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SHAKESPEARE and KALIDASA —A STUDY in COMPARISON

(With Special Reference to *As You Like It* and *Abhijnana Sakuntalam*)

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Abstract:

The comparison between Shakespeare and Kalidasa began in 1789 after Sir William Jones said it in passing that Kalidasa is "the Shakespeare of India". Though Jones didn't quantify his statement, it delighted Indians who were happy to know that there existed an Indian writer who was as good as Shakespeare. For the uninitiated, Jones was the first Englishman to translate *Abhijnana Sakuntalam* (*The Recognition of Shakuntala*), the most renowned Sanskrit Play by Kalidasa.

Shakespeare and Kalidasa, two of the greatest writers of all times, belonged to different time zones. Kalidasa was much ahead in time zone than Shakespeare. Wouldn't it be more apt, therefore, to call Shakespeare '*the Kalidasa of Stratford-upon-Avon*'? Harish Trivedi, known for his books and articles on Postcolonial Literature and Theory, avers:

"Kalidasa lived long before Shakespeare. At the time when Kalidasa, the court-poet, was flourishing as one of the nine gems in the court of Vikramaditya in the 4th century BCE, the British were as unlettered and unpolished as the army of Hanuman." A harsh statement indeed! The army of Hanuman, untrained, raw, but blessed by the grace of Lord Rama with valour and zeal for the great cause they fought for, contributed immensely to Rama's victory over Ravana. And surely words would fall short of eulogising Lord Hanuman, who is worshipped as *Sankat Mochan* and *Asht Siddhi nau nidhi ke data* by a devout Hindu. And though Shakespeare came much later, yet undeniably the British upbringing produced a gem like Shakespeare, inspired by his 'unlettered Muse', who can, very justifiably, be compared with Kalidasa, 'the flourishing gem' in the court of Vikramaditya.

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"Kalidasa wrote epics, Shakespeare's didn't." avers Trivedi. True that! He further reiterates: "What poetry meant to Kalidasa, was not the same for Shakespeare. They belonged to different time zones. The latter's works have no connect with God and nature, while Kalidasa always invoked God and Nature in his writings". I choose to repudiate this statement and venture to establish that both are alike in their perspectives to God, Nature and Man through a comparative analysis of *Abhijnana Sakuntalam* and *As You Like It.* The most famous and oft-quoted lines of *As You Like It*-- '*All the world is a stage. . .'* by Jaques, who plays an inveterate spectator of the diverse pageants life presents, wanting to 'Cleanse the foul body of the infected world' like God Himself (11. Vii. 61), echo till date as the Vedantic philosophy of *Sakshi Bhava*, as taught by Lord Krishna to Arjuna in the *Bhagavad Gita,* while playing different roles in world, assigned to Man by God. This conclusion is supported by the fact that Jaques' presence, though he a 'loyal lord' to Duke Senior, is more in character if we perceive it as a result of his desire to observe the unusual life of outlaws in an apparently Edenic place, supported by the fact that he speeds off to witness Duke Frederick's conversion as soon as the community in Arden returns to the good old beaten path of holy matrimony, rightful rule and tranquil courtly life. Adam's (reminiscent of Eden again) faith in God, Hermit's role in Frederick's conversion, Corin's "little recks to find the way to heaven (11. Iv. 79-80) and many others hint at Shakespeare's invocation of God. Royal court is absent, yet overwhelmingly present as an antithesis in both the plays. Both Kalidasa and Shakespeare use the character of *Vidushka* or jester or clown to comment critically on the corruptions prevalent in court and society: Touchstone in *As You Like It* and Madhavya in *Abhijnana Sakuntalam*. **Touchstone** talks jestingly as befits a clown, of court's lack of honour and wisdom. Similarly, Madhavya in *Abhijnana Sakuntalam* slips in some pointed criticism of the King, under the guise of affectionate banter. Both the plays are a beautiful blend of Love, romance, Nature, Myth and fairy tale with elements of comedy.

Trivedi exhorts the audience to revisit Kalidasa and Shakespeare to learn from their writings: "We should read them on their terms so that they become relevant to us, and expand our sympathies, horizons and our ideas about what theatre is and what poetry is,"says Trivedi. East and West meet in Kalidasa and Shakespeare: aesthetically, thematically, artistically. One finds in their writings manifold beauties and peculiar similarities of thought and diction and such gems as are found nowhere, neither in Oriental literature nor in the Occidental literature.

Key Words:

Pastoral, Romance, Benign, Nature, Idyllic, Enchantment, Quest, Identity, Woodland, Court, Disorder

Great works of Art stand and live eternally. St. John Ervin begins the introduction to *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*: "The Authority of Shakespeare among men of supreme genius does not diminish nor is it brought to a standstill by time. It grows. . .That is as it should be. The mind of a man of genius is not immediately comprehended but must be approached many times before its fullness is seen.This is not to say that the contents of a work of genius are more obscure. . .A hill is more easily surveyed than a mountain whose entire height, indeed, may never be visible to us at any time or all the time. So, it is with Shakespeare."[1] And so it is with Kalidasa. Their works are alike, and yet intriguingly different: as varied in character and quality as their people. And the difference lies in those elements of their art which are their own individual elements, embedded in, and emanating from, their distinctive personalities, each being unique in his own way, and from their distinctive cultural traditions, and socio-religious background. *As You Like It* and *Abhijnana Sakuntalam* parallels almost in everything: from plot to characters to situations to action. It would be immensely intriguing to delve deep into the woof and warp of the textual fibres of both the masterpieces. For the purpose of uniformity, cogency and comprehension, this paper seeks to delve deep into three major aspects of the plays, all inter-mingled and inter-connected:

1) **Pastoral World of Enchantment (Man and Nature)**
   A) **Idyllic World and Shakuntala**
   B) **Forest of Arden and Rosalind**
2) **Love's Order**
3) **Quest For Identity**

1) Pastoral World of Enchantment (Man and Nature) ----

"Sweet is the lore which Nature brings", sings the Wordsworth, the pioneer of Romantic Poetry. How true! Nature, indeed, can essentially teach Man far more than all of the wisdom of the past:

One impulse from a vernal wood

May teach you more of man,

Of moral evil and of good,

Than all the sages can.

(William Wordsworth, *The Tables Turned,* 21-24*)*

Both Kalidasa and Shakespeare, known for infusing the romantic spirit in literature as 'Nature poets' (Samuel Johnson called Shakespeare 'A Poet of Nature'), create an idyllic world in their plays *Abhijnana Sakuntalam,* and *As You Like It* respectively. This world of

pristine nature is pitted against the world of court in order to enact the drama of emotions, thereby playing deftly on the subconscious human longing for harmony and love through the connection between Man and Nature. Social disorder of the artificial, glittering world of court gets converted into a happy world of morality, order and tranquility in the lap of Nature. The natural world reflects the inner state of the protagonists, who feel free to create new identities for themselves, exploring the new Idyllic surroundings and discovering to their joy what they lacked in the artificial world of court. In both the plays, the characters go to the heart of the forest, mingle with those living in the forest, seeking or hiding their true identities, and then return to build a better society. Dushyantha, the Puru King, becomes the caretaker of the woodland. Rosalind becomes Ganymede. Dushyantha brings a metamorphosis in Shakuntala. So does Rosalind in Orlando. Forest becomes a utopian space of physical and spiritual exile, leading to awakening and enlightenment. Spiritual banishment is reinforced by the use of the term 'desert' six times in *As You Like It*. Similarly, in *Abhijnana Sakuntalam*, when Shakuntala, the embodiment of Nature, leaves the hermitage and the green world vanishes, what remains is 'an empty desert' where Dushyantha is sighing with repentance:

'*Having passed by a full-flowing stream, / I pant after a mirage, my friend'* (VI: 19-20)

Nature acts as a catalytic, transformative and restorative agent to bring out innate goodness. What makes their transformations remarkable is that these other identities already resided within each person but had been so far suppressed.

