

Status of Women in KALIDASA'S Writings

Amit Sana

Assistant Professor, Department of Sanskrit,

Bankura Zilla Saradamani Mahila Mahavidyapith, Natunchati, Bankura, Pin -

722101, West Bengal, India.

ABSTRACT: Widely regarded as the greatest writer of all time, Kalidasa occupies a position unique in world literature. His works, written centuries ago, are even today performed and read more often and even in more countries than before. The stories of his works are fascinating to all, generations after generations. They have been translated into almost all languages of the world. A self-effacing writer, like other Indian poets, has revealed little of himself in his works. Nothing is known, or certain, about the life and time of the great Kalidasa. Various anecdotes are though popular, truth of which cannot yet be determined. This is a topic for discussion for years and theories assigning him from first century B.C. to eleventh century A.D.

KEYWORDS: Women, KALIDASA'S, Writings, languages.

INTRODUCTION: A large number of works, reckoned either as outstanding or otherwise have been attributed to Kalidasa. But only two epics, three dramas, and two lyric poems are assigned to him by tradition. The two long epics written by him are the Raghuvamsa and the Kumarsambhava. The lyrical poems are the Meghaduta and the Ritusamhara. The Malavikagnimitra the Vikramorvasi and the Abhijnasakuntala are the three dramas, mentioned as the works of Kalidasa in the dramas itself. Literary critics also approved them as written by Kalidasa.

The Vedas, the Puranas and the Upanisads are the mirrors, as it were, that reflect the glorious past of Indian: its history, its civilization, its language and literature, philosophy and theology. The Vedic tradition¹⁰ has held a high regard for the qualities of a woman who is portrayed as the feminine embodiment of important qualities and powers. These forms include those of Lakshmi (the goddess of fortune and queen of Lord Vishnu), Saraswati (the goddess of learning), Durga

(the goddess of strength and power)¹¹ and the like. There are others, during this period, who were seen as the examples of historical importance. They are Sati, Sita, Anasuya, Arundhati, Draupadi, Queen Kunti¹², etc. However, all that glitters is not gold for in Manusmriti one reads, “The position of women in Hinduism is mixed and contradictory”. Tripta Desai further confirms, “Around 300 BC the status of women began to decline. Probably dating to the beginning of Christian era, the Manusmriti affords glimpses into the severe restriction of women’s activities and status. From AD 500 to AD 1800 more Smritis and Puranas were compiled which further degraded the existence of women. The Vedic society was patriarchal. Gender equality was not promoted; woman was only to be ruled over but not a ruler. Her world was unsympathetically limited. Woman was seen primarily as wife, mother and a sex object. A woman’s role, as an individual thinker or one capable of articulating her ideas, was unthinkable. In case she did express her thoughts and feelings, they were overlooked as though they amounted to nothing. These are some of the reasons the women refrained themselves as intellectual writers or those who in anyway contribute to a thought provoking idea in a male dominated ambience.

THE RAGHUVAMSA: As the name indicates, this epic poem in nineteen cantos, gives an account of the history of twenty nine kings of solar dynasty, from Dilipa to Agnivarna, which was accounted in the Raghuvamsa. Dilipa, Raghu, and Aja are dealt with in the first eight cantos. Aja's son DaSaratha, father of Rama and the death of Aja's wife Indumati come in eighth canto. The story of Rama, an incarnation of Visnu, from birth to the disappearance of rejected Sita under the bowels of earth, is described in cantos ten to fifteen, in resemblance with the Ramayanam of Valmiki. The next two cantos cover the story of Kuba's return to Ayodhya and coronation of his son Aditi. The eighteenth canto contains a rapid account of twenty one kings of the Raghu dynasty from Nisadha, son of Aditi to SudarSana, father of Agnivarna giving a short picture of each in two or three verses. With the nineteenth canto, which deals with the Agnivarna's voluptuous life and his end caused by it and crowning of a queen, who was expecting a child and ruled the kingdom with efficiency and justice, ends the poem.

