

**Imagining Kingship, Duty and Love in Ancient India:
Perceptions in the *Priyadarśikā* and the *Ratnāvalī***

*Dissertation submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University in partial
fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the Degree of*

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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Declaration

I declare that the dissertation entitled, "Imagining Kingship, Duty and Love in Ancient India: Perceptions in the *Priyadarśikā* and the *Ratnāvalī*" submitted by me in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy from Jawaharlal Nehru University is my own work. The dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or any other University.


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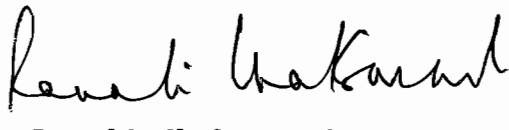
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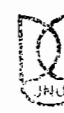
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INTRODUCTION

Ancient Indian dramatic performances were located within the wider activities of society, focusing on love, romance and other themes of emotion. The Indian dramatic art is called *nāṭya* in the *Nāṭyaśāstra* of Bharata who says that “the *nāṭya* is the representation of the states of the three worlds.”¹ Defining the art of drama, Bharata says that the *nāṭya* is the art of *naṭa*, one who performs the act, and the depiction of worldly feelings like pain, pleasure, romance etc. through performance is called *nāṭya*.² Summarizing his theory Bharata said “the combination called *nāṭya* is a mixture of *rasas*, *bhāvas*, *abhinayas*, *dharmīs*, *vṛttis*, *pravṛttis*, *siddhi*, *svaras*, instruments, song and theater-house”.³ The concept of *anukaraṇa* is most significant in dramatic art and *abhinayas* are medium for *anukarana*.

The Sanskrit world of drama is full of aesthetic beauty and love. This dissertation basically looks at issues of love, romance and betrayal through some of the most significant dramas of ancient India. Udayana and Vāsavadattā, the two most fascinating characters of ancient Indian literature, are subjects of analysis and interpretation. The subject matter of dramas also highlights the growing political rivalries between two kingdoms of Avanti and Kauśāmbi.⁴ However the political rivalries are not the concern of this dissertation.

The *Priyadarśikā* and the *Ratnāvalī* of Śrī Harṣa-Deva are primary source of this dissertation. The use of drama as a piece of literature for drawing inferences of historical significance raises a number of questions. Moreover, the relation between history and fiction and fiction as imagination has brought in light an opposition between the two. But imagination leading to fiction does not spring from vacuum. Rather, it has a context and a particular period of time which suggests that a work of fiction is a mirror image of the historical moment that reflects the then prevalent ideas in a particular society, the ongoing events acting as catalyst in influencing form, character and context of fiction. The three-tier classification of the

¹ G.H. Tarlekar, *Studies in the Nāṭyaśāstra*, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1975, p. 1.

² All references to the *Nāṭyaśāstra* are from J. Grosset (ed.), *Nāṭyaśāstra*, Paris, 1898.

³ *Rasā bhāvā hyabhinayāḥ dharmī vṛttipravṛttayah Siddhih svarāsthātodyaṃ gānaṃ raṅgaśca saṅgrahaḥ* references from *Nāṭya Śāstra* 6:10; Bharat Gupta, *Dramatic Concepts, Greek and India: A study of Poetics and the Nāṭyaśāstra*, D. K. Print World, New Delhi, 1994, p. 86.

⁴ For detailed description see, Hemchandra Raychaudhari., *Political History of Ancient India Commentary by B. N. Mukherjee*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1996.

modes of history-writing as expounded by Hegel in his *Philosophy of History*, tries to outline the connection between fiction and history from a philosophical point of view quite succinctly. His concept of *Der Geist* explains the spirit of a particular age. Every event in the said age is determined by the nature of the spirit. Thus, every work of art and fiction in the age is nothing but a reflection of *Der Geist*. Hegel's idea of philosophical history provides us with a good lead in investigating the connection. In order to understand the conditions of a particular period of time in history, one needs to comprehend it philosophically according to an understanding of the spirit of the age.

History has always drawn inspiration from works of fiction and art. The Greek classics such as *Odyssey* and *Illiad* act as reliable sources when it comes to describing the ancient Greek society. Similarly, plays by William Shakespeare present us with a vivid and picturesque view of the Elizabethan society in sixteenth-century England. Many historians working on English history of the same period might find it really difficult to bring to light the real picture of the society in the manner in which Shakespeare could. How easy it gets when one tries to make sense of the business acumen applied in those times through the character of Shylock, the Jew in his drama entitled, *The Merchant of Venice*. The imagination of a historian employing a philosophical understanding of history would perhaps find it of much value, given the fact that in trying to establish it through other historical methods might seem to be a rather cumbersome job. The depiction of society through fiction illuminates the conditions of the epoch quite satisfactorily. Quite clearly, works such as *Laila Majnu* by Amir Khusrau have assumed a real-like picture in the minds of those who have come to know of the story through various modes. The conditions of the society in those times have been described through the play in the most beautiful manner possible. Hence, the current attempt to make sense of the institution of kingship in ancient India in a new light with the help of two dramas entails an effort to understand the society of the period from the philosophical lens which assumes that the dramas have a picture to present that is the true reflection of the society of those times.

