

**Shakespeare and Kalidasa:  
A Comparative Study of Dramatic Purpose of Supernatural Intervention  
[With Special Reference to Shakespeare's Romances and Kalidasa's Plays]**

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**ABSTRACT:**

Kalidasa and Shakespeare are the two brightest stars in the firmament of literature. Being a fan of both Kalidasa and Shakespeare, I have observed some similarities and differences in their way of writing. Widely separated by time and cultural heritage, as they are, Kalidasa's dramas Abhijnanasakuntalam, Vikramorvasiya, Malavikagnimitra and Shakespeare's last plays i.e. Romances, Pericles, Prince of Tyre; Cymbeline; The Winter's Tale and The Tempest offer many grounds for comparison as far as their use of supernatural is concerned. We observe on examining the movement of the action of respective plays that supernatural occurrence provide the impetus for all significant turns of the events in their plays. One thing common between them is that their supernatural power is used to achieve the dramatic purpose. They overcome the difficult junctures in their plays with the help of supernatural elements. Thus the happy endings are attributed due to the presence of supernatural elements otherwise their plays could have ended in tragedy. The denouement owes entirely to the sudden happy turn of events and miracles. The supernatural elements always remain by the side of men in their prosperity. In human happiness, they celebrate festivity and in their suffering they shed tears.

**Keyword:** The intervention of the supernatural power accomplishes the purpose of the happy ending of the play.

**COMPARATIVE ASPECT OF THE USE OF SUPERNATURAL:**

Shakespeare as well as Kalidasa have evoked the feeling of wonder in their literary and dramatic compositions as much by the presence of divine or semi-divine characters. However, the status of the supernatural characters is not the same. Shakespeare has depicted characters suffused with the supernatural powers and divine qualities like a magician Prospero, Ariel, Caliban, Cerimon etc. Kalidasa has gone a step forward as his divine characters themselves play leading role in the plays like Abhijnanasakuntalam and Vikramorvasiya. Kalidasa seems to retain these supernatural characters and also the particular marvelous powers associated with them as integral part of the story. In the last plays of Shakespeare, the magical note that sounds from time to time and helps to give them their unique characters. According to Tillyard, "It enters into Welsh scenes in Cymbeline, the statue scene in The Winter's Tale and it may meet us at any moment in The Tempest. Both Shakespeare and Kalidasa derive their material from mythology, legends and folk tales where the supernatural elements are inextricably mixed with natural and human elements.

The supernatural and the superstitions figure prominently in both Kalidasa's and Shakespeare's plays. In Abhijnanasakuntalam, the curse is of course a central supernatural element which sows the seeds of conflict in the smooth course of love in Dushyanta and Shakuntala. Similarly Shakespeare's last plays are full of spirits, heavenly Gods, omens and portents. Many strange happenings occur in their plays due to the supernatural elements, overriding the ordinary laws of nature but tragedy is averted and happy conclusion is brought through supernatural agencies. Sometimes the supernatural leads totally to the transformation of characters. In Abhijnanasakuntalam, the device of curse saves Dushyanta from being transformed into vicious and strengthens him as profoundly moral being;

similarly, the oracle in Shakespeare's plays leads a jealous person like Leontes to penitence and reconciliation finally to achieve the higher purpose in the end. Shakespeare himself realized " that happiness was possible only through miracles and divine interventions. ( Datta 183) One thing important to be noted here that supernatural happenings provide the impetus for all the significant turns of the event in their plays. In the plays of both Shakespeare and Kalidasa, there is the divine voice that causes reunion. Thus supernatural is the major source of plot construction in their plays.

In addition to thematic similarities, there are also a few technical similarities between Shakespeare's Romances and Kalidasa's plays. In these plays the main action is triggered off by a force or power that is beyond the control of the protagonist. In Pericles, for example, it is riddle, which when explained by Pericles, involves him in the machinations of the king Antiochus. Pericles subsequent escapades are all caused by this riddle-episode. Similarly, in Abhijnanasakuntalam, the heroine's loss of the ring and the consequent loss of husband are caused by the sage Durvasa's curse.

An even more striking similarity lies in the use that Kalidasa and Shakespeare make of supernatural elements. Kalidasa and Shakespeare have introduced the supernatural elements at the end of the story to serve a dramatic purpose and to bring a dramatic relief. They intervene very often in the play when the human beings are very helpless, face critical situation and are unable to find a natural way to over cross it. It is high time, therefore, that the supernatural powers intervened. This divine intervention at the end of the play saves an ugly situation in their dramas and prepares an inevitable step towards the reunion and reconciliation of hero with heroine and others.

In Pericles also, in the end, Pericles recognizes Marina as his own daughter. Then Diana, the moon Goddess, appears to him in a vision and directs him to her temple at Ephesus in Act V, Scene III. There Pericles sees in the priestess of the temple his own Thaisa and Marina kneels to her mother. This supernatural direction gives a good turn to the story. Pericles instantly obeys the divine ordinance which helps him to regain his lost wife and daughter. The reunion brought about by the Goddess Diana is complete. The end of the play is thus the most happily accepted resolution and Pericles feels obliged to the Gods. Virtue is preserved by divine grace.

