

RENUNCIATION AND REGENERATION AS INHERENT VALUES EMPHASISED IN SHAKESPEARE’S ‘THE TEMPEST’ AND KALIDASA’S ‘ABHIGYANASHAKUNTALAM’: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

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Preface:

The most important aspect of the dramatic art of Shakespeare and Kalidasa is the creation of the suitable atmosphere- Physical, cultural, emotional environment -for the fulfilment of the central idea of the play. In both plays, *The Tempest* and *Abhigyanashakuntalam*, the storm of impatience and restlessness settles down when love finds fulfilment in marriage through renunciation and regeneration. Both plays impart the message that ‘True freedom consists in service.’ And “the rarer action is in virtue than vengeance.” Or “First appears the flower, then the fruit; first the clouds and then come the showers; such is the regular course of cause and effect; but fortunes came before your grace.”

The Tempest:

The elements of Renunciation in ‘*The Tempest*’ are seen at the very outset of the play in the life story of Prospero. Being devoted to learning, Prospero handed over the government to his brother Antonio. Being engrossed in the cultivation of the art of magic, Prospero cut of all connections with the affair of the government of his state. Having once attained the skill of granting and refusing petitions of promoting and demoting the aspirants, he secured a great hold upon the people and almost changed them to his own convenience, and interest, and because he possessed all the secret springs or keys of administration, he fashioned all the people to his own purpose so that just as the ivy creeper conceals the trunk of an oak tree and sucks up its vital energy; he too derived all his power and put him into the background. Prospero says,

“I thus neglecting worldly ends, all dedicated
To closeness and the bettering of my mind
With that which but by being so retired.” (Act-I, Scene-I, 88-90)

But Antonio being thus endowed with the power and wealth of resources of Prospero’s position began to fancy that he was the real duke just like a person who takes falsehood. Though he was a mere shadow of a duke yet he believed himself to be the substance of a duke i.e., a real duke, because he used to exercise and enjoy all the outward powers and privileges of a duke. But as for Prospero, his books were as good as dukedom and therefore, Antonio considered him as incapable of exercising any power. Antonio was so mad with the lust for power that allied himself with the King of Naples by agreeing to acknowledge him as his overlord and pay some annual revenue to him. Antonio thereby humiliated the dukedom of Milan by stooping so low although Milan was always an independent state and never submitted to any other state. Thus Prospero has no renounce his state and power of King.

Prospero's attitude in renunciation his magic art is very touching. Though he has darkened the mid-day sun, summoned the stormy winds and made them fight against each other between the green sea and the blue sky and has given thunder the fire or energy of tearing open mighty oak trees and shake the rocky foundation yet he utters-

“But this rough magic
 I here abjure and when I have required
 Some heavenly music, which even now I do
 To work mine and upon their senses that
 This airy charm is for, I'll break my staff, Bury it certain fathoms in the earth
 And deeper than did ever plumbed sound
 I'll drown my book.” (Act- V, Scene-I, 57-65)

In the same way, the elements of regeneration are also prevalent at the very outset of the play simultaneously with the elements of renunciation. It is evident as Miranda witnesses the terrible shipwreck; she regrets with sorrow that all the passengers on the board must be broken to pieces. But Prospero consoles her by saying that no injury has been done. He says that the dreadful sight of the shipwreck, which moved Miranda's heart so much, was created by him with the help of his magical art. He has managed the whole thing with so much care that not even the slightest injury has been done to any of the boarders on the ship. He adds-

“Not a hair perish'd
 On their sustaining garments not a blemish,
 But fresher than before and as thou bad'st me,
 In troops, I have dispers'd them 'bout the isle.” (Act-I, Scene-I, 217-220)

Prospero even deliberately creates some obstacles in the way of earthly love between Ferdinand and Miranda because He believes, “lest too light winning make the prize light.” But Ferdinand's understanding paves the way for regeneration for he believes,