A) Idyllic World and Shakuntala:

Shakuntala, brought up in the hermitage of Sage Kanva as his foster daughter, is the Child of Nature. She is also envisaged as the guardian deity of the woodland. As the Lady of Nature, one who lives in the 'green world', into whom has flowed 'the beauty born of murmuring sound', Shakuntala possesses the beauty of Nature as well as its holiness. Kalidasa does not let us forget that the heroine is not wholly of this mortal world of ours:

Ascetic: O King, we are on our way to gather wood for the sacrificial Fire. There, clinging to the slopes of the Himalaya, along the banks of the Malini is visible the Hermitage of our Guru, the Patriarch Kanva where Sakuntala dwells like its guardian deity.[2]

"She belongs to two worlds, sharing in the qualities of her parents, who belonged to two different worlds, invested with Nature's beauty and spontaneous creative energies as well as its holiness, and inheriting the ability for ascetic control that makes her a striking presence in the last act though she speaks a few words", concludes Chandra Rajan.[3]

The myth of Shakuntala enriches the enchantment of this pastoral world created by Kalidasa.In the earliest mention of Shakuntala in the Vedic myth, she is described as an *apsara* who conceived and bore the great Bharata at a place called Nadapit(*Satapatha Brahmana*: 13:5:4:15). Nadapit is glossed by the commentator[4] as Kanva's hermitage. But that identification has obviously been made on the basis of the Shakuntala-Duhsanta story in the *Mahabharata*[5] where, however, the name Nadapit does *not* occur. "The original story of

Sakuntala referred to in the ***SB*** is lost to us; we have only a very long and earthy version of it in the epic (*Mahabharata*: 1: chs.62-69). It must be our guess then, that Nadapit was some place of enchantment, a pool of *apsaras* perhaps, where strange things could happen and fall in love with celestial nymphs", observes Chandra Rajan.[6] In the *Mahabharata,* which is the direct source of the play, Shakuntala is not an *apsara* herself but the daughter of an *apsara* and she is presented as such in the play. Apsaras, born of the *Waters*, i.e. the creative waters where life originated—are powers of Nature, associated with fertility and plentitude. In the ancient myth of the Churning of the Ocean by gods and anti-gods to obtain ambrosia, the cup of immortality, the *apsaras* rose out of waters, together with many other wondrous things, including Beauty (*Sri*) herself. Abandoned at birth, Sakuntala is looked after by birds (*sakunta*)that encircle her protectively so that she remains unharmed until the sage Kanva finds her and names her Sakuntala because she was first adopted in a sense by the birds who cared for her.

Kalidasa's idyllic world is rich in fairy-tale elements.The song of the actress (nati) has already lured the audience into this world. Music is used skilfully to make this transition. It is noteworthy that the word used for the fleet deer that has drawn King Dushyantha far away, is '*Saranga*', which is also the name of a *raga* or musical mode.The raga, *saranga,* is defined as one that through the 'attractive arrangement of notes, *colours* the mind of the hearer.' (*Ranga* signifies colour, paint and also the stage.) Music projects the appropriate mood. The play is located in the mythic past, in a world where mortals still moved with gods; the human and divine intermingled. In this world, the gods were not distant but friends of heroes like Dushyanta who participated with them to keep order in the universe. By removing the action of the play into the world of the past, distant in time, a poetic and dramatic purpose is served: it inhibits a realistic approach to the play. It clearly marks the line that separates the fictional world from our everyday world. In the Sanskrit text the two words '*Atha*' (now) and '*iti' (thus*) at the beginning, and end of the play enclose it as it were; literally, it would read as follows: Now begins the play, entitled *Abhijnana Sakuntalam* and thus ends the play etc. The play-world thus created contains another world-----the world of the deep and dark forests near the river Malini, 'the green world' into which we are lured by the deer and where we meet Shakuntala.

Act 1 is is replete is with the kind of imagery that shapes the green world of Shakuntala — imagery of flowers blooming, honey-bees hovering over them, of green foliage and tender young shoots and buds being prised open, of clear waters flowing in channels to lave the roots of the trees and the fresh cool spray of Malini's snow-fed waters wafted by the breeze. The colour-words present in the descriptions are those of the fresh colours of the wood and of budding youth. The King, a passionate lover, courtly and gallant, describes Shakuntala as 'blue-lotus petal', hidden behind a tree, watching 'her youthful form enfolded like a flower' that 'in its pale leafy sheath unfolds not its glory' and 'her palms reddened lifting the watering-jar' and 'the Sirisa blossom adorning her ear, caught in the sparkling web of beads of sweat.' This is pure poetry overflowing with ***Shringaar Rasa*** and the play is replete with it. Rasas in natya-shastra evoke *bhavas* in full flow. One gets to soak in the beauty of ***Karuna Rasa*** in Act 6 when Dushyanta is going through profound remorse and self-pity; ***Vatsalya***

Rasa when Dushyanta is feeling natural affection for the child playing with a lion-cub, not knowing that the child is his son; ***adbhuta rasa***, creating awe, when Shakuntala disappears in the skies in Act 5; ***Vir Rasa*** when Shakuntala flares up at not being recognised and lashes at Dushyanta, showing a gallant courage in Act 4 and ***Hasya Rasa*** by the Vidushka Madhvya. However, the play is dominated by ***Shringaar Rasa***. In Act 1, Dushyanta is the 'bee circling at daybreak over the "jasmine's cup"'. Later even while he is setting himself up as the noble and self-restrained man shying away from the touch of another man's wife, his appreciative eye, the trained eye of a connoisseur of feminine beauty sees the sweetness beneath the enveloping veil, 'barely revealed', as she stands 'like a bud/ not burst into bloom. . ./ a tender sprout among yellowing leaves'.

Shakuntala is portrayed as kin to all forms of life in the sacred grove. Shakuntala's years of devotion to the hermitage trees have created a deep bond between her and the natural world. This establishes a basic correspondence in the play between Man and Nature. Nature, in her most glorious forms, varied forms, plays an important role in the psycho-sexual growth of Shakuntala:

Lower lip has the redness of young sprouts; her arms

Imitated tender twigs; and youth, attractive like a

blossom, pervades all her limbs.

She and the Jasmine are constantly brought together; they are sisters, born of the same mother—Nature. Her permanent companions are birds, animals and plants, her real kins. She has even given names to them. She calls the Jasmine as 'Madhavi' and 'Vanjyotsana' and a fawn as 'Deerghpanga'. Daily she waters the plants and feeds her pets. When Anasuya asks in good humour: '*why Shakuntala has been watering Madhavi so lovingly?'*, she replies: '*And why not. . . I love her like a sister*.' Blooming of flowers is an occasion to celebrate for her:

Shakuntala: (comes *close to the bush and exclaims in delight)* Look, *look, what a surprise! . . . Priyamvadha listen, I have something to tell that will please you.*

Priyamvadha: Please me? What's that, dear?

Shakuntala: *Look Anasuya. . . the Madhavi is covered with buds. . .from the root up. . . this is not the season for blooming."*

The flora and fauna become co-sharers in her joys and sorrows. 'Nature' and 'Nurture' blend in Shakuntala. The scene of Shakuntala's departure is probably one of the finest and most expressive of the profound spiritual bond between Shakuntala and varied dimensions of Nature:

Priyamvada: *The bitterness of parting is not yours alone; look around and see how the Holy Grove grieves, knowing the hour of parting from you is near.*

The doe tosses out mouthfuls of grass,

the peacocks dance no more:

pale leaves flutter down

as if the vines are shedding their limb.

….. ….. ….. ….. ….. ….. ….. ….. ….. ….. ….. ….. ….. ….. ….. …..

Sakuntala: *(Recollecting) O Father, I have to say goodby to Madhavi, my woodland sister.*

Kanva: Yes, my child, I know how much you love her; here she is, to your right.

Sakuntala: *(coming close to the jasmine, throws her arms round it) O Madhavi, beloved sister, twine your branching arms round me; for, I shall be far, far away from you.*

(Act 4:14-15)

The little fawn, her 'adopted son', whom she 'fondly reared with handfuls of millets', tries to hold her back 'tugging again and again at the hem of her garment' and will not move out of her path. Says Sarangrava, hearing the cuckoo's song:

Kin to her during her woodland sojourn

the trees now give her leave to go

(Sakuntala: 4.12)

While asking Nature bid farewell to Shakuntala, Sage Kanva says:

Hear, O hear, all you noble trees of the Holy Grove with indwelling divinities:

She who never had a drink of water

before you had all drunk your fill,

she who never plucked your tender buds

for love of you, though fond of adorning herself,

she to whom it was a joyous festival

when you first burst into bloom; she, Sakuntala,

leaves us today for her husband's home:

All grant her leave to go.

