



## Reflection of Various shades of Nayika in Sakuntala from Abhijnana Sakuntalam

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### ABSTRACT

Kalidasa, the legendary author of India has contributed in abundance towards the world of poetry and drama. He has the similar the grammar to compose drama given by Bharata in his treatise Natyashastra. Though today all dramas are considered somewhere similar in a common way or looking into it, the ancient Sanskrit theatre has strictly followed the grammar to build the structure of a drama. In this perspective Abhinjana Sakuntalam is a Nataka, one among the ten types of dramas (Dasaropaka suggested in Natyashastra. The theme and plot of the drama is legendary but the author has built it in his own way. As everyone knows Kalidasa is famous for his use of metaphorical usages of themes related to nature. Hence, he is considered as a naturalistic poet. He gave more importance to the Sringara rasa which is the core emotion of this drama. The main attraction of this plot is the love, separation and reunion of the hero and heroine through various stages of their life. He has portrayed Sakuntala as a beautiful young girl and her journey to become a heroine with high quality in nature. From the point of view of a performing artist in the field of Bharatanatyam, Sakuntala is a great example of a heroine or nayika with many aspects. The concepts of Ashtanayika given by Bharata in his Natyashastra is an analysing tool to understand the characteristics of thi

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heroine. And this will pave way to look into this character from various perspectives. Hence this work will look into the characteristics of Sakuntala as portrayed by Kalidasa with reference to grammar of Ashtanayika and other classification of heroines from Natyashastra. It is an attempt to study the character of Sakuntala and the possibilities to bring it to the choreographies.

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## **Introduction**

Abhinjana shakuntalam is a masterpiece written by the legendary Indian poet Kalidasa. This work has got recognised not only in India but also in other foreign countries due to its translation into English done by Sir William Jones in 1789. Hence this work has taken place in the world literature.

Though this play has become famous due to its plot and presentation the original story line has taken from the Ādi Parva of the Mahabharatam. Kalidasa has turned the entire story into beautiful seven act play by adding different hues of emotional states for appropriate characters. Although he has written the play in the Sanskrit one can see the usage of old Indian dialects like Prakrit for particular characters. And the main Rasa is delivered by this combination of various aspects that enhances the beauty and visual presentation of the play.

In this research the researcher wanted to look into the journey of emotional aspects of both the hero and heroine from the perspective of a dancer. In Indian classical dance the basic grammar that has been followed for abhinaya is taken from the treatise like Natyashastra and some commonly accepted commentaries of it. Among them the classification of the Heroes and Heroines are important in terms of abhinaya. Though there are various categories of classification, the eight type of heroines that is Ashtanayika has captured the attention strongly. Also, there are categorisations of both the hero and heroine based on their quality of nature and behaviour. Exploring new areas other than the dance, where one can trace all these aspects can pave way to new perspectives.

## **Discussion**

The Nayika or heroine and her character is analysed and categorised from the perspective of nayaka or the hero.

Based on the age and experience in love the heroines are classified into three such as,

1. **Mugdha**- The one who is in her early stages of youth and has very less experience about love affair.
2. **Madhya** – She is in her youth and knows the shades of love and romance but she feels shy and not too expressive about her feelings.
3. **Pragalbha** – This heroine is the matured one and knows the art of love making without being shy about it.

Another classification is based on the nature of nayika in love. They are,

1. **Uttama** – The one who is in love and completely devoted to her Nayaka.
2. **Madhyama** – One who loves her hero but in an unconditional way.
3. **Adhama** – The one who is not loyal to her hero and not much concerned about their bond.

The next type of classification is based on the attitude towards the hero. They are as follows,

1. **Sweeya** – This heroine is married and is always faithful to her husband. She always remains loyal to her husband and takes care of everything with passion, hence considered as Pativrata.
2. **Parakiya** – This heroine is described as married to one man but has love towards another man. Unlike Sweeya she is sharing her love between to men and hence considered as disloyal.
3. **Samanya** – She is the free woman who is not committed to any particular man. She can accept a man for money also.

After this comes the main classification of Ashtanayika, that is the classification based on the mental state of heroine who is in love. This is vastly used in many dance performances. In Bharatanatyam this plays a major role when it comes to the repertoire. This classification is as follows.

1. **vasakasajja**- she is the one who is dressed up to welcome her husband or lover. She decorates her room, bed to make her hero to enjoy their union.
2. **Virahotkhanditha** – It is the one who is in sorrow due to the separation from her hero.
3. **Swadheena bhatrika** – She is the one who enjoys the love and presence of her beloved.

**4.Kalahantaritha** - This heroien has quarrelled with her hero and now repents about it. She wants her hero to come back to her.

**5.Khanditha** – She is angry on her lover due to his false promises and not showing any kind affection towards him.

**6.Vipralabdha** - She feels deceived and not ready to listen to his words. She is completely sad and upset about his act.

**7.Proshitabhartrika** – This heroine is waiting for her husband who has gone far away from her due to some work, and she eagerly waits for him.

**8.Abhisarika** – This nayika is courageous and takes the initiative to meet her lover and goes in search of him.

Many studies and analysis have done in this topic and artists has widely accepted this classification today in their performances. Any Abhinaya oriented item in a Bharatanatyam repertoire cannot be done properly without analysing the nature of the nayika from these aspects. Hence, moving from the regular and traditional pieces it is nice to find new ways to explore abhinaya. Artists are ready to do choreographies on poems and rare Kritis today. Hence there is a scope for finding new dimensions to explore. Looking into Shakuntala’s character was one such idea that seemed interesting.

