

Musical Dramaturgy: Analysing the Use of Music, Song and Dance and its Transformation in Kalidasa's Plays, Malavikagnimitram and Abhijnanasakuntalam

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Abstract

Music has been used by playwrights and dramatists as far back as 5th Century BCE, where the Greeks used choric odes which were sung during plays. Later music became a staple tool to influence and set the mood of the audience and it changed from scene to scene to suit the emotion during it. One of the earliest playwrights to use music and understand its importance is Kalidasa. Reflected through his plays, his expert usage of music is still marveled by readers of today, both in India and all over the world. This paper argues that Kalidasa's use of music has gone through a transformation from his first play, Malavikagnimitram through his most famous play, Abhijnanashakuntalam and so has his style of using music, dance and song within it.

In order to support this argument, a close reading of both plays has been performed, while drawing references from a translated version of Bharata's Natya Shastra and his Rasa Theory. The plot of the two plays, where and how Kalidasa uses music is closely examined and compared in order to understand how Kalidasa's skill of using music in dramaturgy developed through his works.

The aim of this research is to break down these musical performances, discover the hidden layers and meanings behind them, if any, and also show the significance of these musical performances. It also aims to show the transition of Kalidasa's work, how it goes through a shift and a change from his first play, that is, Malavikagnimitram to one of his greatest works Abhijnanasakuntalam, how his use of music changes, choice of music and their significance to the story increases, how it becomes more intricate and adds to its richness.

Keywords: Use of music, dramaturgy, rasa, transformation

1. Intro

Kalidasa is considered the greatest poet and playwright of Sanskrit Literature in India. His name translates to the "servant of Kali", the Hindu Goddess. Very little is known about his birth and early life, which is a commonality with that of other ancient Sanskrit authors. Several theories place him during various times in history. According to M. Hippolyte Fauche, the French Indologist and scholar, Kalidasa lived during the Sunga Empire from 184 BC to 78 BC as he uses Agnimitra Sunga as the protagonist in

his play *Malavikagnimitra* along with references to the other two kings, *Pusyamitra* and *Vasumitra*, however, this theory has been long dismissed.

Dr. Max Muller, the German orientalist, and Indologist states that he lived during first century BC. during the reign of *Vikramaditya* of *Ujjain*. Dr. Muller believed that Sanskrit works went into a repressed state for several centuries before going through a renaissance during the Gupta empire and *Kalidasa* was one of the nine gems appointed by *Vikramaditya*. This is yet another theory which has been dismissed as many inscriptions prove that Sanskrit literature had been flourishing and no renaissance had occurred.

However the most widely agreed theories place *Kalidasa* somewhere between fourth and fifth century BC, during the reign of *Chandra Gupta II* who changed his name to *Vikramaditya*. Most notably the usage of the word “*Jamitra*” in *Kalidasa*’s play *Kumārasambhava* is also used by *Aryabhatta* which is believed to be borrowed from the Greek word “*Diametron*”, a theory which has been a topic of argument. Along with the references to the Gupta kings in his works, most historians and theorists agree that one cannot place *Kalidasa* after the 5th century.

The lack of a proper time period to bind him causes historians to be unable to determine whether the events that occur in the play are real or fictional. It also allows the readers to ignore the historical aspects and look at his works as they are written instead of trying to compare the authenticity with real events.

Few of his most famous works include *Abhijnanashakuntala*, which translates to “The Recognition of *Shakuntala*”, *Meghaduta* translating to “Cloud Messenger”, *Malavikagnimitra* translating to “*Malavika and Agnimitra*”, and *Raghuwamsha* translating to “Dynasty of *Raghu*”. Many of these works have been translated into English and have been studied and celebrated all over the world due to their poetic nature, beautiful imagery and exploration of human emotions. He is famously known as the “Shakespeare of India” due to his rich literary expertise, a term coined by Sir William Jones, the first Englishman to translate *Kalidasa*’s work, *Abhijnanasakuntalam*.