(1V: 11)

Can this flower, this 'sensitive plant' survive in the 'other world' –the glittering gilded world of the Paurava monarch? Shakuntala herself poses this question:

Rent from my dear father's lap like the sapling of the sandal tree from the side of the Malaya Mountain, how can I ever survive in an alien soil! (4.22.-2,3)

This image of the sandal tree will occur again in a very significant context in Act 7. Act 5 is clear proof that Shakuntala is trampled on, stripped and mutilated (figuratively).

Shakuntala, embodiment of Nature pure, stands no chance of winning her case in the glittering court because she cannot produce the only concrete evidence of a secretly contracted marriage, the royal signet ring gifted to her by Dushyantha. She is lost. In the last moments of her hour of sorrow and tribulation, when she is on the verge of death, she flings her arms up to the indifferent skies and invites death as her last last resort, reminiscent of Sita's disappearance into earth in the *Ramayana,* a flash of light appears and carries her away. Shakuntala vanishes, never to be seen again in this world. The reconciliation and reunion of Shakuntala and Dushyantha takes place in another world, the 'golden world' of the Primal Pair. The resolution of the plot is affected in a mythical world.

Rajan Chandra concludes: "Therefore, the moment of epiphany has to *happen* elsewhere, in another world which I shall call the 'golden world' of the Imagination, a phrase suggested by the word *Hema-Kuta* ((Golden Peak) (7.8+6-8), which is a mystic region that the Puranas place beyond the Himalayas, in the vicinity of the Mythical Mt Meru or Sumeru. It is not the initial world of enchantment we stepped into, the green world of the deep and dark forests; it is, as we saw earlier, a place …filled with the luminous presence of the Primal Parents of the universe."[7]

Kalidasa, like Shakespeare, discovers those hidden linkages between Man and Nature that lie submerged, but do not reveal themselves to common sight. It is this poetic vision that is capable of reading the *mysterious hieroglyphics* of nature, its subtle symbolism, and finding an answer to a great many riddles in it.

". . .behold the earth is being brought near to me as if by someone flinging it upwards."

--- *Dushyantha* (*Act* VII)

Sharad Rajimwale remarks: "Endowed with that keen observant vision which is rarely gifted to select few; Shakespeare, Charles Dickens, Guy de Maupassant, Alexander Pushkin being some of them, Kalidasa too demonstrates a unique sharp eye for the details and a talent for chemizing them into enchanting compositions."[8]

The world of Enchantment is perfect with pastoral beauty of woodland, myth, love, romance, rasas, a world interspersed with many more elements. As Chandra Rajan concludes:

"In the play, to the curse-fall-restoration motif, certain other elements are added: the loss and discovery of the child and heir to the throne and the loss and recovery of the token of identity; a pattern of dream-illusion and of forgetfulness-recollection-recognition, all of which are intricately woven."[9]

B) Forest of Arden and Rosalind:

"The Power of Arden to bestow blessing is confined to those who come to it as a refuge from the pressures outside", comment Harold F. Brooks and Harold Jenkins in their introduction to *The Arden Shakespeare.* In the words of Corin, who gives a good account of himself to Touchstone asking him to justify his faith, one discovers Shakespeare's intention behind creating Arden: "Sir, I am a true labourer: I earn that I eat, get that I wear; owe no man hate, envy no man's happiness; glad of other men's good, content with my harm; and the greatest of my pride is to see my ewes graze and my lambs suck.' Shakespeare's purpose was neither to state nor to analyse the pastoral ideal, but to use it.

As You like it literally falls in the literary tradition of the pastoral, which was very popular at the time as a medium through which socio-political problems were resolved. The pastoral transformed discord into harmony, morally corrupt human beings into paragons of human conduct. It also clears the way for an ideal resolution of socio-familial conflicts. The restored fraternal feeling between Orlando and Oliver as the two brothers enter the forest bears witness to this assertion by Anshuman Singh[10] and others who have noticed the serious content of Shakespearean Comedies.

Walter R. Davis has described the pastoral pattern, in relation to Sidney's *Arcadia,* in a way which is equally applicable to *As You Like It* as well as to *Abhijnana Sakuntalam:*

"The heroes of the Renaissance pastoral romances are always *sojourners* in the Arcadian preserve, never native shepherds. This fact . . . makes the setting of the Renaissance pastoral romances always *multiple*. The pattern formed by the subdivisions of this setting may be graphically if roughly imaged as a centre with two concentric circles surrounding it, implying a kind of purification of life proceeding inward; from the gross and turbulently naturalistic outer circle, to the refined pastoral inner circle, and then to the pure centre of the world. The centre is always supernatural, usually either a shrine like the Cave of the Nymphs or the dwelling of a magician. It may be the actual dwelling place of the god."[11] In *Abhijnana Sakuntalam,* Kanva's hermitage fits in with the above definition of 'pastoral inner circle'. Jacques has another way of putting it: 'Sure', he says, 'there is another Flood towards, and all these couples are coming to the ark.' Thomas McFarland makes a more significant observation in *Shakespeare's Pastoral Comedy*:

"Shakespeare's involvement with pastoral, as a historical phenomenon, reflects a pervasive Elizabethan pre-occupation with shepherds and shepherdesses, and with a highly benign and highly artificial environment in which such characters might move. . . In doing so, however, he came upon a device that gave to comedy a profoundly meaningful symbolic extension.[12]

In his seminal work McFarland locates, "as the centre of the tradition of the pastoral, an ideal landscape. This landscape functions as much more than a mere idyllic background to the action of the play. In the development of the plot it becomes the fulcrum."[13] Forest of Arden, therefore, is the vision of a master artist as Chandra observes:

"It is not surprising, then, that Shakespeare's most masterful creation in *As You Like it* is the Forest of Arden. Rather than simply being an idyllic, innocent site to escape to, Arden is constructed as a neutral space where people are allowed to be themselves, free to create alternate identities, and perhaps this is from where the title of the play, *As You Like It*, derives."[14] In the first half of *As You Like It*, the location alternates between forest of Arden and the world outside it; in the second half the action is confined to Arden.

The play begins with the images of hardness of the world outside the forest of Arden, the injustices, ennuis and fears that accompany life on the manor and the court, both of them places where man is treacherous and ungrateful. Act 1 exposes disorder and tensions in family and court: between elder and younger brothers, Oliver and Orlando, Duke Senior and Frederick. It establishes a clear-cut distinction between good and bad. Orlando is seen reiterating how Oliver, his guardian and eldest brother, keeps him in 'servitude', 'bars him the 'place of a brother', and treats him as one of his 'hinds' or 'animals'. Without any means to maintain his gentlemanly status, Orlando is unhappy and angry and threatens to rebel against Oliver:

Orlando*: My brother Jaques he keeps at school and report speaks*

goldenly of his profit. For my part, he keeps me rustically at home

or, to speak more properly, stays me here at home unkept; for call

you that 'keeping' for a gentleman of my birth that differs not from

the stalling of an ox? . . .the spirit of my father, which I think is

within me, begins to mutiny against this servitude. . .

Oliver's entry interrupts this protestation, but only momentarily, for the two brothers start at once to quarrel in earnest. When Adam, an old servant, begs them, in their father's name, to 'be at *accord*' (1.i.68), Oliver orders him away as an 'old dog' (1.i.85). Outrageously abused thus, Adam responds agonisingly: 'Is old dog my reward?' This whole exchange is a picture of disorder in family. Left alone, Oliver asks Charles, the 'duke's wrestler' –'what is the new news at the new court?'(1.i. 101-2) There follows a second picture of disorder in society, for 'the old duke', says Charles, 'is banished by his younger brother the new duke'(1.i. 104-5); our attention is turned from a 'tyrant brother' in the country, to a 'tyrant duke' at the court(1.i. 300). The duke himself enters to watch the wrestling match between Charles and Orlando. Orlando wins but when he says that he is the son of Sir Rowland De Boys, he receives no honour for his victory; although the 'world esteem'd' Sir Rowland was

'honourable', the tyrant has found that he was always his enemy and therefore he cannot welcome the son (1. ii. 237-38). The patriarchal and hierarchal court forces people to conform to roles assigned to them by those in power or else risk being banished. Then Le Beau dares hardly give his natural right feeling rein:

The Duke is humorous; what he is indeed

More suits you to conceive than I to speak of.