In Vikramorvasiya, the metamorphosis is preceded by a supernatural agency, where a disembodied sagely voice admonishes Pururava to grasp sangamaneeya, the diamond of union. This is quite in keeping with recurrent supernatural interventions throughout the play. The king with a jewel in his hand, embraces a certain creeper and metamorphosis is undone and Urvashi regains her form. The king forgives her, thus the play ends on happily. Kalidasa introduces a popular and beloved puranic figure Narada at the end of the play to bring nirvahana in the last juncture of the story and to ensure the union of Pururava and Urvashi to be a lifelong and permanent union of love. The danger is averted only through the intervention of Indra. Narada arrives from Indra with the message that the King should not lay down his scepter so soon, as Indra still wants his heroic services and that Urvashi would bear his company till his death. Thus the play ends happily with the Rambha, brings the material for the Installation of prince Ayus as Yuvaraja, which the great Indra himself has prepared. After conveying the divine message, the young prince, Ayus is crowned as the Yuvaraja, the son of the immortal and the mortal couple.

In Abhijnanasakuntalam, at the end of the fifth act, we notice that a celestial light in female shape suddenly comes and carries away Shakuntala to the Apsara- tirtha. Between the fifth and sixth acts, a considerable interval of six years has passed and there is no information about Shakuntala. In such circumstances, Sanumati, a nymph serves to bring the necessary news. Sanumati is thus a communicating link between Shakuntala and Dushyanta. Shakuntala is observing the vow of a ' Virahini ' and on the other hand, Dushyanta is also bursting in his varied lamentation and repenting over his past deeds for repudiating Shakuntala. At this crucial situation, Matali's intervention prepares an inevitable step towards the reunion of Shakuntala and Dushyanta. Shakuntala is already in the divine

region, and cannot climb down to meet Dushyanta. He must be, therefore, lifted up to her. The invitation which Matali has brought thus accomplishes the purpose by giving Dushyanta an opportunity to go to heaven.

Similarly, In Cymbeline, Imogen Posthumus story could have ended in tragedy without supernatural intervention. Cymbeline was the first of Shakespeare's plays to have a deity descend in sitting upon an eagle. Posthumus in prison, deeply grieved for the supposed death of his wife on his orders, falls into a sleep. Then the dead parents and brothers of Posthumus appear to appeal to Jupiter to help the afflicted couple, Imogen and Posthumus. He assures them that all has been forethought. This divine assurance in this play saves a terrible situation in Drama. Posthumus invokes divine mercy and he is forgiven. Thus its extremely long and intricate happy ending is a happy ending to all the plays. The mosque in which Jove and other Gods descend on him, anticipated his oncoming union with Imogen and of Cymbeline's dawning Reconciliation with his lost sons.

In The Winter's tale, Hermione is accused of high treason in having committed adultery with Polixenes and having conspired with Camillo against Leontes, her royal husband. However, she denies all charges against her. She argues her case with a subdued eloquence, showing a scorn for death but a deep concern for her honour. But Leontes brushes aside all her arguments. He remains totally unaffected by Antigonus' as well as Paulina's arguments also. His obsession of jealousy is terrifying in its intensity. At this critical moment, Apollo's oracle declares her chaste; Polixenes innocent; Camillo, a loyal subject; Leontes a jealous tyrant and newly born baby Leontes' legitimate issue. Thus, the oracles resolve all doubts.

In The Tempest, Prospero is credited with the power of a medieval magician. He uses his magic for the beneficent purpose of bringing the sinner to repentance, of furthering love and goodwill etc. Prospero does not use his supernatural powers for an evil purpose but only to bring about the best result. Indeed, there is such dignity and mobility in the exercise of his supernatural powers that he appears as a beneficent providence and certainly not as magician with the devil.

Similarly in Malavikagnimitra, Kalidasa delineates the story with a touch of supernatural flavour. Kalidasa has beautifully narrated the Ashoka-Dohada episode in Act III for his dramatic purpose of achieving the marriage of the lovers, Malavika and Agnimitra. The narration in the final act is partly used for gathering the scattered threads of the dramatic story and for clarifying the mystery surrounding Malavika. The unexpected revelation causes an agreeable and pleasant surprise and leads the story to a happy conclusion. Incidentally, Malavika's disguise as a serving maid is explained as a necessary result of an astrological prediction. Kalidasa has covered the propriety of the incidence under the formula of Siddhadesa. Social acceptance of such supernatural forces was very well known to the author. It is, therefore, that he punctuated his Drama with the simple device of Siddhadesa in order to promote the element of suspense of the reinforcement of the love story.

The music of the supernatural is highly ornamental device which embellishes the plays of both the dramatist, Kalidasa and Shakespeare; and which at the same time provides a delectable entertainment in the play. There is a strange unearthly music, which characterizes all their plays. This music is multipurpose music; and it serves various dramatic purposes in the play. This supernatural music contributes to the joyous atmosphere and it has a sublime or spiritual character.

Thus Kalidasa and Shakespeare unanimously believe in the theory of happy endings of their plays and the happy endings are made possible by the supernatural overriding the ordinary laws of nature. Thus both the dramatists use the supernatural to achieve the dramatic purpose. The danger is averted only through the intervention of divine elements in the end. Thus the supernatural occurrences serve to accomplish all significant turns in their plays. The supernatural events transform the tragic course of life into an instrument of good and their by suggesting the idea of providence or destiny which shapes human life.

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