

The Concept of Duty in Kalidasa's Works

Dr. N. Venkatesha Rao

Associate Professor, Department of Sanskrit,
Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning, Bangalore, Karnataka, India

ABSTRACT

Life is a combination of joys and sorrows. To lead a good life, people refer into great person's lives and their great works. By being physically nearer to great persons, one may be inspired. But he cannot observe all their aspects and follow them fully. If one looks into masterpieces of literature, he can learn many lessons. Mahakavyas and dramas are surely master pieces of literature. Particularly the works of Kalidasa are leading lights of knowledge for humanity. In our life Duties and rights go hand in hand, but great poets have focused on the duties to be performed. It is beneficial to individuals and also to society. Beginning from a peasant upto the king, duty is compulsory. Even lord, the creator is bound by duties. Heroes of Kalidasa's works are kings or noble persons. All were honored for their duties and they were criticized for neglect of their duties. This view is the central theme of Kalidasa's works. The duty concept seen in Kalidasa's works at the outset is the central point of our study.

KEYWORDS: Sense of duty in Indian scriptures, Raghuvamsha, kumarasambhava, Meghaduta, ikramorvasheeya, Abhjananashakunatala, Malavikagnimitra etc

INTRODUCTION

In this world many social organizations are active about creating awareness on the rights of the people. Along with rights, duties are also important. Stressing on duties of others may lead to unpopularity. But it will lead to prosperity of the society. So great authors have made this as a central theme of their works. Kalidasa has been universally acknowledged as the highest star in the firmament of Indian poetry. Tenderness in the expression of feeling and richness of creative fancy has assigned to him a lofty place among the poets of all nations. In the oriental method of counting Kanishitika, the little finger comes first, then anamika the ring finger and so on. In the assembly of the learned men everyone counted Kalidasa as first using the little finger. No name was coming further for the next finger. Therefore its name anamika became literally true. Because there was no name to assign to the ring finger. The idea is no one was equal to Kalidasa. For those who study his work in depth, this feeling becomes their experience. We are concentrating on the concept of duty as seen in his works at the outset.

Concept of duty described in ancient literature Vedas, Epics, puranas, Smritis. Dharmashastras and even all literary pieces, speak of one's duties to be performed everyday. Duties may be towards individual, or towards one's family, or society or nation or towards universe or even towards God. But duty is compulsory to all. The initial shloka of Ishavasyopanishad Dictates us to do our duty. Upanishad upholds the duty as to be performed at all times. Till the last breath of one's life duty is compulsory. Whoever wants to live for hundred years he should desire to live so by

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doing duty. Thus it implies that "one has no right to live at all without performing duty.

कुर्वन्नेवेह कर्माणि जिजीइत् चेत् शतं समारं

These are the words of svayambhuva manu who ruled the earth for a long period. He is supposed to be the first person in human being in human race. The above mantra further says that there is no other way. While doing duty if one is not selfish, then he is noble. Otherwise he will be liable for faults in his actions. Thus for mankind, duty is inevitable. Even seers pronounced the same. In Vedic mantras we see that preference is not for luck, But for continual effort. Rigveda says "Devas bless only those who put their efforts and not on those who simply dream. According to Sanskrit rules second case used here (सुन्वन्तम्) gives a special meaning. Effort should be continual and sincere.

इच्छन्ति देवाः सुन्वन्तम् न स्वप्नाय स्पृहयन्ति।(R.V.8-2-18)

Even in Atharvaveda the message is same. It says effort and victory are not distant happenings, and one need not wait for it for the other for a long period. It says "Effort is in my right hand and victory is in my left hand". By telling so, it symbolises that effort should be on the right direction.

कृतं मे दक्षिणे हस्ते जयो मे सव्य आहितः।(A.V.7-50-08)

Even for fame one should work hard. Earning fame is to influence the society for a noble cause. Purusha sookta tells this theme in a good way. "I am born in this nation. I should earn fame and prosperity"

"प्रादुर्भूतोस्मि राष्ट्रंस्मिन् कीर्तिं वृद्धिं ददातु मे"- (R.V.)

With fame one can earn followers, with money one can help needy. Thus progress of the nation is achieved.

After having done the duty, men prefer rest. Some prefer more rest. They say it is their right. Some argue the duty assigned to them is physically or mentally tiresome one and it needs rest. But Vedas set aside both arguments and declare one need not take rest or say it is tiresome. It says that “Devas bless only those would not take rest or say it is tiresome”.