THE KUMARASAMBHAVA: The other epic poem Kumarasambhava narrates the story of the marriage of Siva and Parvati, the daughter of Mount Himalayan, in twenty nine cantos. The first canto contains, the birth and childhood of Parvati and penance of Siva in the Mountain Himalayan after the death of his consort Sati. Gods terrorised and oppressed by the demon

Taraka, seeking Brahma their protection and Brahma's reply thereto are described in canto two. The third canto deals with Indra's request to Kamadeva to allure the heart of Siva towards Parvati and the burning of Kamadeva. The fourth canto is the description of the lamentation of Rati on the death of Kama. Fifth canto gives a description of the austere penance of Parvati and appearance and promise of Siva, pleased with the deep and sincere devotion of Parvati. In canto six the message of Siva seeking the consent of her father, through seven sages is detailed. Canto seven is devoted to the elaborated description of the marriage ceremony and the eighth to their happy wedded life. The poem written by Kalidasa, as believed by some scholars, ends here and the last ten cantos, which are not at par with the earlier part and are not found in some old manuscripts, are believed to be written by a later poet. In the ninth canto, which comes under the second part, Agni reminds Siva about the purpose of their marriage. Canto ten describes the birth of Kumara through Agni. In the next, the nourishment of Kumara by the Kartikas and ultimately his adoption by Parvati is given. The twelfth canto deals with the preparation of Kumara for war and Siva's wishes for success. Cantos thirteen to seventeen describe Amaravati, war between gods and the demon and the death of Taraka. It can be seen that the addition of cantos are intending to picture Parvati as incapable of giving birth to the child of Siva and thus to degrade her. Kalidasa himself has stated that their union was intended only for the birth of a son, which was implied by their union in the earlier part.

THE MEGHADUTA: Meghaduta, introduced by Kalidasa as a lyric or a romantic poem is a short poem (khandakavya), in which there is a melodious description of the longing of a Yaksha in his separation from his beloved and more than that a glowing description of nature. Emotion dominates in the work. It is divided into two parts. The first part describes the route from Ramagiri to Alaka and the second part to the residence of Yaksha, who sees everything and his short but lifesaving message to his beloved through cloud, the sustainers of nature.

THE RITUSAMHARA: It is a short poem in six chapters in the form of a conversation, describing the six seasons and their effect on nature and human beings. It is presented through the words of a passionate lover and so erotic in character. Though the description of nature is a common character in Sanskrit works, Ritusamhara, which is exclusively devoted to the description of six seasons, is the first of this type.

THE ABHIJNANASAKUNTALA: Sakuntala, a fine play in seven acts is the most famous among the works of Kalidasa and the best among the poetic works. This is based on the love story of king Dusyanta and Sakuntala, parents of Bharata, the famous and founder father of Bharata dynasty. The first meeting of the king with sakuntala in the hermitage of Kanva, who was on a pilgrimage to avoid the misfortune in the life of sakuntala, is dealt with in the first act. In the second act the king pretending to protect the hermitage, though demanded by his mother, and sends vidusaka to the capital. In the third, sakuntala conveys her love through a letter and got married under gandharva system. Dusyanta returned to the capital promising to take her within three days. Durvasa cursed sakuntala for not receiving him, as she immersed in the thought of Dusyanta. Her female maids managed the situation and secured concession. Act IV describes the departure of sakuntala to capital accompanied by ascetics and loss of token ring. Act V details Dusyanta's refusal, her rescue by mother Menaka etc. Act VI is the story of childless fisherman, who brought the ring by which Dusyanta could remember sakuntala and got regretted. In act VII, Dusyanta accompanied Matali to fight against a demon on Indra's demand. Visit of Dusyanta to the hermitage of sage Marica, on his return journey is detailed in the last chapter. There he meets his son Sarvadamana and sakuntala and got united with the blessing of Marica and Aditi.

