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PHILOSOPHY OF LOVE IN THE PLAYS OF KALIDASA AND ROMANTIC  
COMEDIES OF SHAKESPEARE

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ABSTRACT

The emotion of love is inherent in man; it is the nature of the human soul. There is no one in the world who does not have the urge to love. Therefore it is quite natural for the dramatists like Kalidasa and Shakespeare' to concern themselves with the emotion of love. In their plays they concentrate their attention on the different phases of this feeling. Both the dramatists are never tired of showing its tenderness, its lifting power, its capacity of good and evil and its obstinacy. This research paper has delved into the Romantic Comedies of both the dramatists and has derived a common philosophy of love which plays a pivotal role in their dramas. The basic philosophy in their romantic comedies is that love is free and rises of its own accord in free will which not even God can control. This sovereignty is not easily asserted, the baser elements rebel, and love must be prepared to endure all, before it rules all  
Key words : Cupid, Madan. Love-at first-sight, love madness

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INTRODUCTION

Kalidasa and Shakespeare make it plain that the soul's crown and throne must be yielded to love; this is because "the universal order is the creation of divine love. They share the idea that falling in love is something more than the romantic experience: it is also a rite of initiation into a new life"[1]. Most people do not really understand the full implication of falling in love; but it is indeed a great event in the life of a young person.

This love, which is shown in the romantic comedies, is always the roguish merriment of little God called Madan and Cupid. In "the Sanskrit dramas, Kama, lobha and moha come under love"[2]. Each of these maddens and blinds when in excess. Hence we have such expressions as 'Kamandha'. 'Blind with lust' and mad with love. Mada seems to be as mad, and one of the names of Kama personified as Cupid is madana the 'maddener.' He is the only judge that can measure the depth of love. In Shakespeare's plays, Cupid, the God of love is painted as a blind boy with wings :

"that blind boy who abuses everyone's eyes because his own one about"[3].

Wings and no eyes signify rash haste, because wings permit speed towards objectives which the eyes cannot see. Therefore, a lover is called a child because he is deceived in his choice:

Love looks not with eyes but with mind:

And therefore, is wing'd Cupid painted blind  
Nor hath love's mind of any judgement -  
And therefore, is love said to be a child  
Because in choice he is often beguiled [4].

Cupid and Madan are shown as armed with bows and arrows. These arrows are discharged aimlessly: "Slain by love's arrows"[5] or "Cupid kills with arrows." [6] And therefore the effect is the same, the eyes are blinded by love: the judgement is disabled and the reason is put to flight. The lovers are quite powerless before these all conquering shafts of Cupid:

King: Oh revered God of love, although you impel me to love  
For an inaccessible object, yet you smile at me so sorely  
That I am not able to broke any delay[7].

Afflicted on account of their beloveds the lovers generally make a humble request onto the God of love. The prayers that they make is that: they should be united before long. This prayer preceding from love is common to all. Both the dramatists try to establish a relationship between the lover, the lady and the God of love. When the hero of the play is pierced with the five arrows- that is to say, when he falls in love- it is not to the lady he kneels, in fact he turns away from her to the god of love who commands his service.

Under the influence of Cupid, a person becomes blind not physically, but mentally because the love struck person does not see the defects and limitations of the object of love. A kind of insanity mounts on him. The result is that he cannot maintain his position in the full glare of reality and common sense. For both he dramatists " Love is full of unbellling strains"[8]. a kind of madness in which the victim may be intellectually aware of his illusion, but is unable to resist it. For example, in the play *Malavikagnimitram* though the king is aware of the fact that Malavika is the nymph of heaven and he is the creature of the earth and therefore it is next to impossible to achieve her, but even then he is unable to resist his fruitation of love for her: "What unattainable object doth love attach one to!"[9]

The main scene of Act IV in the *Vikramorvasiyam* is for the most part, a soliloquy of Pururavas gone mad over the loss of Urvasi. The king behaves like a madman as he seeks information from sources which are least of all ever likely to give any information:

Hold, you wicked friend hold  
Where are you going, taking my beloved [10].