The *Priyadarśikā* and the *Ratnāvalī* of Śrīharṣadeva are works of romantic comedy in four acts. The King of Vats (Udayana) plays a romantic role in both the dramas. The present writing emphasize upon the enterprise of the king and shows how drama could be a mirror

for reflecting contemporary society and the activities of people in general and king in particular.

Review of Literature

The institution of kingship and king in particular has attracted the attention of both scholars and historians. Scholars have been trying for a long time to trace the origin of the institution of kingship in particular and the king in general. The proposed historiography of this dissertation will reverse this notion, and it will only discuss those writings which somehow try to present kingship in general and the king in particular. This section also addresses some other writings which are intrinsic to kings behavior. We have very rare work which directly acknowledges kings daily behavior, his personal longing, sexuality and his representation as an object of obsession and jealousy. However, this review of literature is written first chronologically and then gives the details of works on love, eroticism and sexuality.

E. Washburn Hopkins begins his article by referring to “human god” and called them *manuṣyadev*.⁵ In the beginning of this article both brahmin and the king is represented as god but when it comes to ascertaining who is being divinely ordained, brahmin holds the supreme position. “The godhead of the priest is not conferred upon him; he is born to it and only one born divine, so to speak, is at this period a priest. Kingship on the other hand is an attribute which may be bestowed on a member of other than the warrior-caste and in any case a king becomes divine only by virtue of a religious ritual, in which the mere man by consecration and baptism at inauguration assumes a divine nature”.⁶ It analyses the reason and questions what led to the presentation of king of ancient India as divine in nature. According to Hopkins “the war-god Indra is the natural prototype of warrior-king and a verse in the earliest Veda addressed to Indira is in the later Atharva transferred to the king”.⁷ This is one reason which leads to the identification of king with several divinities. As the title suggests, the entire article discusses the divine aspects of the king on the representation of the king mentioned in the texts and nowhere has it presented king more as human, less as god.

⁵ E. Washburn, Hopkins, ‘The Divinity of Kings’ *Journal of American Oriental Society*, Vol. 51, No. 04 (Dec., 1931), p. 309.

⁶ Hopkins, 1931, p, 309.

⁷ Hopkins, 1931, p. 310.

A significant work '*Political Theory of Ancient India: A Study of Kingship from the earliest times to circa A.D. 300*' by John W. Spellman was published in 1964. It is one of the foundational books on the study of the political thought of ancient India. The author makes kingship the central theme of his writing as it was the regular and dominant form of government in ancient India.⁸ However, its understanding differs in various traditions. For example, Spellman has devoted two entire chapters, explaining the divinity of the king in Brahmanical tradition.⁹ However, the Buddhist texts give a contrary postulation of the origin of kingship, where the origin of monarchical polity is not seen as a divinely ordained institution, but as a purely mundane matter.¹⁰ The question of the king's divinity is properly analyzed by the author. In some of his other chapters, he emphasizes over the qualifications for kingship, the methods of selection, and the question of succession; the various ministers and councils which served the king; the rule of law, centering largely on the concept of dharma.¹¹ The book is worth reading but it only analyzes king and his institution from the Brahmanical point of view. The author gives little attention to other forms of rule in ancient India, such as the much-debated question of the prevalence of "republican" forms.¹²

J. C. Heesterman's book *The Inner Conflict of Tradition: Essays in Indian Ritual, Kingship, and Society* is an attempt to discern the two different worlds of power and performance. He differentiates between a temporal order (transcendent order of the ritual and idealized dharma) and the demands of the mundane world of political power symbolised by the institution of kingship.¹³ Here the inner conflict presents the relationship of brahmin and king, who are contradictory to each other both in their daily rituals and responsibilities. It also shows how in spite of having such difference, they are dependent on each other. The king cannot transcend legitimacy without being conferred by a brahmin. So the brahmin was sole source of authority, but he may need the king's material support. Thus in theory, the power is

⁸ John, W. Spellman, *Political Theory of Ancient India A study of Kingship from the Earliest Times to C. A.D. 300*, Oxford University Press, 1964, London, 1964, p. XXI.