As a messenger from the tyrant, Le Beau feels such warm friendship for Orlando that he neglects attendance on the duke to counsel him to leave the court. Le Beau recognises the 'malice' of his master and breaks off his hurried meeting with—

Sir, fare you well:

Hereafter, in a better world than this,

I shall desire more love and knowledge of you.

(1. Ii. 295-7)

Shakespeare's concern with these disorders comes at once from Charles who, in his dispassionate, professional way tells how 'three or four loving lords' have given up 'lands and revenues' to go to the forest of Arden and live there with the old duke in 'voluntary exile' (1.i.106-8). Objectively he recounts the common notion of this other court:

They say many young gentlemen flock to him every day, and

Fleet the time carelessly, as they did in the golden world.

(1.i. 123-5)

More talk of the need to restore order comes when Celia, the tyrant duke daughter, promises Rosalind, the banished duke's daughter, that she will restore all as soon as she is able---she would count herself a '*monster*' if she failed to do this (1.i.24). Rosalind and Celia escape to Arden, leaving the court's travesty of order and security. Disguised as a page, because Rosalind fears the unordered 'thieves' of the forest (1.i. 110-12), they agree to ask Touchstone to accompany them. As Rosalind finds comfort in Celia and Touchstone, so Orlando does in Adam who, trusting in the One who 'providently caters for the sparrow' (1.44), gives to his master all the savings of his thrifty, well-ordered youth, and offers to go with him into exile.

Understandably, Rosalind and Orlando leave for they are hated for no better reason than that they are exceptionally good. Duke Frederick banishes Rosalind and deprives her of rightful inheritance because "Thou art thy father's daughter, there's enough." (1.iii.54) and when pressed by Celia to give a reason for his tyrannical behaviour, says:

She is too subtle for thee, and her smoothness,

Her very silence, and her patience

Speak to the people and they pity her.

Thou art a fool; she robs thee of thy name,

And thou will show more bright and seem more virtuous

When she is gone.

(1, iii, 73-78)

One is reminded of the malice of Dhritarashtra and Duryodhana towards Yudhisthira, the rightful heir to the throne, in the *Mahabharata,* the way Shakespeare presents the usurper Duke's wickedness through Le Beau talking to Orlando:

But I can tell you that of late this Duke

Hath ta'en displeasure 'gainst her gentle niece,

Grounded upon no other argument

But that the people praise her for her virtues,

And pity her for her good father's sake;

And on my life his malice 'gainst the lady

Will suddenly break forth.

Act 1: Scene 111: 270-275

Similarly, Oliver analyses his hostility towards Orlando:

…for my soul—yet I know not why—hates nothing

more than he. Yet he is gentle, never schooled and

yet learned, full of noble device, of all sorts enchantingly

beloved, and indeed so much in the

heart of the world, and especially of my own

people, who best know him, that I am altogether

misprised.

(1.i. 163-69)

The fact that Duke Frederick and Oliver have the capacity to recognise this nobility of character and the conscience to feel some measure of uneasiness at their irrational hostility towards their siblings paves the way for their sudden, and in the case of the duke, inexplicable change of heart in the end, as soon as they enter the forest. "It is only when they enter Arden, or approach it, in the case of Duke Frederick, that those qualities that the court had suppressed finally emerge", observes Vinita Chandra. Goodness leaves the court when the good Duke goes to Arden, and Charles the wrestler tells very early on that he is creating a golden world elsewhere.

On this cue the scene changes for the first time to the forest of Arden. It is neither the careless golden world of people's imagination nor the ruffian world of Rosalind's. There is an 'adversity' (11. i. 12), or 'stubbornness of fortune', which has to be 'translated' into peace and quiet (11. i. 19-20). This is stressed as each fugitive enters the forest.Rosalind, Celia and Touchstone are the first to arrive, weary in body and spirit. The clown says frankly that it were better to be at court, while Rosalind, asking the old shepherd Corin for help, hardly dares to hope that such a 'desert Place' can yield 'entertainment' (11. Iv. 72). When Corin rejoins that he is a 'shepherd to another man', a master of '*churlish* disposition' who

. . . little recks to find the way to heaven

By doing deeds of hospitality. . . . .

(11. iv. 78)

Their fears seem confirmed. But Rosalind discovers a kinship with the suffering, amorous shepherd Silvius, and Corin promises to help them, and at once their spirits rise. Rosalind offers to buy the master's cottage and Celia forgets both her weariness and the unfriendly aspect of Arden--- she will 'mend' Corin's wages and 'willingly could waste' her time in the forest (11. Iv. 94-5). **This double aspect of Arden, at one moment forbidding and at the next welcoming, makes it such that its beauty, lying in the eyes of the beholders, cannot be represented objectively.**

When Orlando enters the forest with Adam, he almost despairs of comfort:

If this uncouth forest yield any thing savage, I will either

be food for it or bring it for food to thee. (11.vi.6-8)

Rosalind and Celia are met with a pleasant sheepcote "fenced about with olive trees" (IV, iii,77), abundantly soaked with sheep and flock, while Oliver's reception is by a snake with drawn fangs and a lioness with dry udders. The duke and his retinue need to hunt in order to eat and live in caves, but in that same forest Audrey makes a living by keeping goats. The genial flow of human love and hospitality binds people instantly:

Orlando: I almost die for food and let me have it!

Duke Senior: Sit down and feed and welcome to our table.

Orlando: Speak you so gently? Pardon me, I pray you,

I thought that all things had been savage here,

and therefore, put I on the countenance

of stern Commandment…

(Act 11: Scene vii)

It isn't until the nucleus of society (Duke Senior and his attendants, the exiled sons and daughters, and eventually even Duke Frederick) moves to the wilderness that virtue and order can be restored to society as a whole. Shakespeare is not interested in how the duke came to lose his dukedom but in how little he regretted it. There is no dejection or repining. Rather in Arden, Duke Senior finds goodness in everything:

And this our life, exempt from public haunt,

Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,

Sermons in stones, and good in everything.

Act 1, Scene 2: 15-20

His natural virtues (Wisdom, Kindness) come to his help in Arden. As Rosalind tells Celia that Fortune controls worldly wealth and prosperity but not our personal qualities, such as beauty and virtues like kindness and sagacity which are the gifts of Nature:

Rosalind: *Nay now thou goest from Fortune's office to*

Nature's; Fortune reigns in gifts of the world, not

In the lineaments of Nature.

Celia: *No? When Nature hath made a fair creature, may*

she not by Fortune fall into the fire?...

(Act 1: Sc.11: 40)

The banished duke accepts the 'winter wind' as a counsellor that 'feelingly' persuades him of what he is (11.5-11). John Russel Browne observes pertinently: "Arden is not necessarily or unequivocally the 'golden world' of the people's imagination, but 'gentleness', 'kindness,' the duke's philosophy, or the willingness to serve submissively and patiently for love can translate the 'stubbornness of fortune' into a sweet and quiet style."

Arden is a world of enchantment like the green world of Shakuntala. 'The circle of this forest'[15] is a magic circle. When Oliver enters its confines, he completely changes his character. He is greeted by the snake and lioness in order to help him reform and in the twinkling of an eye he becomes a fit lover for Celia:

Celia: *Are you, his brother?*

Rosalind: *Wasn't you that did so oft contrive to kill him?*

Oliver: *'Twas I. But 'tis not I. I do not shame*

To tell you what I was, since my conversion

So sweetly tastes, being the thing I am.

(Act IV, Scene 111, L. 135)

The usurping Duke fails even to enter. He lets fall his weapons as though there were some invisible barrier which evil cannot pass. The forest sends out an old religious man to convert Duke Frederick from his evil ways. "This is the point at which we must acknowledge that we are in the world of Shakespearean romance, and by now we should be conditioned to accept it, however strange."[16]

In Arden, Rosalind finds her freedom. Her transformation is mesmerising. Once in the forest, it is Rosalind who takes charge--- even of her father, to whom she makes herself known in her own good time---and Shakespeare puts the denouement into her capable hands. Chandra interestingly observes: "What happens to Rosalind as soon as she sets foot in the Forest of Arden that those clipped wings spread open and allow her to soar? Not only is her father still banished, now she is banished too. She still has not found her father, and interestingly enough, shows little interest looking in for him."[17]When we first met her, she was sad:

Celia: *I pray thee Rosalind, sweet my coz, be merry.*

Rosalind: *Dear Celia, I show more mirth than I am mistress of, and would you yet I were merrier? Unless, you could teach me to forget a banished father, you must not learn me how to remember any extra-ordinary pleasure.*

(Act 1: Scene 11, L 170-175)

Now it is a pleasure to watch her spirits bubble up. "As a matter of fact, Rosalind's spirits and inventiveness perk up once the decision to fly to Arden has been taken. [18] She sounds vivacious and vibrant instantly as she plans her disguise as Ganymede with Celia. In Greco-Roman mythology[19], Ganymede was a young shepherd boy, who tended his flocks on Mt. Ida in Troy.