THE MALAVIKAGNIMITRA: Malavika, a play in five acts based on the love story of Agnimitra and Malavika, existed in the Brihatkatha of Gunadhya made fascinating with his imagination. This was described as an attempt to perform a new play to be presented on the occasion of a spring festival. Agnimitra, son of Pusyamitra of second century B.C. is a historical character. In Vidisa, where Agnimitra was camping, there was a dispute between two cousins. Agnimitra promised to help Madhavasena, one of them, with whose sister Malavika, the marriage of Agnimitra was arranged. Madhavasena with Malavika, on their visit to Agnimitra was taken to prison by the rival. When Malavika escaped and reached the boarder, guarded by Dharini's brother, she was sent to Dharini. Sumati's sister who joined the order of Buddhist nuns accompanied and stayed there as a learned lady advising the king and keeping with the company of the queen. They lived there without revealing her identity with their plan to join with the king. Based on this political story, Kalidasa wrote the play with Ernas'yngara as the main sentiment. Agnimitra received a letter from the king of Vidarbha that he would release imprisoned Madhavasena with his wife only if Agnimitra released his brother-in law, the Maurya minister. Dharini guarded Malavika from the sight of the king, but the king fell in love on the sight of her

portrait. Gautama devised a plan for the meeting of Malavika and the king in the guise of a dance programme. The king, queen and parivrajika witnessed the dance performance of Malavika, where she expressed her passion for the king through a song. Then Dharini commissioned Malavika for performing dohada, since she was unable as fallen from the swing. While preparing for dohada, Irvati and her maid Nipunika happened to listen the conversation between Malavika and Bakulavaliks. Irvati dismissed the girl and speaks rudely to the king. Vidusaka, obtained the signet ring, which was required for magical curing of the pretended snakebite and released Malavika. Subsequently, the king and Malavika managed to meet. Later a messenger from Vidisa who arrived there announcing the disappearance of Malavika identified her. By this time the queen herself decided to permit their marriage, pleased by the victory of her son over Yavanas. Agnimitra condemned the action of Madhavasena's rival and decided to divide the Vidarbha country and give to Madhavasena and his cousin to rule. Agnimitra with the concurrence of Irvati, though somewhat ungraciously, married Malavika. Thus it has a happy end.

MAJOR FEMALE CHARACTERS: Based on certain similarities, the characters are divided into groups such as heroines or beloveds, queens, princess, maids, working class or labourers, goddesses, semi divine and personified characters This is done based on textual evidences. Only human characters or characters presented in human form are included here. In this section, a sketch of the major female characters of Kalidasa is given.

HEROINES (OR BELOVEDS)

Parvati: Parvati is the heroin in Kumarsambhava. She is the only female character seen pervaded from the very beginning to the end of the text. In the works of Kalidasa, no female character other than Parvati catches so much attention. In Kumarsambhava, she is presented as a divine incarnation of Sati, the former wife of Siva.' Three stages in the life of a woman, according to the tradition, are her life as a daughter, as a wife, and as a mother. In Kumarsambhava, Kalidasa depicts Parvati as a lucky character in these three roles. She was born as the daughter of Mount Himalaya, the sovereign of mountains². Her birth is considered as auspicious.³ She purified her Her parents had a special concern towards her than her elder brother. She lived happily in her home. Kalidasa describes Parvati's happy childhood in three verse. She became favourite to all by her pleasant behavior. Gradually she attained her youth.

She is described as the most beautiful in the world.' Sage ~arada' and Arundhati blessed her to become the only wife of Siva. She engaged in the service of Siva who was doing penance, with the permission of her father.⁴ Loosing proud of her beauty⁵ as she could not win the mind of Siva by it, she decided to achieve the purpose of her beauty through penance with the permission of her parent. Kalidasa justifies her desire, which was praised in the Veda. Siva was also performing penance up to their marriage⁸ '...kenapi kamena tapascakara'. Thus they were pictured as equals. She is the only suitable to Siva and it will be futile if they were not joined together. Kalidasa did not recognize Galiga as the wife of Siva but only as a river." Siva is pictured as a strict monogamist. Parvati is the only person, who can give birth to a son from Siva and rescue gods from the attack of Tarakasura." She occupied the highest rank among the chaste women and enjoyed a happy conjugal life. She is the inherent creative power of Siva according to tradition." She is a divine and affectionate mother endowed with all qualities of a mother. She was affectionate even towards trees, birds and animals.¹³ She is eulogized as a viramata, mother of the hero, being the mother of Kumara, the rescuer of gods and virtues. Kalidasa pictured them in an ideal human way with harmony in wedded life supplementing and complementing to each other.