### Observation

To observe Kalidasa’s Shakuntala from these aspects one can see the progress of her journey by surpassing all these stages. She is introduced as a young and innocent girl who never had any experience about love or romance. She is fully devoted to the hermitage and followed the instructions of her father. She is a **Mugdha Nayika** here.

After the meeting with the king Dushyanta, she is slightly changed in her behaviour. Though she is unaware about the reason she expresses her pain and yearning for the man who captivated her heart. She finally admits that she is in love and she is unable to bare the pain of separation (3<sup>rd</sup> Act).

After this scene, she starts to write a letter to him as suggested by her dear friends. As soon as Dushyanta appears in front of her, she is unable to hide her emotions and they both share their feelings and accepts their love with whole heart. By seeing these shades of her it is much similar to that of a

**Madhyama Nayika.** Here, Shakuntala is aware of her feelings and once her lover goes back, she is immensely lost herself about his thoughts. The Gandharva vivaha or their secret marriage by keeping nature as the witness make her more confident about her relationship with Dushyanta and she can be considered as a **Pragalbha Nayika.**

Regrading her attitude towards him about her relationship she can be considered as an **Uttama nayika.** Though she was aware that her husband has gone away from her to a distant land about which she has no idea, she is waiting for him. The love she holds for Dushyanta in his absence shows her loyalty as an Uttama nayika.

In the next type of classification based on the loyalty towards her love, Shakuntala can be considered as a **Sweeya Nayika.** She is the nayika who believes the promises of her husband who has left and gone away. Even in his absence she remains loyal to him. Hence this attributes her perfectly.

In the classification of Ashtanayikas, it is not easy to differentiate the various states of Shakuntala accurately. Yet, one can see the different shades of her through out the plot.

And this cannot be done in the same order that has given in the Natyashastra. The nature and behaviour of Shakuntala can be compared to that of the classification given in the Ashtanayika group.

After meeting Dushyanta and fell in love with him Shakuntala is completely immersed in the emotional ecstasy. And Dushyanta leaves her due to some reasons related to the kingdom after promising his love to her. He makes her wear a ring of royal sign as a sign of his commitment in their marriage. He promises to comeback and leaves the hermitage. The mental state of Shakuntala after this scene can be compared to that of a **Vasakasajjaka Nayika.** She is waiting for her husband to come back. And her whole mind is completely dedicated to the thoughts about her beloved. And it is during this moment that she gets cursed by the angry sage Durvasa.

From another angle she can be considered as a Proshita bhartrika in the same situation. Proshita bhartrika is the nayika whose husband has gone far away due to some work. Here, in this situation Dushyanta has gone to complete his duties as a king. And Shakuntala also knows it and waits for him. Considering the Gandharva Vivaha, she is the wife of Dushyanta and both has promised their love to each other. Hence, she is a **Proshitabhartrika nayika** here.

There are no much areas where one can find the shades of **Abhisarika nayika** in Shakuntala. The only possible way is that she takes the courage to meet the hero but that too with the help her friends.

In the fifth act of the play Shakuntala and her people goes to the court of Dushyanta. Her parents decide to give her to the king after realising that she bears the child of the king. Shakuntala becomes sad and happy at the same time about this. She is sad that she has to leave her beloved friends and the hermitage. But she is extremely happy to join her husband after the long separation. But due to the curse given by the sage Durvasa Dushyanta was unable to recollect anything about her or the marriage. And she becomes shocked and worried because of this behaviour from the king. Here, she shows the shades of a **Vipralabdha Nayika**. A Vipralabdha Nayika is the heroine who feels deceived by the lover. She lost her hope and tries to convince him. Here, Shakuntala takes all the efforts to make him recollect the past. She explains each small incidents that has happened during their private meetings in the hermitage. But Dushyanta remembers nothing. He denies all of it with feeling sorry for her. She becomes tired of trying to convincing him and becomes hopeless as a Vipralabdha Nayika.

Later when others try to convince Dushyanta by saying that Shakuntala, who was brought up in a hermitage will never lie like this, he denies that. He says that women have this attitude of making stories to fulfil their wish. They will go to any extent to get it done. Hearing this accusation Shakuntala becomes furious because of the insult. She felt humiliated and regretted for being truthful in love. She questions and accuse him for being such arrogant and ignorant. She blamed him for being judgemental and generalising others through his own perspectives. She is becoming a **Khanditha Nayika** here. She is not the calm and poised one and expresses all her anger towards him. Later Dushyanta also becomes furious after listening all her accusations.

And after these arguments her relatives decides to leave her at the palace and leaves the decision to the sages. The court priest suggests that let Shakuntala give birth to the child first and take decision to accept or not accordingly. But Shakuntala feels helpless from both her husband and family. Here she has the shades of **Virahotkhanditha Nayika**. She is angry and at the same time sad about her situation. She felt cheated by her beloved whom she trusted with whole heart. And on the other side she lost her parents because the same person. Though there are no exact evidence it is possible to assume that Shakuntala can also show the shade of a **Kalahantaritha Nayika** here. She doesn't repent on her decision but feels exhausted after all these incidents. After this incident she calls the mother earth and it is described that she was carried away by an Apsara to the sky.

## Conclusion

The different shades of Shakuntala throughout the play have been analysed based on various scales, which are the classification given in the Natyashastra. The story of Shakuntala has given a lot of scope for the choreography. Today in a Bharatanatyam repertoire the abhinaya pieces has become more attractive and attention seeking piece. Audience is eager to see new ways to explore abhinaya by the performer. In that sense this kind of understanding the heroines can pave way for innovations. One can compose new works and dance pieces based on these kinds of studies. There are many heroines in Indian poetry and literature. Shakuntala was one among them. Hence there are more possibilities in future.

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