Arden, therefore, is understood as an ideal space where the restrictions of the social world can be temporarily dispensed with providing an opportunity for frolic and carnival. At court or in Oliver's household, affection and faith could only bring 'content' in the 'liberty' of banishment, but once in Arden, content is at command: the forest mirrors one's mind; if peace and order are found there, the forest will reflect them. This general view is put in the most cogent terms by C. L. Barber in his book *Shakespeare's Festive Comedy*:

"The forest of Arden like the wood outside Athens is a region defined by an attitude of liberty from ordinary limitations, a festive place where the folly of romance can have its day."[20]

2) Love's Order:

John Russel Browne makes two pertinent observations in *Shakespeare and his Comedies:*

"The comedies are chiefly concerned with the establishment of love's order"[21] and "the images of order and disorder are used in the comedies to picture human relationships."[22] This is applicable to the play of Kalidasa as well. Willing acceptance of the 'order' of love is expressed through Nature in both Kalidasa and Shakespeare. Shakuntala symbolises 'Love's order' as well as fertility. So says Chandra Rajan: "She brings to the King something of significance that is lacking in his life. Dushyantha's childlessness, referred to indirectly in Act 1 in the blessings pronounced by the anchorite, and emphasized in Act 2, is metaphor for barrenness of more than one sought. I might venture to characterize it as a spiritual barrenness of more than one sort. Dushyantha's narrow and enclosed world of the gilded court, circumscribed by the round of royal ceremonies and pleasures, is thus expanded by the virtue of his encounter with Shakuntala, who is of this world, and yet not wholly of this world".[23]

With the very first lines of *Abhigyan Shakuntlam* we are transported to a world of love and romance. We get to see a handsome, young King, out hunting, lured far out into 'another world', the green world of nature possessing plentitude, fertility, beauty, grace and holiness. And the inevitable happens. Love springs in the forest. A romantic note of anticipation strikes at the very beginning:

KING: *Tranquil is this hermitage, yet my arm throbs; what fulfilment can await me here?*

(Act 1, Scene 1, l. 15)

And a few minutes later strikes the arrow of Kam-deva (God of Love) and one gets to dip into Kalidasa's beautiful verse of ***Shringaar Rasa***, as King Dushyanta hides behind a tree and soliloquises, watching Shakuntala:

KING: *With rounded breasts concealed by cloth of bark*

Fastened at the shoulder in a fine knot,

Her youthful form enfolded like a flower

In its pale leafy sheath unfolds not its glory.

While it is true that bark is not the appropriate dress for her youth, can it be really held that it does not become her like an adornment? Consider:

Though inlaid in duckweed the lotus glows;

a dusky spot enhances the moon's radiance;

this lissom girl is lovelier far dressed in bark!

What indeed is not an adornment for entrancing forms!

(Act 1: Scene 1: L. 18-22)

Nature in Kalidasa provides rich sources of poetic expression of various human emotions, especially different shades of Love. Shakuntala's beloved Jasmine tree, 'Light of the Forest', whom she would only forget to water "when I forget myself", is a symbol of her own impending union with King Dushyantha. Shakuntala sees Dushyanta and falls in love with him. We are offered a beautiful glimpse of her awakening urges in the wines and creepers seeking the support of sturdy trees—

Anasuya*:* *Look, Sakuntala, the jasmine that you named Vana-Jyotsni has chosen the mango as her bridegroom.*

Shakuntala comes close to the vine and looks at it with joy.

Sakuntala: *O Anasuya, what a charming sight, this marriage of vine and tree. See, the jasmine has this very moment entered into her budding youth. And the mango tree is laden with young fruit indicating he is ready for enjoyment.*

(Act I: 20)

Shakuntala feels a strange flutter in her heart at the sight of Dushyantha, a feeling hitherto unknown to her:

Shakuntala (*to herself*): *How is it that at the sight of this person,*

I feel an emotion inconsistent with a grove devoted to piety. [13]

Shakuntala's hidden, restive emotions are given voice by her pretty companions, Priyamvadha and Shakuntala, who support her through her first experience of love.When Shakuntala confides in her friend Priyamvada about her love-at-first-sight for Dushyanta, which has unnerved and excited her a little, Priyamvada affirms that Shakuntala's attraction is natural:

Shakuntala (*shyly*): *From the moment that Royal Sage who is the protector of penance-grove came within my sight. . . (breaks off overcame by shyness)*

Priyamvada and Anasuya: *Go on, tell us, dear.*

Shakuntala: *From that instant I'm pining for love of him.*

Both: *Fortunately, you have set your heart on one truly worthy of you. But then where else would a great river flow except to the ocean! What plant's lush enough for the jasmine to entwine, if not the mango?*

(Act 111: 13-14)

The natural world of the play reflects romantic desires kindled in human hearts. In Act 1 Shakuntala is harassed by a black bee who suddenly, leaving the Jasmine, pursues her, mistaking her youthful face to be another flower. The situation is deftly portrayed to uncover the amorous attraction between the Shakuntala and King Dushyantha.

Shakuntala (*in alarm*): *O help, a bee has flown out of the jasmine bush. . .and it is buzzing round my face*. (*attempts to ward off the bee*)

King: (*looking longingly at her*):

Her lovely eyes rove following

the hovering bee close to her face;

She knits her brows practising already

playful glances though not in love—but fear.

(*with a show of vexation*):

O, you honey-foraging thief!You touch

Ever so often her glancing eyes, tremulous,

and softly hum, hovering close to her ear

as if eager to whisper a secret,

sneaking in to taste her ripe lower lip

---the quintessence of love's delight---

Even as she piteously flails her hand.

Blessed indeed are you, while I wait

seeking to know the truth---undone.

Shakespeare shows Orlando hanging his love-verses on tree bark. Similarly, in her fevered impatience, Shakuntala writes her love-letter, as advised by Priyamvadha to '*incise the words with your nail on this lotus leaf soft as a parrot's downy breast'*, to say:

I do not know your heart,

but my nights and days, O pitiless one!

are haunted by love,

as every part of me

yearns to be one with you.

And the King mutters:

Love burns you, true, my slender girl!

But me, He consumes utterly--- relentless;

Day wipes out the moon from view

but not the water-lily.

Your limbs aflame with pain that bite

into the bed of flowers, fast fading

your bracelets of lotus-fibre, need not

bend in the customary courtesies.

(Act 3: 19-20)

Sharad Rajimwale concludes: "Significantly enough, in Kalidasa's poetry man's urges, desires, aspirations and fantasies are seen in terms of numerous aspects of nature, something that was the mode of the great Elizabethan poets and later the Romantic poets too."[24]

Love becomes the fulcrum of *As You Like It*, as within the sequestered and romantic glades of Arden, the runaways find leisure to fall in love. It seems as if the poet meant this play to illustrate that which he put into Phebe's mouth; 'whoever loved, that loved not at first sight?' Stopford Brooke, referring to the different types of love in *As You Like* It, has observed in his book, *On Ten Plays of Shakespeare*: "In this play love lives in many forms: in Orlando and Rosalind, Celia and Oliver, Silvius and Phebe, Touchstone and Audrey. We see other forms of love also: the love of two girls for one another, of Adam for his master and his master for

him, of Touchstone for Celia and Rosalind. Even a few touches are given to us of a daughter's affection to his father." The inseparable bond between Rosalind and Celia is vividly portrayed in Celia's impassioned speech to her father when he threatens to separate them:

I was too young that time to value her

But now I know her. If she be a traitor,

Why so am I. We still have slept together,

Rose at an instant, learn'd, play'd, eat together,

And whereso'r we went, like Juno's swans,

Still we went coupled and inseparable.