“न ते श्रान्ताय सख्याय देवाः” (R>v,10-117-4)

Because if a person takes rest others may also follow that path. Slowly that becomes the trend of the society. Then it is unproductive act for society. That is why it is said “Devas will not be friendly to those who take rest”.

Actually one takes rest after victory. He even celebrates it with friends. But that leisure time may be -- opportunity for his enemy to take revenge. So devas will not be friendly with resting persons.

Taittiriyaopaniṣad tells: Even teacher and student both should be attentive. Introspecting about one's own performance is compulsory to both.

“स्वाध्यायप्रवचनाभ्यां न प्रमदितव्यम्, तद्धि तपः तद्धि तपः” (tai up-1-23)

It concludes that by saying twice as tapas. Just as tapas pleases devas, United effort of teachers and students pleases the devas and universe.

It says spreading right knowledge is not optional. It is obligatory on the part of the student. Having got education he cannot be selfish or calm. Thus it says “this is the order to spread knowledge. This is advice to do their duty. Ultimately it says this is the essence of all Vedas and Upanishads.

-एष आदेशः, एष उपदेशः, एषा वेदोपनिषत्, एतदनुशासनम्, एवमुपासितव्यम्।--(tai up-1-23)---

Duty is compulsory to all. It is not for only for human beings. Even God also does His duty. If he skips from duties others may become lazy. God says that others may follow that model. They may not do their duty and order of the world may collapse. In Bhagavadgita Krishna says “Oh, Arjuna I have no compulsion on my duty. Even in the three words I am not bound by it, yet. There is nothing more to be got for me, or some thing I have not got. Yet, I do it as my duty. Otherwise People follow wrong path of not doing duty.

न मे पर्यास्ति कर्तव्यं त्रिषु लोकेषु किंचन।

नानवाप्तमवाप्तव्यं वर्त एव च कर्मणि॥

उत्सीदेयुरिमे लोकाः न कुर्यां कर्म चेदहम्।

मम मम वर्तमानुवर्तन्ते मनुष्याः पर्थ सर्वशः॥

So this message embedded in Indian scriptures has been concentrated by Kalidasa.

Now we shall concentrate on the works of Kalidasa. Kalidasa is an ambassador of our Indian culture and moral values. He is a luminous star in the galaxy of Sanskrit literature. Commentator Mallinatha has beautifully depicted the greatness of Kalidasa's works. He says kalidasa's works can be understood fully by Kalidasa himself. Next to him is the four faced brahma who can understand in some angles. As He is the Creator he can attempt to some extent in

bringing out the beauty of Kalidasa's works. After this, Sarasvati, the Goddess of learning can understand as she represents all branches of knowledge. Mallinatha says that they are capable to some extent, but he concludes his incapability as a common man and asks how he can understand fully? Mallinatha is the commentator of panchamahakavyas. Even then he exhibited his humility and the heights of Kalidasa's works. we can only say that we are concentrating on outlines of kalidasa's works. His works are Abhijnanashakuntalam, Malavikagnimitra, Raghuvamsha, Kumaraasambhavam, Ritusamhara and Meghadutam. Though kavyas are for entertainment, a maha kavya has a message for society. Values embedded in them should always show a path for the mankind. The definition KalpAntasthAyi-----says “Kavyas should live for ever” It can be so only by concentrating in eternal values..

Malavikagnimitra

Abhijnanashakuntalam

1. Do your duty with pleasure and with excellence.

It is said work is worship and duty is God. In such a case the duty can be performed with pleasure.

It is good to the individual and society. Kalidasa highlights this aspect. In Abhijnana Shakula, Shakuntala's friends casually remark on the tenderness of Shakuntala and she being ordered to water the plants by her father. They felt it is difficult and tiresome work. While Shakuntala hears this, she did not keep quiet. She says she loves that duty. she said further that she had brotherly affection in these plants. kalidasa enforces this aspect in duty.

Excellence has two parts. Doing duty sincerely is one part. Bringing more satisfaction to others and also to himself is another part. For this specialization and foresight is essential. A teacher teaching what he knows is sincere. But causing interest to students on the topic is obligatory on his part. For this he must master all techniques which are needed. Kalidasa says this in this drama “that teacher should be made to stand in front line of all.

