



Influence of Kālidāsa in Harsa's Dramas

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Abstract

Among various similarities and differences observed in the comparative study of literature, one major similarity found is the source, style or techniques followed by the authors. This is more clear in case of dramatists. The works of Bhāsa, Kālidāsa and Harṣa gives the right case of this where the similarities found in their works bring forth the fact that there is a direct influence of the predecessors on the decedents. The similarities on theme, style and technique also show how the authors are influenced by their predecessors. This paper will highlight how Harṣa has been inspired by the great dramatist Kālidāsa. This paper is mainly analytical and based on primary sources. It gives information regarding Harṣa's works and his indebtedness to the dramatist Kālidāsa.

Keywords: *Ratnāvalī, Priyadarśikā, Nāgānanda, Inspiration, Festival*

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Introduction

It is a general tendency of all the writers who knowingly or unknowingly imitate their predecessors. In the realm of Sanskrit literature it is noticed that some writers followed the same ideas and techniques of their predecessors as we find in the case of kālidāsa who had been deeply inspired by the great author Aśvaghōṣa and Bhāsa. kālidāsa has also been a constant source of inspiration to all later dramatists for a very long period. Some ideas have been borrowed by Harṣa, the author of *Ratnāvalī*, *Priyadarśikā* and *Nāgānanda*, from him, which is evidenced from a critical study of their works. The present paper tries to find out the influence of Kālidāsa on Harṣa by emphasizing on his three works *Ratnāvalī*, *Priyadarśikā* and *Nāgānanda*.

Methodology

The paper is mainly analytical in nature. It draws its information from both primary and secondary sources. The primary sources are the three dramas of Kālidāsa and those of Harṣa.

General Trend of Sanskrit Writers

When we study literary works of a particular author or different authors, a common pattern is found in those works. This may happen spontaneously with separate authors or sometimes the imprints of the works of some of the authors are observed in the works of others. Here examples can be given of Bhāsa, who was inspired by Aśvaghōṣa and Subandhu and Bhaṭṭanārāyaṇa by Bānabhaṭṭa. So also the case with Kālidāsa and Harṣa.

Harṣa's works: A Brief Introduction:

Ratnāvalī is a romantic comedy of Harṣa which deals with the love story of Udayana and Ratnāvalī. Ratnāvalī, who was sent to the Vatsa country in a ship, unfortunately meets with a mishap in the midst ocean. She is rescued by a merchant of Kauśambī. The merchant brings her to the chief minister of Udayana and ultimately she is handed over to the queen Vāsavadattā. Ratnāvalī is appointed as an attendant in the inner apartment. Ratnāvalī sees Udayana in the Madana festival for the first time and falls in his love. When the festival is over she makes a portrait of the king to satisfy her desire to see him, sitting in the plantain bower. Her friend, Susaṅgatā appears there and she also makes a picture of Sāgarikā by the side of that of the king. This picture board plays an important role in the development of the love story of the king and Sāgarikā. Their love-affair is discovered by the chief queen and faces many obstacles and ultimately the hero and the heroine become united by the approval of the chief queen.

The story of Priyadarśikā is almost same as the drama Ratnāvalī, only with some changes in names and incidents. Here the hero is Udayana and the heroine is Sāgarikā.

Nāgānanda is a nāṭaka of self sacrifice where the hero Jimūtavāhana sacrifices his life to save the life of a serpent, Śankhacuda. The first three acts deal with the love of the hero Jimūtavāhana and the heroine Malayavati while from the fourth act the story takes a new dimension. While roaming on the Malaya- mountain, Jimūtavāhana sees a heap of bones and from Mitrāvasu he comes to know that it is formed by the bones of the serpents devoured by Garuḍa. After a while he hears the lamentation of an old woman which hurts him. She is the mother of Śankhacuda whose only son becomes

the victim of Garuḍa, for the agreement made by Vāsuki. The hero at once decides to sacrifice his life in his place and also does the same. The fifth act depicts the union between the hero and the heroine. The serpents also regain their lives with the favour of gods.

Influence of Kalidasa on Harsa's Work

From a comparative study it is noticed that there is a close similarity between Kālidāsa's *Mālavikāgnimitra* and Harṣa's *Ratnāvalī* and *Priyadarśikā*. The main stories, as well as, some other major incidents, of both the *nāṭikās*, appear to be the imitation of that of *Mālavikāgnimitra*. Mālavikā, the heroine of *Mālavikāgnimitra* is found to be kidnapped by the *Savaras*, got shelter in the harem of the king Agnimitra, the hero of that drama and we find the same happening in case of Āraṇyikā, in *Priyadarśikā* as she is captured by Vījayavarmana and Rumaṇvān from the house of Vindhaketu¹, where she was kept by the *kañcukin* of Dṛḍhavarmana.