2. Music in Drama

Music, both vocal and instrumental is very commonly used in drama in contemporary times. It is one of the most important aspects of drama and helps in setting the mood without using words or acting. Music has always been an integral aspect of dramaturgy with its roots taking us back to the Vedic ages.

The roots of Indian drama are set in the *Natyasastra*, written by *Bharata Muni*. Unlike ancient Greek drama, Indian drama did not focus mainly on the plot and the fable but also considers various other aspects such as representation (*rupaka*), spectacle (*preksa*), decoration, postures (*angika*), words (*vacika*) and temperament (*sativa*). But one of the most interesting aspects is its importance of dance, song and instrumental music. Other than just words, gestures and costumes, dances were performed and instrumental music was played but more importance was placed on the words, music and dance and the individuals took part in what is described as a “dramatic spectacle” and this combined with the unique production style of Indian drama is what made it special in nature (*Ghosh XLII*).

Another peculiarity of the Hindu dramas was their general dependence on dance (nritya), song (gita), and instrumental music (vadya). Though the chorus of the Greek tragedy introduced in it some sort of dance and songs, the function of these elements seem to have been considerably different in the Hindu dramas. (Ghosh XLII).

Kalidasa is one of the earliest writers of the Sanskrit Literature who used music as an important aspect in his plays. Following the traditions of the Natyasastra, Kalidasa blends music with dialogue, creating a blend that has captured the attention of many readers. His two works, *Malavikagnimitram* and *Abhijnanasakuntalam* are perhaps the most important due to different reasons. *Malavikagnimitram* is considered Kalidasa's debut work while *Abhijnanasakuntala* is considered one of his greatest works, being the first to be translated into English. Kalidasa's ability to use music so skillfully within his work, to be able to convey emotions through it, not only to the audience, but also to the readers is what truly makes him and his works one of the finest in Indian history. The *Natyasastra* may have been the first literary work to use musical performances and music, but Kalidasa manages to use music more than a performative aspect and more of a literary device, using it with his skillful and vivid descriptions of nature, beautiful setting and complex characters to make works which have been read since the ancient times till the present, with translations into several languages which have been read and appreciated all over the world.

Both the plays follow a similar style of story, with the plot revolving around a King falling in love with someone who is not of royal blood, the struggle for the female character to express her love for the king and the difficulties she faces while trying to get to her beloved. The plays also end with a similar manner, with tragic endings being not allowed, both the plays end in a happy note, with the female character finally being united with the King and everybody happily accepting her. Several musical performances like dance and songs are placed within the play, along with the dialogues to enhance the play itself.

3. Role of music in Sanskrit drama

Indian drama dates back many centuries with its mention found in the *Rigveda*, containing hymns in the form of dialogues. Proper Indian drama began with the composition of the *Natyasastra* written by Bharata Muni. There is no exact date of the creation of Sanskrit drama, it began as a part of classical drama. Although called 'Sanskrit' drama, it used both Sanskrit as well as Prakrit language.

Sanskrit drama was usually performed at royal palaces and courts as patronage and entertainment for the king and the ministers. It covered many subjects, from romantic love poems, political debates, comedies, religious plays, etc. Tragedies were strictly prohibited and every play was required to resolve all conflicts and end with a happy ending. The plays usually had a select number of characters and instead of being individual people with their own personalities, they assumed a character which had a set personality. The main characters included the hero or the

"nayaka", the heroine or the "nayika", the villain or the "pratinayaka" and finally a jester or "vidushaka".