⁹ Spellman, 1964, pp. 26-42 and 211-224.

¹⁰ For detailed discussion see, R. S. Sharma, *Aspects of Political Ideas and Institutions in Ancient India*, Motilala Banarsidass, Delhi, 1959.

¹¹ Spellman, 1964, p. 98.

¹² For the study of political history of ancient India see, H. C. Raychaudhuri, *Political History of Ancient India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1996, (rpt. 1927, 1970, 1996, 1999).

¹³ For detailed discussion see, J. C. Heesterman, *The Inner Conflict of Tradition: Essays in Indian Ritual, Kingship, and Society*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1985.

ultimately subordinate to priesthood, whereas in fact the priesthood submits to power.¹⁴ Status and power, and consequently spiritual authority and temporal authority, are absolutely distinguished and Brahmin was sole source of legitimacy.¹⁵ The power relation is at the center of this book. While Vedic myth and rituals are Heesterman's proper field, and a number of the essays are devoted to it; but he also goes far beyond, in essays on the *Arthasāstra* and the state, on the Mughal Empire and the British Raj, on caste and karma, and on Max Weber. So the book is very useful for students working on the power structure and power relation of ancient India and other topics discussed above.

Kumkum Roy's book '*The Emergence of Monarchy in North India: - eighth to fourth centuries B. C.*' also contributes to studies of early Indian kingship. Roy traces the origin of monarchy and institution of power in north India during eight to fourth centuries B. C. She provides a vivid picture of the king and his institution and explores the institutionalization of relationship of power in early north India. She says that the north Indian society underwent a major transformation during the period of the eight to fourth centuries B. C. Roy situates the emergence and development of political institution within the changing socio economic context and locates the rise and institutionalization of monarchy within the wider social context of the Brahminical tradition and talks about the contested power relation. Within the ambit of Brahminical tradition she pays attention to the over-arching emphasis on *varna* identities through which social relations were shaped. She talks about how Brahminical power continued to manifest itself through rituals and legitimation of authority. This book is important for the studies of early Indian kingship and the social milieu in which kingship as an institution developed.

J. F. Richards (ed.) '*Kingship and Authority in South Asia*' aims to provide a re-evaluation of monarchy in South Asia. According to Richards, "the conventional historiography of kingship in

¹⁴Louis Dumont, "Kingship in Ancient India," in Louis Dumont and D. Pocock (ed.), *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, Vol. VI, Mouton and Co. Paris, The Hague, 1962, pp. 48-77 (esp. 52 and 54); *Homo Hierarchicus: The Caste System and its Implication*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1980.

¹⁵ Dumont mainly emphasis over legitimacy of power where he states that the social stratification in India carries a peculiar nature wherein despite having control over political powers and material resources the king looks up to the Brahmin priest for legitimacy. For detailed description see, Louis Domont, *Homo Hierarchicus*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1980 ; J. C. Heesterman, *The Inner Conflict of Tradition: Essays in Indian Ritual, Kingship, and Society*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1985.

South Asia is a flat, monotonous landscape.”¹⁶ One significant essay of this book talks about the relationship between king and brahmins i.e., essentially Vedic ritualism and king’s authority and legitimation.¹⁷ It shows how the political power of king was required to sanctify by the religious authority, pointing towards the superiority of brahmin. The same book has another interesting article which shows how the kingly installation and renewal of the institution of kingship was a privilege enjoyed by the brahmin in the ceremonies conducted by the them.¹⁸ Thus the book is not only significant from the prospective of king and his institution, rather it also provides fresh insight into the relation between the upper *varnas* of the society, their social relation and control over each other.

Some of the writings in the last few decades have seen ancient Indian texts in some different contexts. One such work is Daud Ali’s *Courtly Culture and Political Life in Early Medieval India*. The expression of love that has been confined to the Sanskrit texts is vividly discussed in the context of courtly culture. The book comes under the category of one of the most significant writings on king and his institution focusing on the practices of court and customs within it. It mainly emphasizes over the court culture of Gupta period (c. 350-750) and traces the emergence of court as place of royal enjoyment. It looks at courtly life such as: manners, ethics, and aesthetic beauty. Ali’s interest in courtly culture and activities associated with the theme can also be glimpsed from his article written four years before the publication of above mentioned book (2002). The ‘*Anxieties of Attachment: The Dynamics of Courtship in Medieval India*’ where he discusses the problems of courtly culture. He distinguishes between different kinds of attachment which comes with the feeling of love. Overall the writings provide insight into the king, his institution and courts.

