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Discuss the importance of the Ring Motif.

The ring motif has been utilised by Kalidasa in a very effective manner. From the very beginning, the ring appears to be unfaithful and ill omened to the person possessing it. When, in the first act, Dushyanta holds it out, it reveals the truth about him when he wants to hide it. The King wants to give it, but it does not reach Shakuntala's fingers, when the King so desired it. Priyamvada and Anasuya place confidence in the ring, and it betrays their confidence. It slips away from the fingers of Shakuntala without her knowledge. In the Royal Court, when it is badly needed, it is not available; and thus it puts Shakuntala in an altogether false position. In the sixth act, it comes back to Dushyanta's hands, only to make him extremely sad. The ring has been so unfaithful to Shakuntala that she lost all confidence in it, and therefore, at the time of the re-union she refuses to accept it when it is offered to her by Dushyanta.

Dushyanta offers his ring to Shakuntala in order to make her free from the debt she owes to Priyamvada. This pretext is not entirely free from objections. Priyamvada and Anasuya are hermit girls; they do not use ornaments. Unlike worldly ladies, they have no attachment for gold. Dushyanta was a King and should have known this. His enthusiasm in offering the ring seems to reveal his ignorance about the life of hermits. The purpose of the ring here is to disclose the identity of the King, but one feels that that could have as well been served in some other way than the King's offering it.

Would it not have been possible, to bring about the same effect by making a few alterations? It may be suggested, for instance, that after describing Shakuntala as being extremely fatigued, the King should have requested her. The King could have extended his arm, the ring thus attracting the attention Priyamvada to rest at least for some more time, and that while requesting of these girls. Priyamvada being smart, could have read the name 'Dushyanta' on the ring, and the King could have punningly explained it as 'a gift from by the sympathetic one or, say, by the King. The reply of Shakuntala would then naturally follow.

We have already seen that the curse of Durvasas has had a mysterious effect on the ring, as it has escaped the memory not only of the King, but also of every other person at the royal palace. Even when Shakuntala refers to the ring in Act V, neither the King, nor the discerning Purohita remembers the missing ring. The curse of Durvasas seems to have worked on his mind also.

It appears that Kalidasa wanted to suggest that true love needs no tokens. An emblem of this kind should have been altogether unnecessary and therefore, Kalidasa is unsympathetic to it. After their union, which follows the dire suffering of the lovers, the ring is altogether unnecessary. That is a possible explanation of Kalidasa's lack of sympathy for the ring.