Music plays an important role in Sanskrit drama. The *Natyasastra* states:

gītē prayatnaḥ prathamastu kāryaḥ - śayyām hi nāṭyasya vadanti gītam | gītēpi vādyēpi ca samprayuktē - nāṭyaprayōgō na vipattimēti || (Cited in Sumithra)

(effort should be made towards (organising) the musical aspect as it stabilises the drama production; when vocal and instrumental music are employed, the play is assured of success)(Music in the Plays of Samskrita Ranga). (Sumithra)

This shows that Bharata understood and saw music as an important aspect of theatre and how it helped in ‘stabilising’ the drama production. He also states that the addition of both instrumental and vocal music in a play assured its success and popularisation among the people. He goes on to state that a drama contains four types of ‘abhinaya’, which are ‘angika’ or the body movements, ‘vacika’ or the dialogues, ‘aharya’ or the costumes and finally ‘sattvika’ or the expression of emotions. The most important and effective way to express ‘abhinaya’ was through music. Music and song were placed in a flow in between dialogues without breaking continuity. The main aim of these plays was to achieve ‘rasa’ or the aesthetic bliss, which was achieved through the 4 ‘abhinaya’. Music was placed within the ‘vacika’ or the dialogues, and music was not only incorporated within the dialogues but also the dialogues were written in a musical and rhythmic pattern which sounded better to the audience and helped express emotions which could not be expressed by dialogues and other means. The dramas also contained a number of dances which were also seamless with the dialogues and they were accompanied by suitable instrumental and vocal music. These dances were also important as they symbolised the emotions of the character and dances helped to bring out the true essence of these emotions and heighten its impact on the audience.

4. Kalidasa’s use of music

Other than the Natyashastra by Bharata, one of the earliest major literary works that contains music and dance in minute detail and considers music as a technical aspect of a play is Malavikagnimitra. In this play, he displays his knowledge and pays attention to the minute details of various songs and dances, which express emotions and reflect the themes of the play. The Natyasastra states that evoking the various rasa is the end goal of any play, and in order to achieve that, dialogue, dance, music and song must be used appropriately. Kalidasa had knowledge of the Natyasastra, evident from his reference to his reference to not only Natyasastra but also the sage Bharat Muni, its writer, in his plays, namely Vikramorvashya and Kumarasambhava. He uses music as well as dance to display emotions which cannot be expressed in words. Deep and strong emotions, such as love, anger, hatred and grief, are often portrayed by songs, either sung by the characters themselves or in the background, as well as dances. In Abhijnanasakuntalam, there are references to vocal music being able to evoke strong feelings from the beginning of the play itself.

In the third act of the play, Sakuntala sings a love song to her companions, Priyamvada and Anasuya, a song she composed for King Dusyanta:

I do not know your heart,
but my night and days, O pitiless one!

Are haunted by Love,
as every part of me
yearns to be with you (Kalidasa 205)

The song acts as an important catalyst through which King Dusyanta learns of Sakuntala's love which leads Dusyanta to gift her the ring, progressing through the rest of the story. Music here becomes an essential tool for Kalidasa to progress the plot, convey emotions, sometimes using it as a literary device to bring out the essential themes of the drama to the audience.

The musical performances in his works also help to evoke various forms of rasa or aesthetic bliss among the audience. Kalidasa sees musical instruments more than their mere physical form, rather he sees them as tools to evoke certain emotions. For example, drums were considered auspicious in nature, being used during periods of triumph and victory, such as in Raghuvamsa, an epic poem by Kalidasa, references to drums being used when a child was born in the royal family can be seen.

puropakanthopavanasrayanam kalapinamuddhatanrtyahetau | pradhmatasankhe parito
digantamsturyasvane murcchati mangalarthe | | (qtd. in "References to Musical Instruments by
Kalidasa")

"while the sound of auspicious musical instruments swelled by the blasts of conch shells was waxing loud and spreading all round in the quarters of heaven, making the peacocks roosting in the suburban gardens dance in a frantic manner" (Kale 158)

Similarly, other instruments such as conches, flutes, lutes (veena) and vocal music have been referenced and used in his works.

5. Introduction and plot of Malavikagnimitram

Historically, Malavikagnimitram is considered as Kalidasa's first play. It is believed to be based on the incidents that occurred during the reign of the Shunga Emperor, Agnimitra. The plot is a romantic story between Agnimitra and a maid, Malavika, who is also the pupil of Gandasa, a master of dance and music. The story progresses as Agnimitra expresses his love for Malavika while she is unable to express her love for the king and faces jealousy from the other maids. The play also contains some scenes of comedy as well.