-----dhuri pratishtapayitavya eva

2. While receiving honors for victory, accommodate all with care.

Normally while we are victorious others are in a mood to honor us. Then we gradually slip into self flattery and forget our duties of accommodating all. Then others may not be with us in next projects and our growth may diminish. The theme of Raghuvamsha has this message.

Birth of Raghu

The work “Raghuvamsha” is named after the king Raghu. Even lord Sri Rama is respected as a crest jewel of Raghu's clan. Having come in his clan he has practiced the heroic qualities of predecessors. That is why he has become famous. He was titled as “Maryada purushottama” an “An ideal man of moral values of all times” One incidence mentioned by Kalidasa on king Dilipa is note worthy.

Dilip was childless. For this reason he was much disturbed. As a king he needed some representative on whom he can influence directly and who can rule nation on his ideals. Thus he approached his preceptor “kulaguru Vashishtha”. Guru

replied that due to his mistakes in practicing the duty he was childless.

When questioned further guru said “while you visited heaven all complimented you.

Then Kamadhenu, the mother of cows was also eager to compliment you, You received compliments from devas and others. In a hurry you rushed to earth by ignoring the kamadhenu who was in a mood to convey her best wishes. Thus it amounted to displease the cow. That is why you are childless. This reminds that one may be a king, yet he should accommodate all the people, even animals and birds.
शं नो अस्तु द्विपदे, शं चतुष्पदे”-----

Let the two legged beings and four legged beings (animals) be happy.

Then Dilipa understood his mistake and served the cow’s daughter for 21 days and pleased her. He got the son who was named as Raghun later.

Thus king should care for all living beings .It is the prime duty of king. This is the main theme of Raghuvamsha. Service mindedness to please all must be way of life.

After dilipa’s long time service, as a honor , cow Nandini offered to Dilipa” to get the milk from her” .But king said” he has to take permission of Vasishtha and permission of her calf. He meant calf also has a right on mother’s milk and king can not transgress this rule. Even king is bound by this rule. It is needless to say that Rama went to forest as it was his duty to obey parents and that duty sense forced him to send his wife to forest. For a king pleasing subjects is the prime duty.

3. Know basic principles for which your designation stands.

A. In this competitive world, we observe others closely and make free comments. But while claiming our positions, we forget for basic principles of the job for which we stand exclusively. For example, a teacher who has to care for student’s questions, a king who has to protect the needy, a merchant who must care for consumer etc. Dilpa as a king he was aware of his duties and obligations. A duty bound king is father of all subjects.
“स पिता पितरस्तासां केवलं जन्म हेतवः”-----

Kalidasa says this in a beautiful way. He speaks of the welfare state of Dilipa. Dilipa was the real father for all subjects. Like him, people also respected him as father. Others were referred by subjects रेफरेण्ड् ब्य सुब्जेक्त्स् just fathers for having given birth to them. This kind of treating people is noble for all times.

B. Only a kshatriya can become the king. Dilipa says he knows the meaning of the word kshatriya. Kalidasa explains the word” kshatriya “

As -----

Whoever protects the people from not being wounded is a kshatriya. He derives that name with two words. Kshat means wounded and Tra means protection. Protecting people from all injuries and troubles is a the duty of a king.-----

He even says that otherwise, what is the use of that kingdom? or of that king? Who pleases the people is a king-