“There be some sports are painful and their labour
 Delight in them sets off; some kinds of baseness
 Are nobly undergone and most poor matters
 Point to rich ends.” (Act-II, Scene-III, 1-4)

Consequently Prospero assigns Miranda's hand to Ferdinand and acknowledges-

“If I have too austerely punish'd you,
 Your compensation makes amends, for I
 Have given you here a third of mine own life,
 Or that for which I live: who once again
 I tender to thy hand; all thy vexations
 Were but trials of thy love, and thou
 Hast strangely stood the test, here ,afore Heaven,
 I ratify this my rich gift.” (Act-IV, Scene-I, 1-7)

The elements of regeneration are shown brightly than ever as all the spirits celebrates the betrothal of Ferdinand and Miranda and bestowed the couple with their blessing as Juno wishes them all sorts of joys and pleasures may follow them at every step of their married life. Similarly, Ceres also showers her blessings upon the couple as-

“Ceres; Earth's increase, foison plenty,
 Barns and garners never empty,
 Vines with clustering bunches growing,
 Plants with goodly burthen bowing,

Spring come to you at the farthest
In thy end of harvest!” (Act- IV, Scene-I, 108-113)

The elements of regeneration can be noted in the attitude of Prospero towards Gonzalo-

“Holy Gonzalo, honourable man,
Mine eyes even sociable to the show of thine,
Fall fellowly drops. The charm dissolves apace,
And as the morning steals upon the night,
Melting the darkness, so their rising senses
Begin to chase the ignorant fumes that mantle
Their clear reason.” (Act-V, Scene-I, 71-76)

Alonso also exemplifies regeneration in the form of human values by giving back to Prospero his dukedom and begs for pardon for his wrong doings to him. To which Prospero replies,

“My dukedom since you have given me again,
I will require you with as good a thing!
At least bring forth a wonder to content ye
As much as my dukedom.” (Act-V, Scene-I, 191-194)

The aura of Regeneration covers the entire situation than ever as Miranda reflects,

“O wonder!
How many goodly creatures are there!
How beauteous mankind is! O brave new world,
That has such people in’t.” (Act-v, Scene-I, 208-212)

In the same way, Gonzalo’s word echoes the same feeling as he speaks out,

“O, rejoice
Beyond a common joy and set it down
With gold on lasting pillars; In one voyage
Did Claribel her husband find at Tunis
And Ferdinand, her brother found a wife
Where he himself was lost, Prospero his dukedom,
In a poor isle and of us ourselves
When no man was his own.” (Act-V, Scene-I, 239-245)

It is surprise to note that when the curtain of ‘All’s well that ends well’ is hanging on the pole then how can be a brute Caliban be far behind? He also adds his tone in the song of regeneration as he acknowledges-

“I’ll be wise hereafter
And seek for grace. What a thrice-double ass
Was I, to take this drunkard for god
And worship this dull fool!” (Act-V, Scene-I, 348-350)

Then Prospero assures all the people around there that they will have a very calm sea, favourable winds and also a very quick voyage so that they may be able to overtake the rest of their fleet.

The philosophical aspect of renunciation and regeneration is manifested in Prospero’s beautiful poetic utterance-

“Our revels now are ended. These our actors,
As I foretold you, were all sprits and
Are melted into air;
And, like the baseless fabric of this vision,

They could-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve
And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff
As dreams are made on, and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep.” (Act-IV, Scene-I, 148-158)

At the end of the play ‘*The Tempest*’, in the Epilogue, Prospero in his character of a man, no longer a potent enchanter, petitions the spectators of the theatre for two things, pardon and freedom. Prospero, the pardoner, implores pardon. He reveals the universal truth by saying that every energetic dealer with the world must seek a sincere and liberal pardon for many things.