The story begins with King Agnimitra noticing a portrait of Malavika in Queen Dharini's court and is captivated by her beauty, wishing to meet her. During this, the chamberlain comes in informing that an argument has broken out between the two masters of dance, Gandasa and Haradatta over who is superior in their art and who has better knowledge of dance and drama. They bring their issue over to the king who tells them that this issue may be solved only through a performance, for which Gandasa chooses his pupil, Malavika. Agnimitra finally gets to see her and is immediately awestruck by her beauty. During this, a side plot occurs where Agnimitra's army prepares to attack the king of Vidarbha since he had

captured Agnimitra's cousin Madhavsena and his sister, although she had managed to escape later, her whereabouts are unknown to everyone. The competition finally begins with Malavika putting on a beautiful show of a Chhalik dance and singing, an act which completely amazes the king. After her performance, Agnimitra is disinterested in the competition, and is saved by the announcement of lunch. Later, the two maids, Malavika and Valukavalika, are sent by the queen to perform Dohada or a ceremonial dance under the holy Ashoka Tree, which causes it to bud flowers. The queen is meant to do it, but due to a leg injury, she is unable to get up and asks Malavika to do it instead, seeing her talent for dancing. She also promises Malavika that if the tree blooms successfully, she will grant her a wish. As Malavika prepares for Dohada in the pleasure garden, with Vakulavalika painting red dye on her feet, all of the maids come together and she performs the Dohada ritual by gently kicking the Ashoka tree. The King soon comes out and commends her for performing the ritual, inadvertently expressing his affection and letting the other maids know of it. Once the news of the king's affection for Malavika reaches Queen Dharini, she is furious and captures Malavika and her close confidant Vakulavalika and imprisons them, telling the guards to only open the doors if they can show a ring with a snake impression on it, which the queen had. Agnimitra gets to know of this and is worried, so Vidushaka Gautama comes up with a plan. Feigning a snake bite, he is taken to the royal doctor, who asks for a ring with a snake's impression which can only cure him, managing to get the ring from the queen and allowing Agnimitra to free both Malavika and Valukavailka. In the end, the Ashoka tree blooms beautifully, and before Queen Dharini can grant Malavika a wish, Madhavsena returns after Agnimitra's army defeated Vidarbha's army, declaring that Malavika is actually his sister who had escaped and was living in disguise. The queen then has no more jealousy or anger for Malavika, for she is no mere maid and instead is of royal blood, and as her wish, she makes her one of Agnimitra's queens.

6. Use of Music in the Play

Malavikagnimitram being Kalidasa's first play, his use of music is simpler in nature, being used to resolve the central debate between Gandasa and Haradatta and to evoke certain emotions. Kalidasa's proficiency over music and blending it with literature had not yet been refined, something which becomes much finer in his later works like Abhijnanasakuntalam. Music in this play is more intertwined with dance, with the dance performances being the most important aspect of the play.

The first use of music is in Act I, when Agnimitra hears the sound of the drums playing right before the competition between Gandasa and Haradatta, signalling the beginning of it and summoning the judges and the audience. The Parivrajika named Kaushiki, a learned ascetic who has been invited as the prime judge of the upcoming competition, hears the drum, exclaiming how the sound of the drum "rouses the heart" (Malavikagnimitram 56) and makes all the peacocks look up to the sky, mistaking the sound of the drums to the sound of thunder:

O, the music's begun!
A beating drum rouses the heart
and a peacock's call,
the echoing vibrations rise and harmonize
with the middle note,
while peahens turn their necks upward,

expecting a thundering rain cloud (Malavikagnimitram 56) As previously stated, the drum sounds were usually used to commemorate ceremonies and are considered auspicious. Here the drums are used to summon the royal judges to the competition of dance performance between Gandasa and Haradatta. Other than the direct symbolism, the drums also symbolise the king's growing attraction towards Malavika. By now, he has only seen her portrait and is already attracted to her, and when he learns that Gandasa is choosing Malavika as his pupil, he is elated and cannot wait to see her in person at the grand hall. Gautama realises this and quietly asks the Agnimitra to be calm and walk slowly in order to not raise any suspicion from the queen, to which the king replies, "Though calm, I'm excited by that seductive drumbeat. Sounds drop down like a path to my heart's desire" (Malavikagnimitram 56) The rapid music of the drums is in a rhythm with the king's pace, fastening to reach the music hall to see Malavika in person. It is a symbol of the king's attraction and a growing infatuation with Malavika, something the queen has already picked up on and is getting annoyed by, for the king had already made several affectionate comments when seeing Malavika's portrait for the first time. Kalidasa uses the drum's holy music to summon the characters to the music hall, a form of inauguration to what is perhaps one of the most important parts of the play as it is here where Agnimitra finally gets to meet Malavika for the first time. The Parivrajika's comments about its sound shows Kalidasa's understanding of music, that is, the rapid and rhythmic beats of the drums being able to evoke feelings of delight and joy within one and also uses it as a form of a foreshadowing, showing the king's growing desire for Malavika.

The next use of music in the play is twofold: Malavika's dance and her song. Malavika sings a song, a composition of four parts. The song is romantic in nature, with her declaring her love for Agnimitra and the difficulties she might face to get to him:

Oh heart! My beloved is hard to get,
don't long for him
Why does my left eye throb so?
Seeing him again, after so long,
how do I receive him?
My lord, know that I long for you in pain. (Malavikagnimitram 61)

The lyrics "Why does my left eye throb so?" is a reference to the Ramayana, where Lord Rama's left eye throbbed indicating a bad omen, difficulties and is a form of warning. Kalidasa's use of this song is significant as this song not only allows for Malavika to confess her love for Agnimitra but also acts to foreshadow the difficulties she is about to face further in the story. Her confession is immediately noticed by Agnimitra who tells Gautama. She performs her dance at the same time, as Gandasa says, both the song and the dance are a composition of Sarmistha, with the song being a Catuspada and the dance called Chalita. The choice of these specific styles is important as they express the Sringara Rasa or the rasa of eroticism or love which is the primary rasa of the play, other than Hasya Rasa (humour).

Unfortunately this is the only use of music that Kalidasa employs in this play, however this short use of dance and music has deep impact as it helps in setting up the main plot of the play. Through her dance and song, Malavika successfully announces her love for Agnimitra and him already being smitten by her looks from the portrait alone, is completely love struck by her performance. One may wonder if such

an elaborate dance and song was truly meant by Kalidasa to be used within the play or if he wanted to make it a separate performance, however seeing how much the performance actually plays into the plot, how it influences the characters and helps in expressing their true emotions, it can be said that indeed, Kalidasa fully intended to use such an elaborate and specific song and dance within the preserve its continuity with the other events.

7. Introduction and plot of Abhijnanasakuntalam

The name “Abhijnanasakuntalam” translates to “The Recognition of Shakuntala”. It is perhaps one of the most famous plays written by Kalidasa. The play tells the story of Sakuntala, a female heroine whose story is found in the “Mahabharata”. Kalidasa takes her story and elaborates on it, adding in dramatic effects. It is the first play by Kalidasa which was translated into English and later into many other languages.

Sakuntala, the protagonist of the story, is the daughter of the great sage Visvamitra and the apsara or nymph Menaka. Her birth is more of an accident as Menaka was sent by Indra due to his fear of Visvamitra’s powers which he achieved through penance and sacrifice. Menaka is thus sent to break his penance and seduce him, which she succeeds in doing, and Sakuntala is born to them. However she is abandoned at birth and is left in the forest and is discovered by sage Kanva, who finds her guarded by birds, which leads him to name her Sakuntala. Since she is born of a nymph or a celestial being, she herself has some celestial powers, those being mainly her power to interact with nature itself.

