the family of Malavika. So when a fortune teller tells her that if Malavika stays in the palace like a 'dasi', for one year, she will be married to a very good person who fit for her. So, when she sees Malavika in the royal palace of king Agnimitra, she does not reveal the truth earlier. But during the time of marriage between king Agnimitra and Malavika, when the two 'paricarikas' recognize their princess Malavika she also reveals the truth before everyone. From such actions she proves her intelligence.

In prasadhanavidya also she is expertised. So queen Dharani requests her to do the prasadhana of Malavika. Though we cannot see Panditakausiki in every act yet it is exceptional but important in the drama.

VI. NIPUNIKA

In the drama from the first act to the fifth act Nipunika plays an important role for the queen. She is an attendant of the queen. Nipunika helps Iravati in every step. She is an ideal '*Sevika*'.

VII. BAKULAVALIKA

She is an attendant of the queens. But in the later acts we can see her as a friend of Malavika. Whenever Malavika faces any kind of problem she goes and tries to solve the problem. Malavika reveals her mental condition only before Bakulvalika. She exposes her heart only before Bakulvalika that she is in love with the king. After that in every step she tries her best to unite Agnimitra and Malavika. Malavika seeks her help even in performing '*Dohada*' of Asoka tree. When within five days flowers blossom she consoles Malavika that queen Dharini always keeps her words and she will also do the same in case of Malavika. That means, Dharini will accept Malavika as her co-wife.

She is a true friend of Malavika. Because of Malavika she accepts the confinement. When Vidusaka frees them from the Patalagruha she thanks him after that also works as a messenger of Malavika. King Agnimitra also sends messages to Malavika through her. This character is very charming and interesting in this drama.

From the above discussion it is clear that the female characters of Malavikagnimitra are very appealing and simple. The great poet Kalidasa sketched even a small character perfectly. Here one can notice the excellence of Kalidasa as a dramatist. He has enriched the Sanskrit literature and vaidarbhi style.

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- [3]. "dirghaksham saradinudukanti vadanam bahunatavamsayoh samkshiptam nibidonnatastanamurah parsve pramriste iva/Madhyah panimito nitambi jaghanam padavaranguli chhando nartayituryathaiva manasahslistam tathasya vapuh/" (Act-II, Verse No. 3)
- [4]. "yadyad prayogavisaye bhavikamupadisyate maya tasyai tattadvisesakaranat pratyupadistiva me bala" (Malavikagnimitra 1st act, verse No. 4)
- [5]. "mayapi yasasvina bhavitavyam" And "patravise nyastam gunantarambrajati silpamadhatuh. Jalamiva samudrasuktaumuktaphalatam payodasya" (Malavikagnimitra 1st act, verse No. 6)
- [6]. "atikaramantimiva iravatim pasyami" (Malavikagnimitra 1st act) Malavikagnimitra 3rd Act, Page 279
- [7]. "pathinayanayaoh sthitva svapne tirobhavati ksanat Tarati sahaya bahvromadhyam gatapi-sakhi tava.Manasijaruja klistayaiva samagamamayaya Kathamiva sakhe visrabdham syadimam pratimemanah" (Malavikagnimitra 4th act, verse No. 11) And "daksinyam nama vimbozhi vaimbikanamkulavratam. Tanmedirghaksiye pranaste tvadasanibandhanah" (Malavikagnimitra 4th act, verse No. 14) "hastam kamvati runaddhi rasanavyaparalolangulim Hastu svau nayati stanavarnatamalingyamanabalat. Patum paksmalaksacaksurunnamayatah sacikarotyannam Vyajenapyabhilasapuranasukhamnirvartyatyeva me." (Malavikagnimitra 4th act, verse No. 15)
- [8]. Malavikagnimitra, Act-I, p.266
- [9]. Malavikagnimitra, Act-IV, p.287
- [10]. "pratipaksenapi patina sevantebhartrvatsatah sadhyah. Anyasaritam satani hi samudragahoraoayantyabdhim". (Malavikagnimitra 5th act, verse No. 19)
- [11]. Malavikagnimitra, Act-III, p.282
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[14]. Malavikagnimitra, Act-I, p.265

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