In the second act of *Priyadarśikā*, we find a direct influence of Kālidāsa's *Abhijñānaśakuntalam*. In the first act of this drama, the king Duṣyanta hides himself behind a tree to overhear the conversation of the three friends². His entry takes place in that moment when Śakuntalā is struck by a bee and she has cried for help³. Same incident is picturised by Harṣa in his *Priyadarśikā* while Āraṇyikā is assailed by bees, rushed from a cluster of lotuses⁴. Here also the hero overhears the conversation within Āraṇyikā and her friend Indīvarikā and rescues the heroine from the attack of the bees⁵.

Priyadarśikā of Harṣa can be regarded as the resemblance of the *Mālavikāgnimitra* of Kālidāsa from a comparative study of the plot, description of the situation, management of the events. We find a great similarity from the very beginning though *Priyadarśikā* is a *Nāṭikā* but *Mālavikāgnimitram* is a *Nāṭaka*. In both the plays, a common incident i.e. the imprisonment of heroine's guardian, reminds us the indebtedness of Harṣa to his predecessor Kālidāsa. Dṛḍhavarmana, the father of Āraṇyikā has been captivated by his rival king of Kaliṅga in *Priyadarśikā*⁶ and we find Mādhavasena, Mālavikā's brother to be imprisoned by his enemy king. We also find that in both the plays, the marriage of the heroine is promised only for the welfare of the kingdoms.

In the first act of *Abhijñānaśakuntalam*, the meeting among Duṣyanta, Śakuntalā and her friends is found to be disturbed by the coming out of an elephant⁷, which idea is imitated in the second act of *Ratnāvalī*, where Sāgarikā and her friend Susaṃgatā were engaged in conversation

about Sāgarikā's love for the king Udayana, a monkey gets loose and they have to conceal themselves⁸.

In the *Mālavikāgnimitram* of Kālidāsa, an exhibition of singing and dancing in the play-house by the heroine is arranged by the rival teachers of the histrionic art, which may have given the suggestion for introducing the 'Mimic-play' in the play house of the drama *Priyadarśikā*. But this introduction of Mimic-play is Harṣa's brain-child which is not found anywhere in other dramas. The beauty and the importance of this play have placed the *Priyadarśikā* in a very high rank. *Harṣa* has shown here his great skill by introducing such an incident. It is observed that in *Mālavikāgnimitram* the dance competition is held between two disciples where Mālavikā is presented to bring about a meeting between the hero and the heroine, likewise Mimic play of *Priyadarśikā* is also inserted for the same purpose. But in both the cases that has been interrupted by the idle talk of *Vidūṣaka* in his sleep⁹. Another incident, which shows the similarity between the two plays, is the biting of the snake to the heroine.

A striking similarity of the happenings of *Mālavikāgnimitram*, *Vikramorvaśyam* or *Abhijñānaśakuntalam* is found in the *Priyadarśikā* or *Ratnāvalī* of Harṣa. There are certainly recollections of the first act of *Śakuntalā* in the second act of *Priyadarśikā*. The 'idle-talk' between the heroine and her maid in *Abhijñānaśakuntalam* is recalled by a passage in the second act of *Priyadarśikā*.

In Sanskrit literature there is no room for tragic drama as Indian philosophy does not admit it. Keeping this point in view the dramatists arrange their dramas in their own accord introducing some incidents which may help in their final goal, as a Sanskrit drama must be concluded in comedy. In *Abhijñānaśakuntalam*, when Śakuntalā was rejected by king Duṣyanta, she gets shelter in the hermitage of sage Mārīca. Obviously, this behavior of the king would be an obstacle in the reunion of Śakuntalā and the king. Hence, the dramatist Kālidāsa very cleverly introduces Sānumati, who informs the affection of Duṣyanta for Śakuntalā, even when she is apart from him. Such kind of episodes are invented and introduced only to bring union between the hero and the heroine, and make them mentally prepare for their reunion. Yet, the *Aindrajalika* episode is unique which shows Harṣa's great talent. In *Ratnāvalī* where the queen Vāsavadattā was in strong opposition of the love affair of Udayana and Sāgarikā, except such an episode the marriage of Sāgarikā with Udayana was quite impossible. The introduction of *Aindrajalika* episode removes the obstacle in the union of the king and

Sāgarikā and makes the queen to confess for her cruelty done against Sāgarikā.