Sakuntala: Sakuntala, the heroine of Kalidasa's famous play Sakuntala is a character driven by fate, in contrast to Parvati. Her life is a failure from the very birth. She could not enjoy the eligible privileges in her life. She was born as the daughter of the celestial nymph Menaka ' and resplendent sage Visvamitra a warrior turned sage. This birth is a combination of spiritual and celestial powers and provides intellectual, social, financial facilities and high reputation. But unfortunately, abandoned by parents she was protected by birds, then rescued and brought up by Sage Kanva. Though she was brought up in a house of ascetics, she obtained the affection of a mother from Gautami² and of brothers and sisters from the inhabitants of the hermitage of Kanva. She lost all celestial glory and enjoyment, which she might have had, if she lived with her parents. Then in youth, she got married and deceived by the Paurava king Dusyanta. The king, who reached the forest on the way for hunting happened to visit the hermitage. He met Sakuntala there and fell in love with her. Defeated by infatuated love, he married her under gandharva form of marriage, convincing her that it was not against the rule, without even waiting for the return of sage Kanva, who was away for performing remedies for the misfortunes in the marriage life of Sakuntala.' Then he returned to the palace promising to take her within three

days. When he reached home, he forgot this in the midst of delights enjoyed in the palace life. sakuntala, who forgot herself in the thought of the king, did not notice the presence of furious sage Durvasa in the hermitage, who cursed her for not receiving him properly that the beloved could not remember her. This carelessness and hurriedness is explained as a negation of dharma.² So Kanva sent her to King's court. The King could not identify her. He rejected the arguments of the disciples of Kanva as well as sakuntala. Motherly Gautami accuses both sakuntala and Dusyanta for getting married without the consent of elder explained the reason for taking her to the palace. She, even though chaste, if lives with her kinsmen when husband is alive, people would suspect her. But the king as well as ascetics⁴ abandoned her the priest suggested the king that he would keep her in his residence. If she delivers a son the king can take him as his successor and admit her in his harem with felicitations⁶ otherwise send her back to her father. sakuntala, who was thus deceived and neglected, resorted to death as the only remedy. Then her mother Menaka appeared in the form of lightening and took her to the mōricairama for protection. Thus, the second and most celebrated stage of wifehood became not only a failure but also a dreadful one. The suggestion of priest proves that sakuntala can either be accepted or rejected according to the need of the man, which indicates that the concept of chastity is relative and is a creation of masculine mind.

In the third stage of motherhood also she could not lead a peaceful life. Due to her misfortune, her son Sarvadamana also lost his glorious childhood life of palace. At last on the recovery of token-ring he remembered her and repented on his fault of lapse in dharma. He also had to pay much for this. He thought that the affliction caused by him to sakuntala by deceiving her was the cause of his sorrow. Finally, sakuntala could meet her husband, who was changed for want of progeny to continue his lineage; otherwise the kingdom would become heirless. However the poet made the play having a happy ending after all the sufferings. She lost all the traditional protection.' She was a child without parents, a queen without guards and a wife without husband. But it is significant to note that she possessed the virtues of a traditional wife not cursing or even accusing her insulted husband, but cursed herself repenting on the doings in previous birth.