The plot revolves around the story of Sakuntala and Dushyanta. Dushyanta, the king of Hastinapur, rides into the forest to hunt. As he was about to shoot a deer with his bow and arrow, a sage stops him from doing so, for the deer was from the hermitage and under their protection. Dushyanta does not tell the sages that he is a king and instead goes into the hermitage as a commoner, where he sees Sakuntala with her two friends and immediately is struck with her beauty, confesses his love to her and hands her a ring, which is symbolic of a secret marriage.

They meet again several times and soon Sakuntala is pregnant with their child. Finally, Dushyanta has to leave, and Sakuntala is lost in his thoughts, which causes her to offend Durvasas, a short-tempered sage who curses her by saying that whoever she is thinking of to be this distracted would not be able to recognise her. With the pleas of Priyamvada, he finally changes the curse, saying that a curse cannot be lifted, but if an object gifted by Dushyanta is presented to him by Sakuntala, the curse will be broken. She thus leaves the hermitage for the capital, where she is met with a confused Dushyanta who denies ever knowing or meeting Sakuntala, and when she tries showing him her ring, she discovers that it has fallen out of her finger. She is forced to leave and the ring is later found by a fisherman in the belly of a fish, which he returns to the king which in turn reminds him of Sakuntala. However, this is unknown to her, and she lives in melancholy and grief as her son Sarvadamana is born. Many years later Dushyanta finally sees a grown up Sarvadamana, and notices his similarities in looks and realises that it is indeed his own son, thus he is finally reunited with Sakuntala and they talk about her curse and live happily in his court.

8. Use of Music in the Play

Music accompanies from the very prologue of the play, with the director or Sutradhara asking the actress to “treat the audience to something that will delight their ears” (Kalidasa 170). The actress obliges and sings a song of their current season, summer.

Exquisite are Sirisa blossoms
see how they sway
crested with delicate filaments
kissed lightly, lightly
by murmurous bees
lovely women
exulting in their youth
place the blossoms
tenderly (Abhijnanasakuntalam 170)

Her song entrances the director as well as the audience and the director tells the actress how silent the hall has become. Here the first instance of Kalidasa’s use of music as a tool to foreshadow the events in the play. The director says how her song has made him forget the play they were about to perform, a reference to Sakuntala’s curse which makes Dushyanta forget her. The prologue gives an insight into Kalidasa’s more developed use of music; he uses it to set the tone of the play and the mood of the audience along with a foreshadowing which the audience would only realize after the entire play is over. The song also sets the mood of the play as romantic and light-hearted, reflecting themes of love and compassion. The next use of music is found in Act III, where Dushyanta hides and watches Sakuntala with Priyamvada and Anusuya. He overhears Sakuntala as she talks to Priyamvada and Anusuya about her feelings for Dushyanta and confesses her love for him through a song which she has composed.

I do not know your heart,
but my night and days, O pitiless one!
Are haunted by Love,
as every part of me
yearns to be with you. (The Loom of Time 205)

Dushyanta comes out immediately after hearing this song, leading to him also confessing his feelings of love for Shakuntala and gifting her the ring. Here, Kalidasa uses music as an important element to progress the play. The song directly helps in bringing together the Sakuntala and Dushyanta, leading to their secret marriage. Kalidasa also shows the power of song as a device to express repressed love, as Sakuntala tells her companions that she feels strange and it is only through her song that she can express what she truly feels, that is, her love for Dushyanta.