4. In love duty cannot be over looked
- A. Shakuntala being cursed by sage Durvasa, is the turning event of the drama. Shakuntala was engrossed in the love towards Dushyanta. In that involvement, she did not realize the arrival of sage Durvasa’s. Durvasa felt he was neglected and cursed her, that “her lover should forget her”. She suffered a lot for this. In life one should not forget his duty. She forgot her duty towards the guest- “Athiti devi bhava-“Treat the guest as god”, It is the duty of every one, It is more obligatory on shakuntala as she resided in ashrama and knew it. The message is “Even in love donot forget your duty”.
- B. Same was the theme of Shiva’s penance. While Shiva performed tapas, Manmata wanted to disturb him with his attendants. He even dares to discharge flower arrows at Shiva. But Shiva became angry, opened the third eye and burnt manmata. Kalidasa’s message is “while concentrating on goals be disciplined” Never allow out side distractions to be deviate your goal.
- C. While going to her husband’s house she cares for her aged father. She tells her father s to take care of his health. While she further talks, Goutami tells “Do not disturb him. His penance should not be disturbed.” Performing penance is the duty of a sage. Affection on family members also need not disturb in performing one’s duty. This was her intention.
- D. In his lyric poem Meghaduta. kalidasa has stressed on a good theory. Even on any pretext one should not show negligence. Duty is of prime importance. Yakshas are like gandharvas. They have enormous powers. They can move to any place and get anything just by a thought. such yaksha was married. His duty was to pluck flowers from a garden during brahmi muhurtha and give it to kubera for worshipping lord. as he was newly married and basically as a yaksha he was blessed to enjoy luxuries at his will. His wife suggested him not to get up very early in the morning to pluck flowers. She suggested to pluck them previous night and deliver by next day early morning. For him who is a [pleasure seeker by profession and spiritual powers, her idea looked fantastic .He plucked flowers at that previous night and gave it to ykubera next day. Kubera observed closely and found it was plucked day back. They were not fresh. Offering them to lord was not good .So he cursed Yaksha to be separated from his wife for a year.
- E. In drama Vikramorvasheeyam, the turning event of the plot is oorvasji being cursed by brahma. This happened because she was not vigilant in her duty. While she has to address the hero on the stage, she was looking at pururava, who was in the chief guest of the function. In love towards him she called the hero as pururava. with this brarata was upset. For this he cursed oorvasji to be on earth. Thus one must be careful in observing duty is the central message of the drama. Aa
- F. Kalidasa abruptly ends the epic work “Raghuvamasham” with the story of king Agnivarna. This is not accidental. It has a big message in. Agnivarna neglected the people’s welfare. He was interested in VEENA and vilAsini. Veena stands for musical instrument lying on the lap of a lady and playing to her tunes. Vilasini stands for enjoyment. Both are at the will of some one. A king who is expected to command all by his majesty was resting in ladies

herms and like an instrument he was lying on their laps. Instead of demanding explanation from wrong doers he was himself giving an pitiable look to forgive him. Where was Rama who preferred to care the people than his family members, and where is this Agnivarna who disregarded duties and enjoying luxuries. Kalidasa's message is "One should not boast of predecessors and remain happy. He should do his duty sincerely.

5. Advice of a father to the daughter getting married. In present days, parents ie, hyaband and wife bith are working. They have no time or even the back ground to advice their children .As a result of this, social unrest and broken homes are seen. It is the duty of parents to advice their children. Absence of this is the cause of this -----So this advice of Kalidasa is more relevant. Goutama's advice to Shakuntala is all time instruction to a lady. It is the most attractive literary piece .There each part speaks of her duty. "Listen to your in laws and elders and serve them, look upon the other wives of the king as you dear friends. Even when you get angry with your husband keep yourself cool and do not act on impulse. Be geneorous with your servents, do not be conceited about your fortunes. By following these dictums you will acquire the status of a true wife. Those who do the opposite cause great mental agony to the family". Here Kalidasa has precisely listed out the duties of a daughter in law. A united home is always a blend of happiness and peace. Kalidasa highlighted this aspect. This is the duty of elders.

6. Take casual advice seriously -----
In our life we do not care for advices. That too it is more so with the advice of parents and friends. Kalidasa advices us to observe them with a note so that one can avoid casualities. After having attended to kashyapa's advice, her friends addviced her "to be careful on ring given by king" Because they knew that if it is not produced to the king, king may not remember her as wife. With out revealing this, they just said as an advice. She took it casually. While she was on the journey to Dushyanta's palace she lost the ring as it slipped from her finger as she waived her hand in the river water. Though it happened un knowingly, yet she was put into difficulty. As she could not produce the ring before the king, Duhshyanta did not recognize her. She was put into humiliation and series of difficulties. This was the later consequence."Be aware at all times" is the message here. This is a guideline to the duty bound person.

7. Warn the wrong doers ,while you are authorized
While duties are entrusted to us we should do it sincerely. Many times as it causes embarrassment we keep quiet. But as a king, as a warden, as a teacher, or as an employee sometimes we enact as ignorant. That should not be done. While king has gone for hunting, he chases the deer and takes an arrow to hit it. It enters ashrama. Then a hermit looks at it and warns king Dushyanta." This is ashrama, here hunting is prohibited". As a result of this Dushyanta stops hunting and obliges to it.