Shakespeare too in his play *A Midsummer Night's Dream* presents love as a kind of madness which is due to the whims of Cupid: "Cupid is a knavish lad, / Thus to make poor females mad." [11] It is impossible for lovers to be reasonable:

Lovers and madmen have such seething brains,  
Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend  
More than cool reason ever comprehends.  
The lunatic, the lover and the poet  
Are of imagination all compact[12].

For both the dramatists love has no basis with reality, which creates a phantom, a mere shadow of the beloved person: it is a dream. This clearly indicates that Kalidasa and Shakespeare are of the opinion that all lovers are mad because Love is a madness.

In the romantic tales of the dramatists, the lovers generally get fiercely assailed by love that arises at their first-sight. For example Shakuntala feels a strange flutter in her heart at the sight of Dushyanta. She had not known Cupid before and hence her heart was bare of armour. She had felt a particular attraction for the King the like of which she never felt before :

Shakuntala (to herself) : How is it, that at the sight of this person,  
I feel an emotion scarce inconsistent with a grove devote to piety[13].

This is the first awakening of love, which has unnerved and excited her a little. The similar situation is also present in Vikramorvarsiyam when the king Pururavas and Urvasi exchange mutual glances and straightway fall in love with each other:

King : Ever since I saw her, that  
Celestial one has enthroned herself  
in my heart to which access was given  
to her by the unerring shafts of love.[14]

Urvasi is also "fiercely assailed by love." [15] Which has arisen at the sight of Pururavas.

This principle of love-at first sight is perhaps the keynote of all the Romantic Comedies of Shakespeare, which is nowhere better illustrated than in *As You Like It*. As Phebe says: "Whoever loved that loved not at first sight" [16] is true of many characters, of this love comedy. For example, Rosalind is smitten with love the moment she sees Orlando, this is evident from the dialogue of Celia :

Is it possible, on such a sudden, you  
Should fall into so strong a liking with  
Old Sir Rowland's son?" [17]

Orlando is also overthrown at the sight of Rosalind. Not only the hero and the heroine, but all are in love, and they fall in love at first sight. Rosalind and Orlando, Phebe and Ganymede are all cases for love at first sight. John Vyvan has rightly said that "in the religion of love the ladies eyes represent the baptismal font" [18]. Through her eyes a lady conveys her inner feelings. Both Kalidasa and Shakespeare have expressed this theory. For example, in the play *Abhijana-Sakuntalam*, 'Sakuntala conveys her feelings towards Dushyanta through her "tender looks even while she directed her eyes elsewhere." [19] Even Dushyanta notices her silent messages of love:

King : She does not  
Stand with her face turned towards  
Mine, nevertheless, her eyes for  
Most part are not turned to any other object.[20].

Similarly in *The Merchant of Venice*, Portia also seems to like Bassanio. She did not speak out her love to him, but he reads her love in her eyes, because they gave him silent messages of love.

"Sometimes from her eyes  
I did receive fair speechless messages." [21]

Kalidasa and Shakespeare both seem to agree that love is "first learned in a Lay's eyes." [22]

With this background their dramas seem to convey a philosophy that this kind of love, which is endangered in the eyes, which feeds upon mere appearances and has no roots in reality, dies as soon as it is born. This is because fancy is not true; it springs from the head, not from the heart. Both the dramatists do not appreciate this kind of love which is born in the eyes, but their method of criticizing it is different. This difference may be because Kalidasa had no lively sense of humour and it probably never occurred to him that 'love-at-first-sight' had its comic possibilities. Shakespeare used this to its full, but without ceasing to respect the principle of the gradual awakening of human love to heavenly beauty. Kalidasa on the other hand is "bent on emphasizing the value of love at-first-sight only after going through the agonies of separation. To deserve each other they have to undergo a period of separation without even the hope of reunion." [23] Not only this in the play *Abhijana-Sakuntalam* Kalidasa has inserted the curse of Durvasa to bring home to our mind that love inspired by sight i.e. by external charms has a taint of sensuality in it and is, therefore of a low type. It is only when "it is tested in furnace of tribulations that all its cravings for self-indulgence is burnt away like a dross and then it is sublimated into a spiritual affection with a keen sense of moral obligation in place of carnal gratification" [24]. Shakespeare also shows the fickleness of love-at-first-sight in the play entitled *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with the aid of love juice. The love of the Athenian young-men is capricious, wayward irrational. Their love is born in the eyes and is therefore, quick shifting. In the play *As You Like It* Shakespeare satirized this kind of love, when he makes Orlando say :