It approaches the court from a broadly conceived ‘social history’ perspective.¹⁹ This book aims to see early Indian courts as “societies”, composed of individuals having particular code of behavior and modes of thought. It primarily looks into the issues of court and proper

¹⁶ J. F. Richards (ed.), *Kingship and Authority in South Asia*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1998, p.1.

¹⁷ For detailed discussion see J. C. Heesterman, ‘The Conundrum of the King’s Authority’, in J. F. Richards (ed.), *Kingship and Authority in South Asia*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1998.

¹⁸ For detailed discussion see, Ronald Inden, “Ritual, Authority, and Cyclic Time in Hindu Kingship”, in J. F. Richards (ed.), *Kingship and Authority in South Asia*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1998.

¹⁹ Daul Ali, *Courtly Culture and Political Life in Early Medieval India*, Foundation Book, New Delhi, 2006, p. 4.

emphasis has been drawn on the themes of courtly beauty, refinement and love. The author approach contrast to the earlier writings and presents ancient Indian king outside the realm of divinity. It de-emphasises the figure of king as an embodiment of 'kingship'.²⁰ He opines that a proper attention to king's court would provide information on ruling class.

The theme wise study of sources provides an interesting insight into the court and court related activities of early medieval India. The first theme comprising three chapters, deals with the rise and spread of royal household, the people at the court, the culture of court, the protocol of the court from Gupta times.²¹ The book's second section is significantly important for understanding the aesthetic sensibilities at court. Chapter 4 of this section discusses the courtly concept of beauty. The next chapter explores the affective world of the court as embodied in literature and manuals on polity.²² The third theme of this book contains two chapters, raises the problem of erotic love in courtly life. Chapter 6 explores the sexual relationships and courtship among the aristocratic and urban elites. To meet the desired aim, the author focuses especially on the dramas composed between the fourth and seventh centuries.²³ Chapter seven critically examines the courtly conception of erotic love and sexual lives of people at court.²⁴ Though Ali deals with various issues of interest but probably very rare works have been written from the behavioral aspects of king in his day to day life. This dissertation is an attempt to throw light on the personal life of king in general and his behavior in particular.

Shonaleeka Kaul's *Imagining Urban: Sanskrit and the City in Early India* ascertain the features of ancient Indian cities. The description of cities also brought its living characters into light, their activities and personal behavior. She examines Sanskrit *kāvya*s of historic significance to trace the historicity of ancient cities and later reached at appoint where she discovers that the cities were vibrant and teeming with variety and life. Chapter third and fourth are important for this dissertation, here former deals with urban character and its world- the man, the libertine, the courtesan and family women while later particularly highlights the existence of the ascetic, the brāhmaṇa, the king and finally the *kāma* culture

²⁰ Ali, 2006, p. 5.

²¹ Ali, 2006, pp. 29-140.

²² Ali, 2006, pp. 143-206.

²³ Ali, 2006, pp. 209-233.

²⁴ Ali, 2006, pp. 234-261.

and the social order of urbane. The sub theme of chapter four entitled ‘The King’ provides insight into a complex interface between the king and the city. The book seeks to offer a very detailed picture of urban life and discusses the activities of urbane. No especial attention has been paid to the king in particular and his institution in general. Kaul has beautifully summarised the subject matter of ancient *kāvya*s but nevertheless she does not directly look into the issues which this dissertation seeks to bring into notice.

Revisiting Abhijñānaśākuntalam: Love, Lineage and Language in Kālidāsa’s Nāṭaka, edited by Saswati Sengupta and Deepika Tandon keeps the *Abhijñānaśākuntalam* at the center of discussion and provides new insights for understanding traditional attitudes towards gender, class and power relation in pre-modern India through evoking the image of Śākuntalā. All the chapters of this book are not directly useful for this dissertation, but the ambivalence in the representation of an idealised king Duṣyanta and the politics of romantic love is interesting for outlining the character of the king.²⁵

A large number of works are also available on love and eroticism. Historians have also tried to link love with spirituality²⁶ and female sexuality.²⁷ The large number of Sanskrit literature provides ample opportunity to discuss various aspects of love and its nature. One such important writing is S.K De’s ‘*Ancient Indian Erotics and Erotic Literature*’ published in 1959. According to De, love and erotic sentiments occupies the central place in both Sanskrit and non-Sanskrit literature. He talks about impartiality in context of description of the physical charms and beauty of women frequently narrated in Sanskrit poetry in contrast to men who are seldom directly described.²⁸ Sukumari Bhattacharji in her ‘*History of Sanskrit Literature: Classical Age*’ talks about differentiation between desire and love. She opines that desire always begins and ends with the body but true love transcends all in order to attain beauty and richness. Love is not always between two opposite sex is shown by Giti Thadani

²⁵ For detailed description see, Saswati Sengupta and Deepik Tandon (ed.), *Revisiting Abhijñānaśākuntalam : Love, Lineage and Language in Kālidāsa’s Nāṭaka*, Orient BlackSwan, New Delhi, 2011.