Malavika: In Malavika, is the daughter of Vidarbha king and sister of Madhavasena. She is the beloved heroine of the play and pervaded throughout the text. Though she was a daughter of a king, she had to live as a maid of Dharini in Agnimitra's court. She was described almost as a

child. She did not try to conceal her feelings of love towards Agnimitra before her friends. Parivrajika, who accompanied her to the court, functioned as an intermediary. Dharini, understanding her talent in dance, appointed a dance master for specialization. The queen aware of the fickleness of her husband tried to hide her from his sight. But, Agnimitra who saw her picture incidentally, fell in love and tried to gain her with the help of clever vidusaka. In the pretext of testing the efficiency of the dance masters, he arranged a dance performance of Malavika, though protested by the queen, in which she expressed her love towards the king through a song cleverly. Overcoming many obstacles he succeeded in his venture. Like Agnimitra, she also became passionate and anxious to gain her lover. She lives a life of a brave lover and tries to meet the king on her accord. She was cautious of the arrival of Iravati, the younger and once beloved wife of Agnimitra. As a result of their effort she won him as a present by queen Dharini, overjoyed by the victory of her son Vasumitra and also with ungracious concurrence of Taravati. In this work, Malavika is not pictured as a wife who leads a life of sufferings and silence. But he depicted the heroine as a submissive character of Indian tradition. He did this, based on traditional values but with progressive and positive outlook as well and with the vision of society in which he lived or flourished. This work contains a value oriented programming of social consciousness pointing to female oppression. Though the drama was intended for enlightenment (kridaniyaka) he employed quality and discrimination in depicting his characters. Malavika acted according to the rules in KaS.' She being the youngest one secretly served the king well, and received special honour from him. Kalidasa adopted the policy that heroes should join or encourage CO-wives to act jointly and not to encourage them to quarrel or create enmity.

Urvasi: Urvasi a heavenly apsaras and the beloved of king Pururavas, is the heroine in the play Vikramorvasiya, who appears from the beginning to the end of the text. She is a woman of ardent love. She is an apsaras, sprung from the thigh of the sage Narayana as a youthful maiden.' So there is no relevance of her childhood. Being an apsaras she enjoyed more freedom to move in society and possessed some super human powers like thiraskarini, than the terrestrial woman. She could also move through air. She, with no match in beauty, was described as an ornament of ornaments, a peculiar decoration of decorations and a standard of comparison to accepted standard. The play begins with the story of capturing Urvasi by demon Kesi and her rescue by Puraravas. They fell in love with each other. She is a good actress of heaven and belonged to a

race of actors. She uttered the word 'Pururavas' wrongly instead of 'Purusottama' in a drama directed by Sage Bharatha, who cursed her to become a human being. By this curse, which was a boon to her, she could remain as the wife of Pururavas. She felt more freedom on earth than the forced servant-ship of Indra. So she wanted to remain on earth. She was the personification of love. According to Indian tradition the conjugal life would be fruitful only on begetting a child especially a son. Urvashi wanted to live in company with Pururavas at any cost, so she hid her son from the sight of Pururavas for fear of separation. She was pictured as self-radiant and more assertive not controlling all kinds of deviant behavior like jealousy and with complete failure of femininity. She was jealous towards Ausinari and departs disappointed due to her all consuming passion. Unlike other heroines in Sanskrit plays, she had the freedom to depart from the company of Pururavas, if she liked. She agreed to marry Pururavas only if certain conditions were satisfied. When there is any breach of contract, she could desert her husband lover. This character is an example for participation of Indian girls acting and dancing in theatre as professionals. Generally the role of a heroine ends with the birth of a son. Urvashi put her son hidden and on his sight she lost her happiness because there ends the story. But Kalidasa extended their relation by a special order from great ruler Indra through sage Narada aiming at further helps from the valorous king.

