

and the human journey.
to evoke empathy and contemplation.
complex interplay between love and destiny.

Q. 13. Throw light on the general criticism of Shakuntala.

Ans. Kalidasa's *Abhijana Shakuntala* like his *Raghuvamsha*, is most popular and very widely read in all parts of India. It is a love-drama, and belongs to that class of *Rupakas* which is known as the '*Nataka*'. Its subject is taken from history in its main out-lines. This single play has so much of the poet's genius displayed in it that we need not go to his other works to establish the superiority of Kalidasa's muse. Its language exhibits all the traces of his style: it is highly elegant, being dignified where necessary; it abounds in striking and tasteful comparisons, is sublime in the poetical portions without becoming obscure or involved, and presents a most charming ease and simplicity in the dialogues without ever descending to vulgarity. No forced constructions, no offensive conceits mar its beauty. The metres are mostly of the shorter kind, very musical and varied, with the sonorous *Arya* prominent among them. It is also highly finished from the artistic point of view. The action is progressive and the interest well-sustained. Wilson's remark—"the story, the situations and the characters, are all highly imaginative, and nothing can surpass the beauty and justice of many of the thoughts. To select one as an example were to disparage a number of other passages, and they may be left to the critical acumen and taste of the reader"—applies more appropriately to the present play. The very fact that there have been translations, and versions of these translations, made of this play from time to time in the various languages of Europe, ever since it was made known to the European world by Sir William Jones by his publishing a translation of it, is a sufficient proof of its supreme elegance and growing popularity among the learned in every country of the civilized world.

Though resembling its two sister dramas in many of the above-mentioned features and in its general dramatic structure, the *Abhijñānashākuntala* differs from them in many respects. It aims at giving a realistic picture of the life of the people in a more marked degree than the other two. The usual expedient employed by writers of erotic plays, viz., the introduction of a rival wife or wives, to give variety to the action and add interest to the incidents by the unwelcome interruptions in the love-meetings of the Hero and the Heroine, is not made use of in the present play. Another distinguishing feature of it is the comparatively insignificant part assigned to the *Vidushaka*, who is so conspicuous in the other two plays. There are also no maid-servants introduced in connexion with the love-intrigue, since there is none such mentioned in the play.

Kalidasa is regarded as a master of similes and of sweet and melodious language; and this is amply borne out by the present play. It is hardly necessary to point out particular instances, since such abound in it (*Vide* II. 8, III. 12, VII