²⁶ For detailed discussion see, Vijaya Ramaswamy, *Divinity and Deviance Women in Virasaivism*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1996; *Walking Naked: Women, Spirituality in South India*, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla, 1997.

²⁷ See, Shalini Shah, *Love, Eroticism and Female Sexuality in Classical Sanskrit Literature: Seventh-Thirteenth Centuries*, Manohar, New Delhi, 2009.

²⁸ For more detailed discussion see, S. K. De, *Ancient Indian Erotics and Erotic Literature*, Firma KLM, Calcutta, 1959.

and Salim Kidwai. Thadani's '*Sakhiyani*' published in 1996 and Kidwai's '*Ruth Vanita and Same-Sex Love in India*' (2001) point to the fact that love and eroticism can be possible among same sex. S.K Srinivasan work is interesting and provide a new perspective on the literature of love. In his '*The Ethos of Indian Literature: A Study of its Romantic Tradition*' (1985) says that the roots of Indian literature lie in the people's poetry-the bardic songs which celebrate love among the common folk. He saw Hāla's Gāthā-Saptaśatī of the first century CE as the earliest available specimen of such literature. According to Srinivasan the trading caravans and Prākṛit –speaking Jaina monks moving along the *daksināpatha* between Madurai and Ujjain via Pratisthana, disseminated these love songs. He emphasis over the female authorship of these Prākṛit songs²⁹ and considered the Prākṛit love songs as the main inspiration behind the classical Sanskrit lyrical love poetry.

This dissertation is divided into three chapters excluding Introduction and Conclusion. Chapter One looks discusses the dominant paradigm that paints a picture of the king embedded in the notion of collectivity. Under the traditional understanding of the institution of kingship, the king is seen as a guardian of the collective conscience of the society. It is in this chapter that the king is studied as an ordinary human being guided by his unconscious who behaves according to his emotions and desires. The argument is stretched forward in the next Chapter, which describes the indulgence of King Udayana in hedonistic pleasure and which is explained through the concept of *kāma*. His love for women could be seen as a divergence from the prescribed norms of behaviour for the king. His pursuit of womanly love results in court intrigues involving women of the royal household which forms the theme of Chapter Three. The women involved in love affair with the king make him the target of obsession and jealousy. The dissertation is an attempt to look beyond what has been the core of the dominant discourse in this area of academic research. It also aims at explaining another side of the reality where, contrary to the popular belief that women become a subject of male exploitation in a patriarchal society, sometimes women themselves become agents of exploitation for other women.

²⁹ K. S. Srinivasan, *The Ethos of Indian Literature: A Study of its Romantic Tradition*, Chanakya Publication, Delhi, 1985, p. 37.

CHAPTER 1

King as Lover, King as Betrayer: Attachment, Anxieties and Repression in ancient Indian Dramas

King's Divinity and Reflection from Literature

The study of the king and kingship has been a subject of interest among historians. Traditionally, the history of a particular king is the political history of his dynasty. Moreover, the literature on this topic specifically deals with the origin of kingship, the divinity of the king and his duties. A large number of writings on ancient Indian history have revealed the fact that the position of kings in early India was of superiority, bearer of authority with special qualities. All the actions of a king, his words, gestures, weapons, coins, etc. have both symbolic and religious significance.¹ The religiosity of kingship as an institution and king as the sole authority of this institution presents the king as a superhero, keeping aside his personal life, which is full of desires, eros and romance. The focus of present study is to explore the multiple images of the Kauśāmbi king, Udayana.

The study of early Indian history and literature on monarchy presents kingship as the ideal political institution.² But the question of its origin rests on divinity rather than on human agency. The earliest references to the king's origin exist on the divine³ rather than individual consciousness and they come from the *R̥g Veda*.⁴ Throughout the

¹ Scholars like John W. Spellman have provided a very detailed study of the King and his institution of kingship. Spellman throws light on the divinity of the king. For a detailed description, see John W. Spellman, *Political Theory of Ancient India A study of Kingship from the Earliest Times to C. A.D. 300*, Oxford University Press, 1964, London, pp. 26- 42 and 211- 224 ; also see, E. Washburn Hopkins, "The Divinity of Kings" *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 51, No. 4 (Dec., 1931), pp. 309-316 ; Sheldon Pollock, "The Divine King in the Indian Epic" *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 104, No. 3 (Jul. - Sep., 1984), pp. 505-528. However this is a contestable statement on two counts. Recent works of R. S. Sharma, Romila Thapar and Kumkum Roy would go against the notion that the *R̥gveda* was aware of mature kingship. The existence of a state society is difficult to prove from the *R̥gveda*. The term *rājā* in the *R̥gveda* stands more for a chief than the king.

