

Psycho-philosophical thoughts of Kalidasa

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Abstract

Kalidasa is one of the foremost of poets the world has ever seen. His works are rich with experience and awe of nature. Kalidasa's poetry is not only excellent pieces of literary art, but also have pregnant hints of philosophy and psychology. Undoubtedly, Kalidasa had a very evident background of philosophy, both in its mystical part as well as polemical side. If philosophy was more on a deeper ideal level, Kalidasa's treatment of psychology is humane and appealing to all as indeed true. The present paper is an attempt to look at various remarks of Kalidasa in many of his works from the perspective of philosophy and psychology. Although such an effort is justified in a work far more voluminous than a paper, certain striking remarks alone are discerning taken and examined from the background of philosophy and psychology. The cultural and social background of Kalidasa is also kept in view while making an attempt to understand his remarks with the twin perspectives.

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Kalidasa's genius is evident, not only in his poetic excellence, but also with respect to his philosophical maturity and deep understanding of human nature. In our understanding of philosophical thoughts and psychological elements in the works of Kalidasa, we come across certain striking and very impressive remarks. In the invocatory verse of Raghuvamsa, Kalidasa remarks with deep philosophical note:

Vaagarthaviva Sampruttau

Vaagarthapratipattaye

Jagatah Pitarau vande

Parvatiparameshwarau

It is here that Kalidasa very naturally demonstrates the philosophical background he had. In this verse, it is said: "Like the word and sense are united, to know the inner purport of word and

sense, I salute Parvati and Parameshwara, who are the parents of the world.” There are two aspects evident in this verse. At the outset, the theological part. Paarvatee and Parameshwara are hailed as the parents of the universe. This apart, Kalidasa, in his usual style of simile (upamana alankara), draws a philosophical comparison. Paarvatee is compared to Vak or word, and Parameshwara to meaning. The word and meaning are ever integrated. There cannot be any word without meaning and there cannot be any meaning without word. This has been very rightly put by modern thinkers as well as “there cannot be any thought without word”. Such an advanced concept was already identified by Kalidasa. Today, linguists and philosophers as well are diving deep into this aspect of inseparable relation between the word and the meaning.

Kalidasa not only puts forward a technical philosophical thought but is also pragmatic in his Sloka. It is vagarthapratipattaye which is pragmatic. The purpose of philosophy in one way is to realize the true sense of word and meaning. The entire gamut of vakyartha tradition is centered upon knowing the word and sense. The very term vakyartha signifies this. The Upanishads are vak and the realization is artha. This is the culmination of philosophy which kalidasa portrays.

To some of the philosophical remarks of kalidasa:

सतां हि सन्देहपदेषु वस्तुषु

प्रमाणमन्तकरण प्रवृत्तयः ¹

“whenever a good one is in ambiguity, it is the inner self which is the adjudging proof to it”

¹-अभिज्ञानशाकुन्तलम् (महाकवि कालिदास)

To analyze this philosophically, there are intricate philosophical elements. There is clearly a suggestion of Pramanya Svatasthva Vada of Indian philosophy. To look at the svatasthva or intrinsic nature of validity of knowledge, Vyasa Tirtha remarks in his Tarka Tandava: "Grahya pramanya virodhyopasthapaka samgrasamavahita grahya pramanyashraya tat tat jnana vishayaka sakshi jnana vishayatva naiyattiyam".²

The word Sakshi is quite important here. In the background of Indian philosophy, the sakshi is the inner self. Whenever a doubt such as "post or man" arises, it is later rejected by right knowledge as "This is indeed a post". The philosophical question here is that whether this knowledge too can be sublated. However, it is the sakshi which affirms the validity of knowledge. Hence, the saying of Kalidasa that सतां हि सन्देहपदेषु वस्तुषु प्रमाणमन्तकरण प्रवृत्तयः, can be viewed in this philosophical aspect as well.

In another saying of Kalidasa,

*क्रिया हि वस्तुपहिता प्रसीदति ।*³

The one which is imparted to the one who is deserving alone yields fruits.

We can note that it is indeed a form of "Daanam dhruvam phalati paatra gunaanukoolyaat".

Today, current research of philosophy is centered upon this. The question of philosophy for

² Tarka Tandava, I

³ Raghuvamsha

everyone is a current problem. As one thinker puts it, it is not a choice of no philosophy or philosophy, but it is only a choice of right philosophy to the right deserving.

Similarly,

पदं हि सर्वत्र गुणैर्निधीयते ।⁴

Good attributes put their impressions everywhere.

This is very accepted in the Greek tradition of philosophy as well.

Looking at Psychological elements in Kalidasa's works, kalidasa is a close observer of human psyche.

औत्सुक्यमात्रमवसाययति प्रतिष्ठा⁵

By getting recognition, the enthusiasm of effort cools down.

This is psychologically important in many ways. Our enthusiasm is result orientated and is psychologically motivating. This sayings is of vastu tantra type of psychology and not rather idealistic.

A very beautiful subhashita styled psychological verse is as follows:

⁴ Raghuvamsha

⁵ -अभिज्ञानशाकुन्तलम् (महाकवि कालिदास)

भवन्ति नम्रास्तरव फलोद्गमैः

नवांबुभिर्भूमिविलंबिनो घनाः

अनुद्धताः सत्पुरुषा समृद्धिभिः

स्वभाव एवैष परोपकारिणाम् ॥⁶

The trees bend down by fruits, the clouds bend down by heavy rain-water, likewise the great ones are down to earth even after their achievements, and this is the intrinsic nature of them.

This verse is important with the word स्वभाव एवैष परोपकारिणाम् | The word svabhava is important because it portays inner psychological aspect of a great person. This is the ideal set to the psyche of a illuminated one.

In this verse,

सन्तः परीक्ष्यान्यतरत् भजन्ते

मूढः परप्रत्ययनेयबुद्धिः ॥⁷

Discerning ones always take by examination but dullards are always moved by others opinions

This again is a portray of human nature.

Finally, the saying of Kalidasa which summarizes philosophical and psychological tone as well is

भिन्नरुचिर्हि लोकः १०

“the likes and dislikes of people are many”

⁶ Abhijnana Shakuntala

⁷ -मालविकाग्निमित्रम् (महाकवि कालिदास)

⁸ Raghuvamsha

This is a combination of philosophical and psychology. In philosophical side, it portrays not the monism but realism of many selves which are differing from each other. Psychologically, the tastes of varied conscious beings is a self-evident fact. Thus, it may be remarked that a deeper understanding of kalidasa's works makes us to move towards many philosophical aspects and phychological implications.

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