Yaksapatni: Yaksapatni, the heroine of Meghaduta, is a beautiful young girl recently wedded and having no experience. She is the wife of Yaksha, who is in exile for one year on account of a curse of his master. So to them every movement and everything is embraced with love, which caused the feelings and emotion during separation unbearable. The poem itself is an exploitation of emotions of Yaksha on the sight of the cloud, which is articulated through his own words. The heroine Yaksapatni was not presented in the poem in person, but remains all pervasive. Kalidasa has drawn a full sketch of Yaksapatni through a word picture in a touching manner. She is the symbol of love. Yaksapatni belonged to the group of Yaksha, a semi divine being. (vidyadhara/psara yak~ah rak~ogandharvakinnarah/ pis'aco guhyakah siddho bhiitemi devayonayah.) MB mentions in Sabha parva of millions of Yaksha engaged in the service of Kubera.' Yaksinis are depicted as goddesses, worshiping whom one releases from the sin of brahmahatya. In SP-rudrasamhita, yak~es'vara is said as an incarnation of Siva to subdue the pride of gods on acquiring of ambrosia. According to popular tradition, Yaksi or Yaksini is the romantic spirit dwelling on trees in forests and having uncommon beauty and seductive in

character. The Yaksapatni in Meghaduta is also described as made up by a combination of the best available things in the world and having no comparison. As a virahini, she is depicted as in a state of undergoing vrata, avoiding entertainments and personal and familial decoration and thinking and praying for the welfare of her husband. She was engaged in counting the days remaining of separation putting flowers on the dehali. She was pictured as not living but only existing or sustaining.' The Yaksha, on separation from his lover could find enjoyment in all the things in nature like rivers. In all these, he tried to describe the physical form of the beautiful maid, seeing different aspects of beauty arousing lama according to Kamasashtra, which describes the ways for arousing erotism. But Yaksapatni had to remain sorrowfully avoiding all decorations and enjoyment in her house.

Sita: Sita, in India is the epitome of ideal wife and is considered as the model and all Indian women are advised to be like her. Though she is not the beloved wife of Rama, it seems that she is the most respected and beloved character to Kalidasa. This reverence, he had, can be seen in the expression 'janakatanaydsnanapunyodakeSu' in the description of Ramagiri in Meghaduta.² It seems that Kalidasa is more satisfied with the use of words Janaki, Janakaputri etc. and not Ramapatni or Ramajaya for Sita. He even used 'Janakijani' for Rama. Like all other women characters, no mention was made of Sita's childhood. She appears in the poem only at the time of marriage with Rama. She is described as ayonijrf;' the wife of the leader of Raghu dynasty⁴ and the symbol of wifhood. Her marriage with Rama is the beginning of her sufferings. ParaSurama attacked them on their journey to Ayodhya.' Then, when Kaikeyi interfered and obstructed the placing of royal fortune upon Rama and forced exile, she had to abandon her queen-ship and even her home for the sake of her father in law. She had to lead her life in forest in the prime youth as an ascetic without any hesitation. There the princes had to undergo many sufferings. In the RA⁴ she reminds Rama of her future, leaving her alone with rival king. In Raghuvamsa, Kalidasa states that Kaikeyi persuaded her not to accompany Rama.² In doing so her intention might be to leave cute Sita alone in the palace under Bharatha. Ravana's sister stirpanakha³ approached Rama, seeking love while he was sitting with Sita and Laksmana at paficavau. He rejected her, telling that he was married. His comment, with contempt of woman folk as a whole reveals his character. On the untimely approach of ~tir~anakh¹ to a person in company with his wife seeking love, he directed her to approach Laksmana not having wife with him. This indicates his sense of morality. As a typical wife, Sita with deep single-minded love followed

him silently in his misfortunes avoiding her worldly desires. When they ridiculed ~tir~anakh~, child like Sita laughed at her.⁵ On this, enraged surpanakha warned her of its consequences in future. Then Laksmana caused deformity to her limbs with his sword. Though, she was ridiculed by them Sita was made the victim of their action. The laughter of Sita was a fault attributed to her. Apart from this, the fault imposed upon her is that she persuaded Rama and Laksmana to catch the golden deer, which attracted her.' Here also, if Rama could know that the deer was an illusionary one, it was better to retreat or turned back her from her wrong desire as a good husband. After killing Ravana, Rama retained Sita and accepted her on purifying by fire.' The killing of Ravana was justified by Rama as to avenge the wrong deeds of Ravana and not to rescue her.³ The innocent Sita was denounced, not for her sins or faults but for the fame of Rama.⁴ That is why he solemnly decided and disclosed it before his brothers and threatened to die if they oppose⁵ though he knew that the birth of a child is very near.⁶ Kalidasa also added that none of his brothers dared to speak or even respond to the cruel and stern decision. After her return from the forest, when Sita bowed her mother-in law, apologizing for the miseries caused to her husband⁸ they greeted her using untrue words of consolation to please her. It is also stated that though she did not deserve it, they did so because she needed kind treatment at that time. With eternal ornaments and cosmetics given by Anasiya she appeared before the people as if she was standing in the fire shown by her husband to prove her purity before his people, which indicated a further fire ordeal at the instance of those people.