² Kumkum Roy, *The Emergence of Monarchy in North India Eight - Fourth Centuries B.C.: As Reflected in the Brahmanical Tradition*, Oxford University Press, 1994, New Delhi, p. 1.

³ Hence his institution is referred divine in nature as it is directly linked with the king. For detail description see, J. Gonda, "Ancient Indian Kingship From Religious Point of View", *Numen*, Vol. 03, Fasc. 1 (Jan., 1956),

⁴ John W. Spellman, *Political Theory of Ancient India: A study of Kingship from the Earliest Times to C. A.D. 300*, Oxford University Press, 1964, London, 1964, p. 1.

Brahmanical tradition, both the king and his institution have received maximum attention and the reason for this is not the king but the Brahmin who holds the key to religious values and therefore to legitimacy and authority. Louis Dumont posits a similar argument which must be emphasized in connection with the *varṇas* and that is the conceptual relationship between the Brahmaṇa and the Kṣatriya. It is a matter of an absolute distinction between the priesthood and the royalty. Comparatively speaking, the king has lost his religious prerogatives: he does not sacrifice, he has sacrifices performed for him. In theory, power is ultimately subordinate to the priesthood, whereas in fact the priesthood submits to power.⁵ Status and power, and consequently the spiritual authority and temporal authority, are absolutely distinguished and Brahmaṇa was sole source of legitimacy.⁶

A theory propounded by this tradition is called *matsyanyāya*⁷ which states that in the periods of chaos, when there is no ruler, the strong devour the weak. Without a fixed set of laws and a body to implement these laws, the strong will dominate and ruthlessly exploit the weak just as the analogy of the big fish eating up the little fish. Spellman argues that without understanding this idea, there can be no understanding of kingship in ancient India.⁸ Manu also gives primacy to the institution of kingship and the king and states that “a Kshatriyas, who has received according to the rule the sacrament prescribed by the Veda, must duly protect this whole (world)”.⁹ Emphasizing on the *daṇḍanīti* of the king, he says that “through fear of him all created beings, both the immovable and the movable, allow themselves to be enjoyed and swerve not from their duties.”¹⁰ Thus,

⁵Louis Dumont, “Kingship in Ancient India,” in Louis Dumont and D. Pocock (ed.), *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, Vol. VI, Mouton and Co. Paris, The Hague, 1962, pp. 48-77 (esp. 52 and 54) ;*Homo Hierarchicus: The Caste System and its Implication*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1980.

⁶ Dumont mainly emphasises over legitimacy of power where he states that the social stratification in India carries a peculiar nature wherein despite having control over political powers and material resources the king looks up to the Brahmin priest for legitimacy. For detailed description see Dumont, *Homo Hierarchicus*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1980 ; J. C. Heesterman, *The Inner Conflict of Tradition: Essays in Indian Ritual, Kingship, and Society*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1985.

⁷ The earliest references of the idea of *matsyanyāya* are to be found in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*. For a detailed description see, F. Max Mueller (ed.), *The Sacred Book of the East The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, Vol. 44, Part V, Motilal Banarsidass, 1988, Delhi.

⁸ Spellman, 1964, p.5.

⁹ Muller, 1988, p. 216 (Chapter VII. 2).

¹⁰ Mueller, 1988, p. 218. (Chapter VII.15).

according to Manu the smooth functioning of society could not had been possible without the presence of the king.

The epic like the *Mahābhārata* also reflects the theory of *matsyanyāya*. The *Śānti Parvan* clearly shows the concern over the existence of the king and his institution. It talks about a world without king and presents such a world as the world of anarchy. It states that the ruin and the destruction would destroy the fabric of society if the king did not exercise the duty of protection. Even the happiness and existence of people depend on the king and his institution. In the same context, U. N. Ghoshal states that “the happiness and indeed the existence of the people, the institutions of society, the rules of morality and religion, as well as the sciences and arts, depend upon the king's office, or, to put it in a more general way, these have their being in the organized political society represented as usual by the monarch”.¹¹ It is clear, then, that the king was a necessity for a society.