This leads to the next part, where in Act IV, the now pregnant Sakuntala finally prepares to depart for Dushyanta’s court while bidding farewell to Kanva, Priyamvada, Anasuya and Gautama and other sages of the hermitage, they hear the forlorn song of the birds, bidding her farewell too:

[A koel sings] (The Loom of Time 223)

Along with the forest spirits who also sing:

(Voices in the sky; invisible spirits sing)
May her path be safe and gracious
as gentle breezes blow,
pleasant be her way dotted by lakes
where green lotus-creepers grow;
may the burning rays of the sun
filter mellowed through thick shade trees;
let the pollen of the water-lilies drift
to be as softest dust beneath her feet. (The Loom of Time 223)

It is established from Sakuntala's back story in the Mahabharata that she has a special connection with nature. She was the child of Vishvamitra, the sage and Menaka, an apsara or a celestial nymph. The sad song of the bird, mainly the cuckoo (koel) and the invisible spirits heightens the melancholic nature of the moment, allowing the audience to feel the true weight of the situation. Kalidasa, in this act, shows his excellence in the use of musical aspects, mainly songs, to express the theme and convey the emotions to the audience. It is common for people to be melancholic and forlorn at the departure of a loved one, however through the melancholic songs of fairies and birds, Kalidasa heightens the emotions, showing how the entire forest mourns Sakuntala's departure and not just the people, her kindness and love for the forest and her people causes sadness to extend beyond the realm of the physical and reach the supernatural.

The final use of music and song is found in Act V, where King Dushyanta is with his chamberlain Madhavya in his capital. The chamberlain exclaims, hearing a beautiful music of a veena and song coming from the music hall, which the king confirms is being sung by Queen Hamsavati. The song is romantic in nature, with the queen singing about Dushyanta's loss of love for her and his affections towards other women, referencing his recent marriage with Sakuntala and his affection for her. However, the song plays a much deeper role than simply helping Hamsavati grieve her husband's lack of love; it is a form of foreshadowing for the events which are about to happen, that is, Sakuntala, reaching the capital and asking Dushyanta to accept her as his wife. However, Durvasa's curse had already taken effect, and Dushyanta had forgotten her. With her ring lost in the river, she had no way of breaking the curse and making him remember her identity again. The following are three specific lines of the song:

...once you lovingly kissed
the mango's fresh spray of flowers-
is she then forgotten so soon?... (The Loom of Time 232)

These lines are meant to represent Hamsavati's grief; she sings about how Dushyanta once embraced and loved "the mango's fresh spray of flowers" or the young Hamsavati, something that Dushyanta

admits, saying, “Yes; once I loved her deeply. She is taunting me now for my neglect of her.” (232). However, there is more to these lines than simply Hamsavati’s sorrow. These lines also foreshadow the events which are to occur and have also occurred, “...once you lovingly kissed / the mango’s fresh spray of flowers-....” references Dushyanta falling in love with the young Shakuntala while “is she then forgotten so soon?...” is a reference to Durvasa’s curse on Sakuntala, which makes Dushyanta forget her; a foreshadowing of the future events as Sakuntala has nearly reached the capital. This part shows Kalidasa’s excellent literary skills and his ability to use music in his plays beyond a mere performative aspect but also as a literary device, that is, foreshadowing. He uses this song to convey the sorrowful emotions of Hamsavati, but on a deeper level, it is about Dushyanta’s recent activities and the upcoming events which are about to take place.

These musical performances are employed by Kalidasa to evoke the Sringara rasa which is the rasa of love and romance as well as the Karuna rasa or the rasa of sorrow and grief. He skillfully uses music to evoke feelings, convey emotions and also uses it as a literary device, adding to the richness of the work.

9. Transformation of Kalidasa’s Use of Music in his Plays

The shift and transformation of the use of music in Kalidasa’s works is observable in the two plays, *Malavikagnimitram* and *Abhijnanasakuntalam*. *Malavikagnimitram* was his first play, evident from the shorter size, simpler and less refined story and simpler usage of music, in comparison to *Abhijnanasakuntalam*. There is a clear transformation of his literary prowess and his ability to use music and song as a literary device and add layers to them.