Rama appointed his obedient brother Laksmana to implement his order in guise of satisfying her desire during pregnancy.' Laksmana obeyed the unquestionable order like Parasurama 'and left her near the hermitage of When Laksmana conveyed the order of exile by the king, Sita fell unconscious on her mother's (earth) lap.⁴ Kalidasa ridiculed Rama's vanity through the reaction of mother earth, who did not accept her as she could not believe that the lord of Sita, a descendent of Ikshvaku race and of noble conduct could abandon her. She thought that unconscious state is better and is compared to a lioness when she regained consciousness. The noble Sita, as other traditional woman, also did not utter any word blaming her discarded husband but blamed herself and her wrong action[^]. She compared Rama to Indra, the notorious wanton king of gods and Laksmana, the helpless younger brother obedient to the eldest one in a joined family, to Visnu a dependent on Indra. She also wanted him to convey her hesitation and aversion towards the timid king Rama.⁶ She reminded her mothers in law through Laksmana of

the existence of a child of Rama growing in her womb and to pray for the welfare of the child.⁷ She censured herself, on becoming a refugee, who in her exile days herself had given refuge to many female ascetic. She sustained her life on behalf of the child of Rama, the king who acted against the varnd ramadharmā' violating MS and she decided to join asceticism after the birth of the child so as to get common protection as other ascetics were getting.' She addressed Laksmana, as a child -vatsa-, a dependent baby, or a slave of Rama. Sage Valmiki, abusing⁴ Rama and praising Sita received her with great affection, advised the ways to dispel sins and acquire mental peace, assured full protection for herself and her child, and entrusted her to female ascetics.

Indumati: The episode of Indumati and Aja in Raghuvamsa is important in this study, as it is the only story of a widower. Indumati was the princess of Vidarbha, which is also known as Bhoja and Krthakaisika.' Indumati was an apsaras reborn due to a curse of sage Tmabindu, who was practicing severe penance. Afraid of this, Indra sent Harini, an apsaras, to withdraw the sage. She engaged in lovely sports and disturbed penance. Then, he cursed her to be born as a female in earth. She requested to forgive her fault, as she, only a dependant on Indra, was acting on his command. The sage felt pity on her and stated that the curse would end on the touch of the celestial flower. Thus, she was born as the princess of Bhoja country. Her story begins with the sending of a messenger by her brother to Raghu on her getting youth, to invite Aja for her svayamvara.' Indumati chose Aja, whom Sunanda introduced as the suitable and equal to her with regard to family, beauty, age and compared their union to a jewel melted with gold and also to Rati and Kama. Indumati was qualified as 'patimvara' ie who chose her husband herself. On the way to capital of Aja, after marriage desperate rival kings attacked them. He conquered them after a long and severe attack, by sammohansastra. The couples begot a son Dasaratha, father of Rama and they could release from the four debts.³ Generally, the description of conjugal life ends with the birth of a son. But in this it is not so. After releasing from all ynas they went to the garden and engaged in sports. There a garland from the vina of Narada fell on Indumati. All on a sudden she fell down dead. Seeing this, he fell unconscious.' He regained consciousness by the nursing of attendants. Aja lamented putting her on his lap, which is contrary to that of Rama. He cursed himself and the wrong deeds like Sita or any female character.' Kalidasa pictured Aja as a sincere husband. All others except Aja are interested in the physical beauty of consort bharya or ~atni. He hopes for her survival⁴. The words used by him such as 'aham ekarasah abhinnaragah'