The organic theory of the state suggests that the state, like an organism, consists of a number of parts. These parts are separate from each other. The proper functioning of the state (*rājya*) required certain degree of inter-connection between the organs.¹² The arrangement of elements is given in decreasing order, thus once again putting the king on a higher pedestal.¹³ However, H.G Anjaria totally disagrees with *saptāṅga rājya* (organic) theory of the state. He says since the state was not a moral institution and withheld the liberty of a large segment of the population on the ground that they were inferior; this concept could not be properly applied.¹⁴ This chapter does not seek to enter into the debate whether organic theory of state exists in ancient India or not. But many writings on ancient India discuss about this theory.¹⁵

¹¹ U Ghoshal, *A History of Hindu Political Theories from the Earliest Times to the End of the First Quarter of the Seventeenth Century, A.D.*, London, Oxford University Press, 1923, pp. 1-2.

¹² These eight organs (*aṅgas*) are sovereign (*svāmin*), the minister (*amātya*), the territory of the state and its people (*rāṣṭra or janapada*), the fortified city or capital (*durga*), the treasury of the king (*kośa*), the army (*daṇḍa*), friend and allies (*mitra*).

¹³ For detailed description on this theme see, R. S. Sharma, *Aspects of Political Ideas and Institutions in Ancient India*, Motilala Banarsidass, Delhi, 1959.

¹⁴ For detailed discussion see, chapter IV of H. G. Anjaria, *Nature and Ground of Political Obligation in the Hindu State*, London, 1935; Spellman, 1964, pp. 8-9.

¹⁵ See, D. R. Bhandarkar, *Some Aspects of Ancient Indian Polity*, Benaras, 1949, pp.68-89., and K.P. Jayaswal, *Hindu Polity*, 3rd ed., Part II, Vishvabharti Publications Bangalore, 1995; R.S Sharma, *Aspects of Political Ideas and Institutions in Ancient India*, Motilala Banarsidass, Delhi, 1959.

According to the ancient Indian tradition, the control over the institution of kingship and becoming a king depend on one's *karma*. The theory of *karma* justifies the rulership of a king in ancient India. Thus, emphasizing the past activities paving the way to next generation. The *Agni Purāṇa* emphasise the theory of *karma* and states that repeating the *Gāyatrī* mantra ten million times, by taking bath in the *Pañcāmṛta* for a year and by making a gift of a cow to a Brahmin at its close, a man becomes a king in the next life.¹⁶

The *Śānti Parvan* says that the kings and all others born in high families have become what they are, only in consequences of their penance.¹⁷ The same section of the *Mahābhārata* raised a significant question where Yudhiṣṭhira said to Bhīṣma: 'whence arose the word "rājan"? For what reason does one man, the king, govern the rest of the world numbering many men possessed of great intelligence and bravery?'¹⁸ The question of Yudhiṣṭhira highlights his concern over the centrality of power in single hand and it also raises question over the regulation of power and authority in ancient Indian society.¹⁹ The king was the sole authority of power except the question of legitimacy, which was the subject of Brahmin's power.

If we summarize the whole theory and arguments, it becomes clear that the kings in ancient India are mainly appointed to protect the people through the maintenance of moral order or dharma, which remained in forefront and was always the ultimate source of authority. Thus, it becomes clear that in ancient the India divine laws and the person who executes them (king) determine the nature of law. The ancient Indian religious texts are unanimous in assigning to the king the duty of the protection of people and the maintenance of the order of the world. Hence, the duty of the election or coronation of the king is the first duty of a kingdom.²⁰ The king's divinity reached its apex when the text like the *Mahābhārata* states that 'the *shrutis* says that in crowning a king, it is Indra

¹⁶ Spellman, 1964, p. 12.

¹⁷ For detailed description see, M. N. Dutta (trans.), *Mahābhārata*, Vol. IV, *Śānti Parvan*, Parimal Publications, Delhi, 1994 ; Spellman, 1964, p. 12.

¹⁸ Spellman, 1964, p. 14; Roy, 1994, p. 1.

¹⁹ For discussion see, S. Saberwal, 'On the Social Crisis in India: Political Tradition', *Occasional Papers on History and Society*, No. 7, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, Delhi ; R.L. Peabody, 'Authority', in D.L. Sills, (ed), *International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences*, Vol. I, Macmillan Co and the Free Press, 1968, pp. 473-77.

²⁰ Dutt, 1994, Vol. IV, p. 98.

that is crowned in the person of king. A person, who seeks his own prosperity, should adore the king as he should adore Indira himself.’²¹ And probably on account of all these reasons, the common persons who wanted to seek prosperity and protection devote their consent in some person coroneted as the king.