Is't possible that on so little acquaintance  
You should like her? That,, but seeing, you  
Should love her? And loving woo? Wooing  
She should grant? And will you preserve to enjoy her? [25]

Though Shakespeare's romantic lovers do fall in love at-first-sight, they are permitted to marry only after the full-course of wooing is completed which indeed is the main story of his Romantic comedies. This means that the sanction for marriage is not so much important as the sudden falling in love. It is during such an interval that they are given an opportunity to prove the worth of their passion and loyalty. And conversely, where such interval is lacking the love at first sight is held up to banter and ridicule. Shakespeare's heroes and heroines of the Romantic comedies are not permitted to marry in haste and repent at leisure. In this way we see the quality of romantic love as Shakespeare conceives it. It is different from the average youthful love or real life in which love usually peters out at the end of the honeymoon. Shakespeare's lovers are subjected to severest trials before their love, begun at-first-sight, is consummated into marriage after a considerable passage of time.

Usually in the plays of Kalidasa and Shakespeare, the falling in love of the hero and the heroine is followed by marriage with the same person. This may be because both the dramatists are of the opinion that marriage holds together family life and therefore proper respect should be paid to marriage, as Shakespeare writes in his play *As You Like It*;

Wedding, is a great Juno's crown :  
O blessed bond of board and bed  
'Tis Hymen people's every town:  
High wedlock then be honoured:  
Honour, high honour and renown.  
To Hymen, God of every town. [26]

Marriage is necessary because as Benedick says in *Much Ado About Nothing* "the world must be peopled." In other words both the dramatists seem to convey to the audience a philosophy that "the ideal of marriage is an important factor in human life, not only for social reasons but also for emotional satisfaction." Because when two persons are in love they want to be wholly united. The philosophy which they seem to convey is "Marriage is moulded legally and religiously for providing a dependable opportunity for the expression of the erotic life." [27] Therefore the aim of love is happy union of man and woman.

Kalidasa's plays exhibit this philosophy that man and woman are never complete without each other. Kama or love is to the Indian not merely a physical gratification but a value of life when governed by the goal of Dharma. Love becomes an end value when it culminates in progeny as demanded by Dharma. It is this philosophy which Kalidasa has propagated in all his plays. Even in the plays of Shakespeare the physical aspect of love is not ignored. His heroines are no doubt modest and virtuous but they are also warm blooded passionate creatures, eager for physical union with their lovers and for the pleasure of love. When occasion demands it, as it does in *All's Well that Ends Well* they can be quite forward and bold in the pursuit of their love. Both the dramatists think that, "When two people are united in love there is great joy and satisfaction in life." [28] Hence lies the value of marriage.

### **Conclusion**

Shakespeare and Kalidasa have enunciated a common philosophy of love in their Romantic comedies. According to them love is "no doubt delighted by the sight of beauty in some feminine form but when love is performed in some degrading way, or when the beauty of the body is judged superior to that of the soul-then, the true beauty of love is abused." [29] The continuance of such abuse is said to lead to "delusion and enslavement" [30]. Veil after veil must be successfully withdrawn because love cannot be won only by the fleeting beauty- by purity, humility and devotion. The worth of an individual is to be judged not only by his external features but by his internal qualities. Kalidasa and Shakespeare feel that love could be won only by the beauty of the soul, by purifying all lust, all coquettish airs and graces. Love which is founded on physical

beauty is ephemereal, because it is effaced by the wear and tear of the body. But that love which is rooted in moral beauty is perennial because it defies all hardships, all suffering and remains constant, and when hearts are united they remain united inspite of separation of the bodies owing to adverse turn of fate. In short for both the dramatis : Virtue is beauty.

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