and 'samaduhkhah sakhijanahr⁵ reveal his attitude towards her. Aja performed her funeral rites as advised by the family priest, who consoled him⁶ describing this as an inevitable separation⁷ and advised not to repent on it. ' He did not consign his body to flames with queen not because he cared for his life but because he apprehended the scandal that the king, knowing as he was died after his queen from grief'.⁸ But the repentant king ruled the country till his son got matured. After that he led a life of a widower thinking of Indumati herself abandoning all pleasures and died due to some contagious diseases. This episode pictured a widower, corresponding to the widow in alarniZraiastra, avoiding decoration and all pleasures thinking of the consort. Thus, Indumati is the beloved of Aja and Kalidasa loved this episode. Critics having vested interest neglected this and ridiculed Aja. Though an apsaras, it is seen that she was not free from the flatters bounded by the social rules. She herself could not congratulate Aja on his victory over the rival kings, on their journey to capital; instead, she fulfilled that desire through her personal friends'.

CONCLUSION: Kalidasa stands unquestioned in classical literature, occupying the first finger while counting the poets. He is a multi-sided genius, who excels not only in individual works, but also in his whole achievement. Bhasa is famous as a dramatist, later Bana as a writer of prose romance, but Kalidasa remained unparalleled at the head of all Sanskrit poets, unsurpassed by those who preceded and followed him. He is a dramatist, creator of a literary genre, the lyric, as well as an epic poet drawing attention to exquisite craftsmanship of his works widely commented upon, appreciated and lavishly praised.

REFERENCES:

- [1] Desai, Tripta. Women in India, New Delhi: MunshiramManoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd. 1997.
- [2] Ganguly, Santanu. "Sarojini Naidu (1879-1949)", in Studies in Indian Poetry in English, Kolkata: Books Way, 2009.
- [3] Hardgrave, Robert L. Word as Mantra: the Art of Raja Rao. Austin: University of Texas, 1998.
- [4] Jeyaseelan, Thomas. Women Rights and Law. New Delhi: Indian Social Institute, 2002.

- [5] Jha, Nishikant. "Woman Empowerment", in New Dimensions of Women Empowerment. New Delhi: Deep & Deep Publications Pvt. Ltd., 2008.
- [6] Kapur, Promilla. Empowering the Indian Woman, New Delhi: Publications Division, 2001.
- [7] Kerobin, Raymond. Sant Daria Sahab, New Delhi: Gautam Prints, 2013.
- [8] Krishnaswamy, Shantha. The Woman in Indian Fiction in English. New Delhi: Ashish Publishing House, 2001.
- [9] Lalita, Susie Tharu and K., ed. Women Writing in India. Vol. I. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1991.
- [10] Rathod, Jasvant. "The Indian Literature in English: a journey from Nationalism to search of nation." Researchgate. Vol. 1. Multi-Disciplinary Edu Global Quest, October 2012.
- [11] Rathod, P. B. Indian Political Thinkers, New Delhi: Commonwealth, 2006.
- [12] Sarkar, Monisha and Sarkar, Subh Brat. "Sri Aurobindo (1872-1950)", in Studies in Indian Poetry in English, Kolkata: Books Way, 2009, p. 45.
- [13] Shastri, Ram Dev. Glimpses of World Religions, New Delhi: Mohit Publications, 2009.
- [14] Sinha, Ajit Kumar. New Dimensions of Women Empowerment. New Delhi: Deep & Deep Publications Pvt. Ltd., 2008.
- [15] Shrivastava, Amar Nath. The Champion of Indian Fiction, New Delhi: Mohit Publication, 2011.
- [16] Amaru Shakta- Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, (<https://en.m.wikipedia.org>), (as referred on 22.04.2016).
- [17] Dravidian peoples- Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, (<https://en.m.wikipedia.org>), (as referred on 21.04.2016)