. . . . . .

I cannot live out of her company.

(1, iii, 67-72)

This relationship emerges from truly *knowing* each other, based on their intrinsic worth rather than external trappings:

. . .thou and I am one.

Shall we be sunder'd? Shall we part, sweet girl?

No, let my father seek another heir.

(1.iii. 90-5)

But the filial love must give way to the passion of youthful love, the enchanted drawing of love between man and woman, that evidently supersedes all other forms of love, as Rosalind speaks:

But what talk we of fathers, when there is such a man as Orlando?

(Act 111, SC. V, l.34)

Rosalind, says Mark Van Doren, has found that 'there is only one thing sillier than being in love, and that is thinking it silly to be in love.'[26]

Rosalind and Orlando had met for the first time in court, but their love was not fully expressed there. They had done what they could—Rosalind had given him a favour to wear, and both had confessed that they were 'thrown down', 'overthrown', disordered by a new 'master' and new duties of service (1. Ii. 266, and 271-2) And yet more was expressed in their hesitations than in words or deeds. So, was expressed in the hesitation of Dushyantha

and Shakuntala as their soliloquies reveal: ''*O heart, keep calm;/Anasuya is asking what I wanted to know'; 'Could it be that she feels towards me as I feel towards her?'* – such expressions reveal the lovers' hesitation.

Orlando is deprived in much the same way and that is why the two waifs drift together, drawn by a natural sympathy. He falls in love with Rosalind at first sight, writes indifferent verses, and is led by the nose by a clever girl, who will see to it that nobody else ever gets the better of him. The love-play of what Lodge calls 'the amorous boy-girl', however sexually ambiguous, can give no offence. The relationship between Ganymede and Orlando is deliciously but not perilously balanced. However, 'the course of this love-making by Shakespeare's young heroes and heroines never runs smooth, and one familiar romantic complication that he. . .employs on numerous occasions is the situation in which faithful love is subjected to some grievous, or otherwise abnormal strain. . .' observes E. C. Pettet.[27]

In this way, Shakespeare weaves the images of order and disorder into the love stories also.

After being treated with true 'gentleness'[28] by the Duke, Orlando joins 'the good man's feast', the visible token of order and concord in Arden. He lies under its oaks, roams through its glades, and thinks, writes, and talks of Rosalind's perfections:

Why should this a desert be?

For it is unpeopled? No;

Tongues I'll hand on every tree,

That shall civil sayings show:

. . . . . .

But upon the fairest boughs,

Or at every sentence end,

Will I Rosalinda write,

Teaching all that read to know

According to the Petrarchan traditions in the court, the suitors were expected to woo their mistresses through long elaborate poems. Having internalized this tradition Orlando inscribes Rosalind's name on trees, referring to her as "Queen of Night", "fair" "chaste" and "unexpressive." When Rosalind encounters her lover in the forest of Arden, she cannot, owing to her necessary disguise, directly return his avowed and constant love. This situation is treated comically, for it is Rosalind herself who proposes that she should pretend to be Orlando's own Rosalind to cure him of his lovesickness and who mocks Orlando's love-making. As Ganymede, she tells Orlando:

"There is a man haunts the forest that abuses our young plants with carving 'Rosalind' on their barks, hangs odes upon hawthornes, and elegies on brambles; all, forsooth, deifying, the name of Rosalind."

(111, ii, 334-339)

But an element of strain is also implied in the situation, and as soon as Orlando has gone Rosalind breaks out with her sincere heart-cry, 'O coz, coz, coz, my pretty little coz, that thou didst know how many fathoms deep I am in love!' (1V: i. 209-211). She does not find it easy to keep up the play-acting.

However, **Rosalind's developing love whets her wit and humour**; love sharpens her natural intellect, swift and varied like summer lightening. In Act 1V, scene I, Rosalind rejects Orlando's claim that he would die if Rosalind should fail to return his love:

Men have died from time to time, and

worms have eaten them, but not for love.

(1V. i. 91-92)

These are the most recognisable lines from the play and perhaps the wisest, for here Rosalind takes on one of the most dominant interpretations of romantic love that insists on its unreality. She does not mean to deny the existence of love though. On the contrary, she delights in loving Orlando. 'In her person love's doubts and faith, love's obedience and freedom, co-exist in delightful animation', writes John Russell Brown (*Shakespeare & His Comedies*, P.158). It is only in Arden that they learn the full strength of their new order, of their mutual defeat and mastery, of love that is 'real'. The Forest of Arden teaches them to make their love explicit in the very words by which Silvius vows his service, observance, and faith.

Contentment in love is, like content in Arden, subjective; it is as one's self likes it. Phebe's eyes have power to act against Silvius as 'tyrants, butchers, murderers' (111.v.14) but that is only because Silvius sees her in that way; when she tries to 'entame' Ganymede, she is for Rosalind a 'tyrant' who 'exults' in a power which only Silvius recognises: 'Tis not her glass, but you, that flatters her', she tells the youth---

And out of you she sees herself more proper

Than any of her lineaments can show her.

(111.v. 36-56)

"This private, subjective truth is sufficient for the lovers, as the subjective order must be for the fugitives in Arden; Silvius can only answer Phebe's refusal with renewed vows of generous service. However absurd his unrequited love for Phebe may be, he does stumble forward in the right direction. He knows how much of love lies in the *giving* of faith, service, duty, observance, 'humbleness' (V.ii.89-105). He assures Phebe:

So holy and so perfect is my love,

And I in such a poverty of grace,

That I shall think it a most plenteous crop

To glean the broken ears after the man

That the main harvest reaps: loose now and then

A scatter'd smile, and that I'll live upon.

(111.v. 99-104)

True lovers agree with his account of 'what 'tis to love' and, with 'measure heap'd in joy' (V.iv. 185), they all join with him in the dance which concludes the play.

3) Quest for identity:

The title of *Abhijnana Sakuntalam,* '*The Recognition of Sakuntala*', signifies the identity crisis as the central issue of the play. The King's signet Ring is the token of recognition. Shakuntala is recognised by virtue of a *token* of love, not by love itself. In the absence of tangible proof of love and marriage she is lost; she is nothing. While the loss of the Ring and the loss of memory resulting from the curse, provides the necessary complication in the plot structure, Kalidasa directs us to question the whole idea of furnishing tangible proof for all those things we take on trust—love, constancy, fidelity. In Act 6, while the King and Madhvya discuss the circumstances in which the Ring has been lost, Misrakesi makes a significant observation: 'Does a love like this need a token of recognition? How can that be?' It is reminiscent of the *Ramayana* when Sita is asked to prove her chastity by undergoing the ordeal of fire a second time to allay the suspicions of the public.

The royal signet ring which is the mark of authority and used to stamp documents to validate them (perhaps to stamp objects too, to prove the *legitimacy of* ownership) has gained an added importance and status: Shakuntala is recognised or not recognised by virtue of its presence or absence. As the play progresses, the Ring, an inanimate thing--- 'a mindless thing' as the King describes it, becomes a *character* in the drama and plays a role. Its fall and loss go hand in hand with the fall of Shakuntala's fortunes and the loss of memory of the King and his fall into delusion and 'deep dejection': its finding brings awakening and pain. The theme of identity, *knowing* and *re-cognition* hinges on the presence or absence of the Ring.

There is an interesting parallel with Shakespeare here. In ***King Lear*** proof of filial love is demanded. In ***Othello***, proof of the heroine's chastity, fidelity and love is demanded. **Desdemona's chastity hangs on a handkerchief; Shakuntala's on a ring**. Both heroines are blissfully aware of the importance of the *token.* To them love is its own proof and a witness to their chastity. It is in Acts 5 and 6 that Kalidasa probes most deeply into the heart

of his society' norms and value. He makes Misrakesi ask a highly significant question: '. . .. does a love like this need a token of recognition?'The probing is accompanied by another equally significant question--the question of *knowing*, which is related to the *re-cognition* of Shakuntala at the end of the play.