In *Malavikagnimitram*, Kalidasa uses music in a more simpler manner. He begins with the drum sound, considered auspicious, to represent the commemoration of the competition between Ganadasa and Haradatta while also symbolising Agnimitra’s growing love for Malavika. The only other instance of music is Malavika’s dance and song, a very elaborate and complex musical performance. The song is specifically a Catuspada and the dance is a chalika, one of the four sections of this specific song is sung and danced to. Although there lies a deeper meaning behind the song, it may be overlooked by the audience as they may be too engrossed in the dance and song itself, not realising that the performance has a deeper meaning to it. Kalidasa also uses, or experiments with music being used as a literary device; using Malavika’s song as a device to foreshadow the upcoming events and difficulties that would befall her. This is something that Kalidasa works on and fine-tunes in *Abhijnanasakuntalam*. Kalidasa’s use of music in this play is severely limited when compared to *Abhijnanasakuntalam*, with it being used mainly twice in the play and for simpler purposes. Although, Malavika’s musical performance is placed in order to evoke the Sringara Rasa, the music of the drums, as stated before is used to summon the judges for the competition between Gandasa and Haradatta and is not used to evoke any specific rasa.

Kalidasa’s true mastery over language and his ability to use music in his plays can be seen in *Abhijnanasakuntala*. This play focuses more on the song or the vocal music rather than dance or instrumental music. From the prologue of the play itself, there are instances of music, namely vocal music which is significant as it references and is a form of foreshadowing of Durvasa’s curse on Sakuntala, later in the play. The foreshadowing here is subtle, as the director or the sutradhar is the one

who appreciates the actress' song, telling her that it made him forget what play they were about to perform. Kalidasa utilises songs as a form of foreshadowing much more in this play, perhaps the best one is when the chamberlain and King Dushyanta are sitting together, listening to Hamsavati's song who is grieving her husband's lack of love for her. The lyrics of the song have been beautifully layered with meanings, with the surface level showing Hamsavati's sorrow, while the deeper layers referencing Dushyanta's secret marriage with Sakuntala and foreshadowing the upcoming events; the result of Durvasa's curse causing Dushyanta to forget about Sakuntala's identity.

Also notable is the type of songs which are used in this play, compared to *Malavikagnimitram*, the songs composed by Kalidasa in this play are simple, however they are richly layered with deeper meanings. One notable example would be the songs of the birds and the invisible spirits when Sakuntala is about to depart from Kanva's hermitage in the forest. These spirits symbolise the forest itself, or the forest's spirits, with their song acting as their way of mourning and bidding their farewell. It elevates Sakuntala's virtue as a human as along with the people, nature and even the spirits of the forest are mourning her departure, showing just how much she was loved by everyone in the forest. While the play usually follows the *Sringara Rasa*, this part of the play strongly evokes *Karuna Rasa* or sadness. Kalidasa is able to shift the emotions of the entire audience very easily, simply by using music.

10. Conclusion

By reading both of these plays, one would realise that Kalidasa's works have undergone significant changes when it comes to his use of music. Although the literary richness, skillful use of music, story, characters, etc. can be compared between the two plays, one cannot deny the sheer grandeur of Kalidasa's writings. His ability to not only simply use but also blend music within the narrative and dialogue seamlessly during a time when such practices were quite uncommon and still in their early stages. He adheres to the traditions of the *Natyasastra*, and uses music to evoke *rasa* within the audience, which is considered the ultimate goal of any play. Kalidasa was one of the first authors to use music in this manner in their works. Studying his use of music in these two plays, we can observe how Kalidasa's literary skill as well as his understanding of music and musical performance increased with time and writing.

His vivid imagery and the use of nature and its significance along with complex emotional characters have earned Kalidasa the title of "Shakespeare of India". From the forests of Kanva, to the capital of Dushyanta and from the pleasure gardens of Agnimitra's court, to the royal music hall, Kalidasa has included much diversity in the settings of the plays. He has also managed to use suitable music and musical performances throughout the works, music which has helped solve debates, convey true emotions to both the other characters and the audience and most importantly, music which have layered meanings. Kalidasa's plays are meant for both the lovers of art and drama as well as literary analysts. The music used would seem beautiful and pleasurable to the former but for the ones who are knowledgeable in the field of literature, they could look beneath the surface of the music and discover the symbolisms and references it has to offer.

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