“Now I want
Spirits to enforce, art to enchant
Unless I be relieved by prayer,
Which pierces to that it assaults
Mercy itself add frees all faults.
As you from crimes would pardon'd be
Let your indulgence set me free.” (Epilogue, 392-399)

Abhigyanashakuntalam:

Similarly in *Abhigyanashakuntalam*, the renunciation looms large before our vision as we come to know about the parenthood of Shakuntala. It is stated that Sakuntala is the daughter of the sage Viswamitra and the celestial nymph Menka who had abandoned her amid the beautiful natural surroundings and ascetic hermits.. But the gravitational force of regeneration has already been there in the form of sage Kanva who plays the role of the foster father of Sakuntala. The under current force of renunciation comes to the surface in strong colours of social rituals when Sakuntala is ready to leave for the King's palace and tearfully bids farewell to her dear friends as well as to the trees and animals. The Rushi Kanva reflects-

“In truth a daughter is another's property;
And having to-day sent her to her lord, I find
My soul has become quite clear as if after restoring a deposit.” (Act-IV, 21)

But at the same time the elements of regeneration have already been foreshadows in the answer of Kanva to Sakuntala's question of her returning in this ashram -

“When thou shalt have been a co-wife of the Earth bounded by the four cardinal points, and settled in marriage in Dushyanta's son by thee, a matchless warrior; then with thy husband who shall have transferred the burden of family-cares to him, thou shalt again set foot in this peaceful hermitage.” (Act-IV,20)

The curse of the sage Durvasa becomes the strong reason for Dushyant to abandon Sakuntala as it is stated-

“He on whom thou art meditating with a mind that is regardless of everything else, while thou perceives not me, rich in penance, to have arrived, will not remember thee, though reminded, like a drunken man the words previously spoken” (Act-IV, 1)

However, the sage Durvasa himself suggests the remedy of his curse due to the appeal of Priyamvada-“My word must not be recalled; but the curse shall be lifted at the sight of the ornament(given her) for a token.” Consequently, the recovery of the ring paves way for the reconciliation and reunion. Lord Indra's invitation to Dushyant is proved to be the stepping stone for

the reunion with Shakuntala. The lovers are united again in the sacred hermitage of Marica in the aerial region. The reunion of lovers is achieved through auspicious blessing –the sun. The sage Marica clarifies the doubt of Dushyanta and Sakunta as he states-“I perceived through my powers of contemplation that this thy poor dutiful wife was repudiated by thee in consequence of Durvasa’s curse and through no other cause; that curse was to terminate at the sight of the ring.” (Act-VII)

To which Sakuntala immediately reflects-

“Happy am I that my husband did not repudiate me without cause. But, indeed I don’t remember I was cursed. Or I did not know I was cursed as I was absent-minded through separation; for my friends advised me to show the ring to my husband.” (Act-VII)

Here, Sarvadamana (Bharat) the son of Dushyanta and Sakuntala, meets his unseen father Dushyanta whose childish innocence replete Dushyanta with the paternal feelings. The aura of regeneration dominates the entire situation as the sage Marica utters-

“The virtuous Shakuntala, her noble child
and yourself- here fortunately are combined,
faith, fortune and action.” (Act- VII, 29)

Thus, Dushyanta regains his believed wife and the son Bharat who is destined to become the sovereign emperor of the world. So, love ends with the fruition of parenthood and Selfish ego-centric love is replaced by the noble love of married life. Here, we notice a gradual development from the elemental love to the ideal love and thus the play attains perfection in Kalidasa’s ideal of love.

At the end of the play, Likewise Shakespeare, Kalidasa begins ‘Bharatvakya’ (Actor’s speech) by wishing well to all his fellow beings. He then wishes that if kings strove for the welfare of their subjects and the subjects followed the words of the eminently learned, happiness would reign in the world. Then Kalidasa in the same fashion of Shakespeare looks to himself for it appears to him that he has fulfilled his life’s mission and has come to the end of his literary career. So like *The Tempest*, *Abhigyanashakuntalam* also ends with a prayer of Kalidasa of craving to be free from the bondage of life.

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