What is *knowing?* The King at first knew Shakuntala carnally, as an object of pleasure. She is a flower to smell. She is hardly a person to him. He doesn't *know* her. Nor does she *know* him as a King. The denouement or catastrophe is led by the fact that Dushyanta creates an alternate identity to seduce Shakuntala. On entering the sage Kanva's penance-groves, after some distance, Dushyantha dismounts, takes off the regalia, his crown and jewels, and hands them over with his bow and arrows to the charioteer. This gesture is symbolic in two ways: it represents the reverence the King feels in the sacred grove and all it stands for and for the great sage who presides over it; it also signifies the act of 'putting off' the royal image. The 'public image' of a king is a *mask* which he puts on like an actor putting on theatrical make-up and the costume to suit the role he is about to play.It goes with the regalia and the pomp and panoply which serve to impress and dazzle the world and through that to control it. Dushyantha now enters the Hermitage simply dressed, like an ordinary person, a visitor. In putting off his 'royal face' and changing his identity, Dushyantha is released from the royal baggage, certain expectations and inhibitions on the part of others as well as his own. He enters another world, far removed from the court, its chaos and pressures in more senses than one—Shakuntala's world.

Shakuntala does not see him in his awesome majesty and splendour. She and her friends see Dushyanta simply as a noble from the court, an officer of the King which is how he introduces himself. And we too begin to see him, not as the great monarch bearing the heavy burden of his dynasty's fame and surrounded by the aura of Puru's idealism and exemplary conduct, but as just a young and handsome courtier. Dr Rajan remarks:"The effect of the 'unmasking' is to put Shakuntala's friends at ease; and a lively conversation ensues. However, this too is a mask, for Dushyanta is the King only pretending he is not the King."[29] Priyamvadha and Anasuya soon see through his threadbare disguise and the mask is quietly dropped, though the girls play along and keep up the pretence. But the action has already been initiated; Shakuntala has deeply fallen in love.

And the plot now must move to Shakuntala's adverse fate, springing out of Durvasa's curse and Shakuntala's repudiation by the forgetful Dushyanta, leading to the real issue of ***identity***. Foreshadowing is used as a device skilfully. Shakuntala's adverse fate is mentioned right at the beginning. The sign given to Kanva at the cave of fire, hints of future events strewn around in the conversation of Shakuntala and her friends are noteworthy. But the most important examples are in Act 5. The theme of failing memory: '*wakeful one moment/ shrouded in darkness the next'* and '*the dying flame',* in the chamberlain's speech have subtle overtones. Then comes the song of betrayed love, sung in the background and we see the strange effect it has on Dushyanta. Music makes a portent more ominous:

O, you honey-pilfering bee!

Greedy as ever for fresh honey,

once, you lovingly kissed

the mango's fresh spray of flowers---

and forgotten her

The little scene takes us back to the beginning of the play, to the first little scene where Dushyanta stands concealed behind the tree envying the bee that is hovering round Shakuntala's face. The same word '*madhu-kara'* is used for the bee and used quite consciously. What subtle hint through the nuances of language!

The question that comes to the mind is--- what is in store for Shakuntala? We do not know that the signet Ring—given by Dushyanta to Shakuntala for recognition, has been lost. And we see a pregnant Shakuntala out of the sheltered hermitage, where she has grown up as her father's 'life-breath', for the very first time when she stands trial in the enclosure surrounding the royal Fire Sanctuary:

Shakuntala: *If you are proceeding in this manner under the impression that I'm another man's wife, I can remove your suspicions by showing this highly prized token.*

King: *A proper procedure.*

Shakuntala (*feeling for the ring*): *Ha! I am lost. The Ring is missing from my finger.*

What the King says is shocking. His words now are barbed with venom and unworthy of a great King who is the protector of the sacred groves in his realm —

Intuitive cunning is seen even in females

of lower creatures: what then of those

endowed with reason and understanding:

the cuckoo, as we know, has her young reared

by other birds before they take to the air.

Shakuntala comes into her own instantly. She is livid with fury-- *Ignoble man! You who are like a well covered with grass'*-- at this insulting comparison with the cuckoo that *flies away, abandoning its offspring* in the care of another bird. The reference is not only to her mother Menaka, one of the *apsaras* (who *fly* in air), who abandoned her child, Shakuntala, but to Shakuntala herself who according to him is trying to pass off her offspring as his child. Ironically, when Dushyanta first met Shakuntala, he found the strange circumstances of her birth an added attraction; she was the 'lightening's splendour', not of this earth. But that was in another world; it was Shakuntala's, not his. Dr Chandra concludes:

"In the world of the court, which she had characterised as 'alien soil' on which, like the sapling of the sandal tree rent from the parent mountain, she would not survive. Shakuntala is unimaginably humiliated. Stripped of dignity and modesty, unveiled in public, an outrage in that society (as it is still in some societies), every word she speaks is twisted into a lie."[30]

But Dushyanta instinctively knows that: 'The lady's anger is real—the spontaneous outburst of one who lives in the green world.'

We know that Durvasa's curse— '*because you are lost in thoughts of one/to the exclusion of all else, /you shall be lost in his thoughts: though you goad his memory hard, / he shall fail to remember you'*--- is working its way into Shakuntala's life. The curse represents a whole complex of ideas. Tagore speaks of Shakuntala's 'Fall'[31] and her redemption through penitence. S.K. De[32] describes the curse of Durvasa as playing 'the part of a stern but beneficiary providence'. But the curse is also a metaphor for the arbitrariness of life.

Describes the curse of Durvasa as playing 'the part of a stern but beneficient providence'. But a curse is also a metaphor for the arbitrariness of life; it points to the inexplicable, even absurd element that is of the very essence of life and which is not only beyond explanations and justifications, but beyond all comprehension. Wherever a curse operates the human failing is trivial compared to the enormity of suffering entailed. It concretizes the troubling question that faces every human being at one time or another—why did this happen? Why did it have to be so? The curse also shapes the answer to that question in the form of that uncertain certitude with which man has to shore up bis crumbling faith in order to survive, call it Fate or *Karma* or 'the absurd', or simple acceptance— 'This is how things are; this is life.' Shakuntala herself blames her own actions for her unhappiness in the present. Kalidasa does not moralize; he does not preach. He shows us life as it is in all its beauty and splendour as well as all its inexplicable vagaries which bring misfortunes deservedly or undeservedly.

It is only at the close of the play that Dushyanta really *sees* Shakuntala as a person and *knows* her truly. Something has to be added to his *view of her* to make him see her as a 'person' of intrinsic beauty and not merely as a beautiful object. Priyamvada (4: lines 9-10) is able to correlate outer beauty with the inner. But Dushyanta seems to be unable to do this until a long separation and grief at losing her and an intense sense of guilt, give him eyes to *see* her in her real identity. When Dushyanta meets Shakuntala again in Marica's hermitage, pale with suffering, the flesh mortified to let the spirit glow forth, the King truly *sees* her:

'Aha! Here is the Lady Sakuntala: it is *she*:

Dressed in dusky garments

her face fined thin from observing stricktest vows,

her hair bound in a single braid; pure, upright,

she keeps the long vow of cruel separation

from me who acted so heartless to her.

(7:21)

He *knows* her true worth now; it is recognition, or *abhijnanam*, the highly suggestive word which forms the first part of the compound word that is the title of the play—*Abhijnanam Sakuntalam.* The quest for identity is fructified.

The main action of *As You Like It* takes place in the forest of Arden, which is precisely a place of self-discovery, new identity and reformation, a place of adversity and awe that reminds the characters of the play of what it means to be human. The power of Arden to heal may be referred to fresh air and happy accidents. Its power to convert surpasses nature. The freedom to create an identity for oneself in the forest is underlined by the movement to Arden from the city and the court. Rosalind's transformation is external as well as internal. Her disguise differs from Celia's as suggests that they should besmirch their faces with umber to hide their beauty as a safety measure, **Rosalind decides to take on another persona, to become someone else. So rather than covering up her identity through disguise Rosalind chooses another identity:**

Rosalind: *Were it not better,*

Because I'm more than common tall,

That I did suit me all points like a man?

A gallant curtle-axe upon my thigh,

A boar-spear in my hand, and in my heart,

Lie there what hidden woman's fear there will be,

We'll have a swashing and martial outside,

As many other mannish cowards have

That do outface it with their semblance.

Celia: *What shall I call thee when thou art a man?*

Rosalind: *I'll have no worse a name than Jove's own page,*

And therefore look you call me Ganymede.

