

Dr. Md Sharique Haider
Assistant Professor
Department of English
Maharaja College

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MJC I

Describe the Principal characters of Dushyanta.

Or

Explain the statement "king Dushyanta is the hero of this drama."

Ans. King Dushyanta is the Hero of this drama. Whatever might his kingly qualities or failings be as related in the Puranas we are not concerned with them here. We will delineate his character as painted by our poet in the drama. As already remarked, Dushyanta is a friterer hero; and he is represented in the play as possessed of almost all the qualities which form the connotation of such a hero. We shall specify here the principal points in the character of Dushyanta. He appears to be young, between thirty and thirty-five, as is shown by his ardent longing for chase, which occupation requires youthful energy. The inference is corroborated by the Senapati's words and by the fact that he is made the hero of a love drama. His love-lorn condition, so pathetically described in the third and sixth acts, again proves the same hypothesis. His first appearance makes an imposing impression upon Priyamvad. This shows that he was youthful, handsome, and majestic and of sweet address.

Another point to be noted in his character is the extreme nobility of his mind. Let us first point it out as regards his love for Sakuntals. He was youthful and had in his favour the royal custom, which sanctioned polygamy in the case of kings. True that he was not a rigid monogamist; but it must be conceded to his honour that he was not a reckless libertine. He was fully imbued with the high principles of moral conduct, and he never manifests any-time the least symptom of illicit and lewd passion. It was quite natural for him to be struck with the fascinating youth and superb charms of the Heroine (Act 1. 16, 17); but as a man of honour he wished to ascertain whether Shakuntala was married or even betrothed. He checked his first burst of love till that time, though he was so confident of his nobility that he was pretty surely convinced of the legality of the connexion (1. 20) It is only after ascertaining the real parentage of Shakuntala, and further that she was not married, that he allows his mind to harbour the feeling of love (1.25). His subsequent speech proves the same nobility of his mind. Another feature of this character is his utmost respect for the sages and great solicitude for their comfort. There is really something very attractive and reverence- inspiring in the lives of hermits. Their innocent self-denying and pure life cannot but command respect from all who come in contact with them, and as we approach such environments, we feel we breathe a purer air, the higher impulses of our mind being aroused and we are naturally brought under the purifying influence of the life of renunciation. The king, thought himself commanding universal respect, feels unbounded reverence for the sages and his conduct is marked by a proper sense of what their austere lives deserve at the hands of worldly men.

His lofty sense of regal duties does the highest credit to the greatness of his mind. The following references, out of many amply bear out this point-V. 5,7,8,9; VI. His proclamation shows his regard for the subjects' weal, and his order to his minister about the disposal of Dhanamitra's property bears testimony to his anxiety not to enrich his treasury by unjust means. There are incidents in the drama which testify to his high martial power. He was the bravest of the brave, so much so that even Indra,

the lord of the gods, sought his help (II. 15, VI. 29, 30). The King's love for Shakuntala though sensual to a certain extent, is deep- rooted and permanent; and his mental affliction, after the unconscious dismissal and rejection of the Heroine, is so touching as to give a full idea of what his real feelings were (Act VI). The King was highly cultured; for his remarks are so thoughtful and weighty that they bespeak a very high degree of refinement. He has an observant eye which marks the beauty of natural subjects. His acquaintance with many of the fine arts is thorough; he can appreciate music and be sensible to its impressions; he shows a deep knowledge of painting. In short, the Hero is depicted in such colours as make him quite worthy of the honour. He is a typical sovereign, and the various traits of his character are shown in bold relief by the poet.