Actually the position of a tapasi in the ashrama is not so significant. But yet he did hid duty of reminding about the rules of ashrama. He did not hesitate though the person convernend is the King the highest authority of state.

So Kalidasa prefers to take one step more for advice. Goutama adviced the daughter while she goes to hasband's

house. Even kashyapa reminds his son in law to be careful and follow royal way. So do your duty as expected is the message of Kalidasa.

8. As a friend be a trouble shooter
- A. As a friend it is one's duty to remove troubles of his friend. Accrding to Bhartruhari" whoever parts with joys and sorrows is a real friend ". Anasuya and priyamvada are her true friends. Those names convey a greater meaning., Friend should speak sweetly ie, priyamvada. Friend should not jealous, ie, Anasuya. They came to know about Dravasa's curse on Shakutaltala. They pleaded to Durvasa on her behalf .Even they said she did so for the first time and so she be excused. As a result of those prayers Durvasa said with the seeing of ring curse will mitigate to some extent.
- B. Even while no message is received from Dushyanta.her friends planned of sending the ring to the king through an ashrama person, But as they were engaged in penance they shall not be disturbed.. By disturbing their duty one should not aspire personal favours was their intention. Again while she was departing to the kings palace, they slightly reminded her.Duty of a beloved friend was well depicted.

Kashyapa as a father knew of her forth coming danger and performed teethayathra. He even advised both her daughter Shakunatala and son in law Dushyanta. Shakuntala took care of her son as a mother. Ultimately all ended in a happy way. If all does their duty world will be happier. It is for these principles mahakayas and dramas of great poets become relevant. Even in Bharata vakya, ie, the last shloka of the drama, Kalidasa streeses on doing one'own duty.

9. King is bound to protect all, without rest.
- A. While honey bee troubles Shakuntala as if it is making an attempt to bite her, her friends say to her "Punishing the wicked is kings duty, call him "Though it is essential as a plot for king to be addressed the theme has to be understood. King was called and he does duty.
- B. While he hears that wild elephant has disturbed the asrama as it was disturbed by kings army he proceeds and controls the situation. He does his duty.
- C. On the other instance asrama residents plead king to punish demons who trouble the asrma in absence of goutama. at the same time his mother ordered to come to capital city for assist her for vrata, One side duty another side order of mother king was in a fix. He sends the army to the capital city and prefers to stay personally in asrama,
- D. While asramites come to palace to inform Dushyanta he was taking rest just then. Kanchki his personal attender hinders to disturb him at that moment. Then tapas as say "Sun. wind, Adishesha (holding the earth) and king cannot expect toest. Ultimately king was informed and he attends the gusts with due respect. ----.thus "In service rest need not be entertained" is the message of kalidasa.

The last shloka of the drama od -----is note worthy,It conveys this message.

Let the king rule the earth for welfare of all the people.Let shiva bless us all.

Thus duty is inevitable. we should do it carefully and till its end to reach the goal. Our purpose is to bring out the theme that ancient works are relevant due to eternal values they reflect. Though Kalidasa lived in the golden age, he warns us that one should not take it as granted. One must work hard and help the society. while helping society one must be humble.

------(A.S)

10. Offer your services with humility

He says "Branches of Trees will be bending due to the arrival of fruits. Even rainy clods come down to shower water. So even in prosperity noble people bend down and help others. This is the nature of great persons. thus he says we should do our duty ,and do service by being humble. such values are innumerable in great epics and mahakavyas. this is a small effort to show how great works are so simple and having far reaching effects."

Love the nature

Her love towards the nature is glorious. She cared for the trees and animals of the asrama as she liked it on her own. While she was opting to drinking water only after plants were watered. Though as a girl by nature she wanted to decorate herself with flowers but as it pains the plants while plucking she never desired for that. By looking at the first blossoming of the flowers in the plants she was dancing with joy. that shakuntala is going to husband's house please permit her was the plea of father. Man should rejoice by being one with the nature. At the same time a deer, which she had cared more as it lost her mother from birth, pulls her garment and prevents her from leaving ashrama. she looks at a pregnant deer and tells the father to inform its delivery. Even trees present their ornaments to her while she was going. Thus our love will be equally responded by nature if we are truthful in our services. it is said by kashyapa's order trees have delivered the jewels. Vikramorvasheeyam.