(1.3.120-124)

Rosalind's enjoyment in planning out her disguise speaks volumes for the **transformation** from helpless and grieving maiden to a bold and spirited woman that is underway. Her donning of men's clothing brings out her latent courage and resilience. After the strenuous journey to Arden when she is as weary as Celia, she summons the strength to forget her own weariness and cheer up Celia:

I could find in my heart to disgrace my man's apparel and to cry like a woman. But I must

Comfort the weaker vessel, as doublet and nose ought to show itself courageous to petticoat; therefore courage, good Aliena.

(11, iv, 3-7)

Back in her father's home it is Celia who comforts and encourages Rosalind; it is she who takes the decision to run away secretly at night, to disguise herself and Rosalind, to gather their jewels and wealth together for the journey. But now that she is donning doublet and hose, she takes charge. Celia's petticoat takes second place to Rosalind's doublet and hose now onwards. She is the one who decides to buy the sheepcote and flock and to settle down there. Once Rosalind/ Ganymede settles down in the sheepcote to a rustic life, she starts controlling the actions and emotions of almost all the characters in the forest. By the time she meets Orlando in the forest she is ready to speak to him "like a saucy lackey and under that habit play the knave with him". (111, ii, 290-2), quite different from the typically maidenly gesture of slipping her chain around his neck in Duke Frederick's court.

Rosalind now is able to resist the tradition that restricts the sexuality of women. She challenges patriarchal constructions of male and female behaviour, as Ganymede pretends to be Rosalind and asks Orlando to woo her. She tells him:

"*Come, woo me, woo me; for now I am in a*

holiday humour and like enough to consent."

(1V, i, 161-63)

This liberty of expressing one's sentiments in courtship and marriage was not available to women. Rosalind uses her double-gender identity for taking greater freedom otherwise denied to her. She not only urges Orlando to woo her but also arranges a mock marriage with him in Celia's presence. Celia chides her:

"You have simply misused your sex in our love-prate.

We must have your doublet and hose plucked over your head

and show the world what the bird hath done to her own nest."

(1V, i, 179-183)

Celia knows that the boldness with Rosalind participated in wooing is possible only because of her disguise. Ganymede affects a more 'coming on disposition' mocking the way in which Rosalind would have behaved making the situation comic. According to Dusinberre: "In *As You Like It* Rosalind finds herself in a script supplied by men which she rewrites as the play progresses. She becomes, more than any other heroine, the author of her own drama."[33]

It is interesting to note that like Rosalind, Phebe also defies the tradition of wooing for women. She is unimpressed by Silvius' declarations of love and instead falls in love with coarse Ganymede.

Indeed, Rosalind evolves, as she distances herself from her socially determined gender-identity, which enables a critique of her static role. She is 'liberated', coming into her own in Arden and into a better heritage than she has lost.

Conclusion:

H. B. Charlton calls Shakespearean Comedy 'an artist's vision'[34]—'creative' and 'poetic' and goes on to define it in words which are applicable to both Shakespeare and Kalidasa:

"Its heroes (or heroines, to give them the dues of their sex) are voyagers in pursuit of a happiness not yet attained, a brave new world wherein man's life may be fuller, his sensations more exquisite and his joys more widespread, more lasting, and so more humane. But as the discoverer reaches this higher bliss, he (or rather she) is making his conquests in these realms of the spirit accessible not only to himself but to all others in whom he has inspired the same way of apprehending existence. He has not merely preserved the good which was he has refined, varied, and widely extended it."[35]

After all, pastoral life in Arden is merely episodic in the eternal flitting show of man's fuller existence: "when I was at home, I was in a better place." Love of Rosalind and Orlando finds fruition as 'high wedlock' which is celebrated with 'rustic revelry', and they prepare to return to a court life purged of its earlier flaws. They will return to live their adult life in the society of man and in a civilisation which will impose on them the duties of extended social responsibilities. But 'they have entered into the possession of spiritual endowments'.[36] Arden does strike a nobility of benevolence which will sacrifice all for another's good. Freedom of the forest is about inculcating right values and good life. Paradoxically, and momentarily, the good life is found in the woods. It should be found in the court and when Duke Senior resumes his sway it will be found in the court again.

Similarly, Shakuntala and Dushyanta both undergo dramatic existential transformation, each in his/ her own way—Shakuntala through her experience of the 'hitherto unknown gilded world of court' and Dushyanta through his experience of love in the green world of Shakuntala. Dushyanta is no longer the King he was. He has grown in understanding and has learnt compassion and caring for others. This is implied in the ruling he makes that the estate of the wealthy merchant who died in a shipwreck should not be confiscated by the state but be inherited by his unborn child. The King now is a friend and kinsman to all his subjects who follow the right path. Dushyanta had to experience the grief of childlessness for himself and realize the dangers of an heirless kingdom before he is able to understand and feel for his subjects. He seems to have grown in another way too. After a long spell of penitent grief, he has gained the wisdom to know and value true love, which is a matter of more than the delight of the eye and of pleasure. Shakuntala, the innocent flower of Kanva's hermitage, gauges the situation Intelligently and instantly changes her address from 'my Lord' to ' O

descendant of Puru', lashing at him in intense wrath: 'O wicked one, you judge after the manner of your own heart." All her pride and strength of character arise, in unclothed fury. 'I have fallen into the clutches of a man whose mouth is honey, but whose heart is stone'. She has a great responsibility of rearing her child Sarva Daman, who has been predicted to be the sovereign ruler of the earth; and therefore, she hardens herself to endure any crisis. With her head held high, she leaves the Palace to be snatched up by the celestial light. Her innate strength is revealed as she does not allow fleeting time to diminish her love for Dushyanta. It is a great joy for her, therefore, when he comes back, all penitent at the gross injustice of his action, and regretful fall at her feet. He tells Matali in Act VII:

Supreme Holiness! Having married your handmaid

here by the rites of mutual love, I cruelly repudiated

her because of an unfortunate lapse of memory.

Shakuntala, full of compassion and undiminished love, does not want to see her gallant husband falling at her feet:

O my lord, rise. It must be that I had to reap the

consequence of some wrong-doing on my part in a

former birth; otherwise, how could my lord, so

compassionate by nature, have acted in such an

unfeeling manner towards me.

The long period of penance for Shakuntala and repentance for Dushyanta end in a reconciliation based on mutual respect and trust that brings some measure of happiness for both by finding a common ground in the child and his future. The two worlds of the play, the green world of the woods and the gilded world of the Royal court, are far too apart, and the reconciliation, reunion and restoration cannot take place in either of them. Therefore, the play finds its resolution in another world---a higher world that is inaccessible to ordinary mortals and which partakes of the quality of timelessness because it is presided over by Marica and Aditi, whose origins are before the world ever was; a world that is the creation of art to be held against the insistent, pushing realities and pressures of the actual world.

Thus, there are moments of overhanging gloom, then light of love in darkness; there are moments of bitter irony accompanied by flashes of pure good humour in Shakespeare 's *As You Like It* and Kalidasa's *Abhijnana Sakuntalam.* But both the plays close on a note of serenity, expressing the poet's vision of peace and harmony in a world where order has been restored.

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Notes and References

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15. Latham, Agnes ed., *THE ARDEN EDITION OF THE WORKS OF WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: AS YOU LIKE IT*, B.I, Publications, New Delhi, 1975, p Ixx.
16. Ibid., Pp. 1xx-1xxi.
17. Chandra, Vinita, Ed., *WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: AS YOU LIKE IT*, Worldview Publications, An Imprint of Book Land Publishing Co.Delhi, 2009, p.9.
18. Ibid.
19. In Greco-Roman mythology, Ganymede was a young shepherd boy, who tended his flocks on Mt. Ida in Troy. So, the name Ganymede is that of 'Jove's own page'(1.iii. 127), the most beautiful of all mortals, son of Tros and Callirrhoe, chosen by Jupiter to be his cupbearer, to dwell among the gods as his chosen servant. The Roman God Jupiter(or Jove; his Greek name is Zeus) fell in love with the boy, turned himself into an eagle, and scooped the youth up to Mount Olympus, home of the gods. So in love with the youth, Jupiter granted him immortality. Like Kalidasa, Shakespeare makes dazzling analogies between mythological or archetypal patterns and structure of his play.
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28 The word 'gentleness' (i.e. courtesy, courtliness, *'kindness'*, civilised or ordered sentiment and action), 'good manners', 'civility' are used many times within some thirty lines.
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