

# Sarvadamana: Role of a Child Character in the Narrative Outline of *Abhijñānaśkuntalā*.

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All the heroes, heroines and minor characters portrayed by Kālidāsa are impressive and the same can be said about his child characters. Though there is very little information about Kālidāsa's personal life yet it seems that he has drawn the child characters from his personal experiences. He has portrayed the child with heartfelt genuine child affection and like an affectionate father the poet also feels unending happiness by touching a child.

So, we curiously notice that the love between the hero and the heroine in each plays of Kālidāsa becomes fruitful when a baby was born to them. His immortal child characters are Sarvadamana in *Abhijñānaśkuntala*, Ayu in *Vikramorvaśī*, Raghu in *Raghuvāṇsa* and Kumar in *Kumārsambhava* etc.

Kālidāsa has shown his extra-ordinary skill in portraying the child characters. Every child characters is characterised by a little bit child-like liveliness, impudence, curiosity, love for imitation and preoccupation.

'*Abhijñānaśkuntala*, is the best play in Sanskrit literature. According to a dramatized version of the events by the poet Kālidāsa, the king Duṣṇanta married Śhakuntalā on his hunting expeditions in forests. He was captivated by Shakuntala's beauty, courted her in royal style and married her. Then Shakuntala gave birth to her child who was named *Sarvadamana* by the sage Kanwa.

In the 7<sup>th</sup> act of the play we meet '*Sarvadamana*' on the top of Hemkut Mountain at Tapabana, of Maharshi Marich. Surrounded only by wild animals, *Sarvadamana* grew to be a strong child and made a sport of opening the mouths of tigers and lions and counting their teeth. The infant *Sarvadamana* enters with two lady attendants, at the back stage some warnings like - "मा खलु चापलं कुरु ।"<sup>1</sup> and "कथं गतः एव आत्मनः प्रकृतिम् ?"<sup>2</sup> are heard.

The child *Sarvadamana* is very unquiet as well as stubborn. It seems that he is unfit in the environment of the *Āśrama* but this is natural or intended for a child. A child is a child whether the environment is favourable or unfavourable. A child loses its characteristic beauty and charm if its childhood instincts are destroyed by making it strict and disciplined like a saint. Kālidāsa materializes here all that is natural and devoid of artificiality. He has never given up naturalism in depicting the child characters. Though the King is surprised to see a human child *Sarvadamana* attracting a cub forcefully to play with him, but such behaviour for a child is not unnatural at all.

The nearest one to a child is its mother. He learns to the word 'mother' first. His safest place is the lap of his mother. A child feels infinite yearning, furore to see her, and extreme restlessness for mother and *Sarvadamana* is no exception. Fearless *Sarvadamana* also feels limitless thirst for his mother and this thirst proves that he is not an exception from a natural known child. Getting a hints ("शकुन्तलावण्यं प्रेक्षस्व ।"<sup>3</sup>) of the name of his mother he asks - "कुत्र वा मम माता ।"<sup>4</sup> ('where is my mother?') To a child his mother is all and *Sarvadamana* is also not an exception.

The dramatist has tried to portray the lustful and vicious king Duṣṇanta as a unique, great and unblemished King shielding the curse of *Durvasa muni*. As a result there happens separation between the hero and the heroine. When their minds get purified by the severe fire of separation, the dramatist again has tried to get them united. The child *Sarvadamana* is a medium to make the effort union fulfilled.

King Duṣṇanta is attracted by the delightful behaviour of *Sarvadamana*. He feels affection for the child. Such delightful behaviour of the child was necessary to bring the change in the heart of Duṣṇanta. The activities of *Sarvadamana* like to express his strong wish for a toy, to remember his mother *Śhakuntalā* after hearing 'शकुन्तलावण्यं', to ask his mother childishly about Duṣṇanta all these are essential for the climax of the play. The speech, work, emotion and stance of child *Sarvadamana* are for the fulfillment of the play.

1. *Abhijñānaśkuntala* -edited by Anil Chandra Basu, 7<sup>th</sup> act, page no.555

2. Ibid - page no. 555
3. Ibid - page no. 571
4. Ibid - page no. 571

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