In the second act of *Ratnāvalī*, the picture board falls down from the hands of *Vidūṣaka*, while engaged in joy, which brings forth the secret of the king and leads his friend to become embarrassed, is found in the *Vikramorvaśīya* of Kālidāsa where the birch-leaf has been dropped down from the hands of the *Vidūṣaka* in that Play. The presentation of the *Maina*-bird and the picture-board¹⁰ in the second act of *Ratnāvalī* is poet's own innovation which plays a vital role in the development of the love in the heart of the king Udayana. Here, Harṣa has proved the originality of his talent. The king accompanied by *Vidūṣaka*, entering the garden, where Sāgarikā has been longing for her love-sickness, finds the picture-board. As they were surmising the cause of such a drawing, in the meantime, the *Maina*, as anticipated by *Susamgatā*, repeats the entire conversation between Sāgarikā and her friend, from which the king could know about the love-sickness of Sāgarikā.

Harṣa's indebtedness is noticed not only in the matters of events but in language also. The pattern of composition of verses suggests that he was inspired and impressed by the writings of the great poet Kālidāsa if we compare a verse from *Ratnāvalī* with that of *Vikramorvaśīyam*¹¹. In *Priyadarśikā* as the king says-*'vayasya nirdoṣadarśaṇā kanyakā khalviyam'*¹² in Kālidāsa's *Abhijñānaśakuntalam* also we find the same utterances in the speech of the hero. So we can say that Harṣa has adopted the same expression from *Abhijñānaśakuntalam*. Another expression i.e. *'aye katham nabhomadhyamadyāste bhagavānsahasradīdhitih'* brings forth the resemblance of Kālidāsa's idea in Harṣa's *Priyadarśikā* and *Nāgānanda* also¹³. The sun in the mid-sky is described through a bard to announce the mid-day.

Harṣa is successful in depicting the situations of the inner apartment as he, himself is a king and he shows the love affair of the prince and the princess in a very natural manner, and has not sought artificiality.

A striking innovation is also noticed in the first act of *Nāgānanda* where the poet represents a very noble situation of the first meeting of Jīmūtavāhana and Malayavatī, the hero and the heroine. Jīmūtavāhana was very much attracted by the playing on lute of Malayavatī, while in other dramas the hero or the heroine is found to be attracted by the bodily beauty of one another as we find in case of Śakuntalā.

Conclusion

Thus, from a critical analysis of various events of all the works of Harṣa, it is noticed that he has maintained a great uniformity in delineating the different situations in his works. The importance of Harṣa as a dramatist lent special luster to his name and works after times. The handling of incidents and the skill in construction is noteworthy. Though, Harṣa is a close follower of Kālidāsa, it cannot be said that he has borrowed the techniques or languages from his predecessors rather it will be wise to say that he was greatly influenced by them and has got some ideas from the various events of their works.

Notes and References

1. 'Evaṃ savandhuparivāre hate vindhaketau tamanusṛtāsu sahadharmacāriṇīṣu.....kanyakā tadduhitetyasmābhirānītā dvāri tiṣṭhati' Priyadarśikā. Act. I. p. 9.
2. 'Pādāntarita eva enaṃ paśyāmi'. Saradaranjan Ray ed. Abhijñānaśakuntalam. Act. I. P. 20.
3. 'Paritrāyethām mām anena durvinītena madhukareṇa abhibhūyamānām' Ibid. Act. I. P. 140.
4. 'Indīvarike paritrāyasva mām paritrāyasva mām. Ete khalu duṣṭamadhukarāḥ paribhaviṣyanti.' Priyadarśikā. Act. II. Pp. 19, 20.
5. Ibid. Act. II. P. 20; Abjn. Act. I. v. 21.
6. 'Kalīṃgahatakena vipattirīdṛṣī kriyata iti' Priyadarśikā. Act. I. P. 4.
7. Abjn. Act. I. v. 26.
8. 'Eṣa khalu dadhibhaktalamphaṭo sārīkāpañjaramudghātyāpakrānto duṣṭavānarah' M. R. Kale, ed. Ratnāvalī. Act. II. P. 36.
9. 'Manorame kiṃ nartitvāgataḥ Priyavayasyah' Ibid. Act. III. P.41.
10. 'Susāṃgate katham tvayā citraphalaka ujjhitaḥ' Ibid. Act. II. P. 36.
11. 'Udayataṅtaritamīyaṃ Prācī sūcayati.....' M. R. Kale. ed. Ratnāvalī. Act. I. v.24; Vikramorvasiyam, Act. III. V. 6.
12. M. R. Kale, ed. Priyadarśikā . Act. II. P. 18; S. Ray, ed. Abjn. Act. I.
13. M. R. Kale. ed. Priyadarśikā . Act . I. P. 10; Naga. Act. I. P. 40.

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