So when did the term *rājā* become a symbol of prosperity and acted functioning as a nourisher is the subject of interest for scholars working on ancient Indian history? Romila Thapar believes that *Ṛg Vedic* society was pastoral in nature, where livestock was breeding and more specifically, cattle herding was the major activity. In *Ṛg Vedic* society cattle, was main source of wealth and people accumulated cattle through breeding as well as capturing other herds and cattle raids are form of acquiring cattle.²² Sometimes herders were also lifted along with cattle in the raids. According to Thapar, “leadership in this situation requires the ability to protect not only the herd, since cattle are the chief form of wealth, but also one’s clan, and to defend the claim to ownership of cattle and control over the grazing ground or *vraja*. Therefore the synonyms of *gopa*, *gopati* and *janasya gopati* for the *rājā*, as against the later terms *nṛpati* and *nareśvara*, the lord of the herd eventually giving way to the lord of men.”

The gradual movement from a lineage based society to the emergence of a state system in the mid-first millennium B.C. highlights the transition from the chiefship to the kingship. The newly emerged king of later Vedic period had different role to play with different status quo. The definition of *rājā* mentioned in *Sutta Nipāta* that ‘he who enjoys an income from land or from a village is a *rājā*’ would have been unrecognizable to the cattle-raiding *rājās* of the Purus and Bharatas.²³ So this transition from the lineage to the state witnessed changes at many points. The well-defined *Saptāṅga*²⁴ theory of state which was considered as cornerstone of state was noticeably absent in the earlier Vedic society. The conflict in the newly emerging state was no longer a cattle raid but all efforts were made to conquest a new territory. Such change in nature of state is highly alarming.

²¹ Dutt, 1994, Vol. IV, p. 98.

²² Romila Thapar, *From Lineage to State Social Formations in the Mid-First Millennium B. C. In the Ganga Valley*, Oxford University Press, 1984, Delhi, p. 24.

²³ Thapar, 1984, Delhi, p. 155.

²⁴ For a detailed discussion of *Saptāṅga* theory of state see, R. S. Sharma, *Aspects of Political Ideas and Institutions in Ancient India*, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1959.

Slowly the *rājā* became *nṛpati* and pivot of the community shifts from the clan to the town.

The weakening of lineage system and the emergence of monarchical state has certainly provided space for king to assert his rule over the subject and became protector of the same. Thus the concept of kingship in ancient India was largely limited to the protection of classes or order of the society. The notion of protection was so strongly associated with kingship that the *Mahābhārata* states, ‘A priest without knowledge and a king without protecting power are but wooden elephants.’²⁵ The epithet such as *dīrghabāhu-* “of long arms”, *mahābāhu-* “of mighty arms, long-armed” or *vipulāṃśo mahābāhur mahoraskaḥ* “broad-shouldered, long-armed, broad-chested” reflect the power of king.²⁶

However, J. C Heesterman in his article, ‘The Conundrum of the King’s Authority’ says that the simple reverence for the king and uniform did not resolve the problem of authority.²⁷ In most of the myths, the king has been presented as the preserver of social order, i.e. the three *vargas* (categories) – *dharma* (virtue), *artha* (wealth), and *kāma* (pleasure). Thus making king as a divine or semi-divine figure, whose presence in society guarantees social order and hence society cannot be the final source of authority. In course of comparing him with divine or making him semi divine, all his human features were kept aside. But the textual representation of king in relation with the institution of kingship and his engagement in other personal activities shows his alienation from the institution. In this chapter, attempt has been made to explore this aspect of king and his behavior.

Looking Beyond the Brahminical Prism: King and his Desire

If we look at the king outside the prism of these theories and religious literature, a genre of secular literature portrays king differently.²⁸ Some of the literatures gives the

²⁵ *Mahābhārata*. 12, 78, 41 f.

²⁶ J. Gonda, 1956, p. 40.

²⁷ For discussion see J. C. Heesterman, ‘The Conundrum of the King’s Authority’, in J. F. Richards (ed.), *Kingship and Authority in South Asia*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1998.

²⁸ Most of the literature of early India includes *Ṛg Veda*, *Brāhmaṇas*, the *Mahābhārata* etc are religious in nature. While the literature of Gupta and post Gupta period which includes Kālīdāsa’s drama such as the *Abhijñānaśākuntalam*, the *Mālavikāgnimitra*, Śrīharṣadeva’s *Ratnāvalī* and *Priyadarśikā*, Bhāṣā’s

diametrically opposite images of the king as the two sides of the same coin and portrays the king both as a lover and a betrayer. This chapter focuses on the image of King Udayana through an analysis of the relationship which the emperor had developed in two different dramas of the Śrīharsadeva. Both the *Priyadarśikā*²⁹ and the *Ratnāvalī*³⁰ deal with the marriage, after numerous serious incidents, of Udayana, king of Kauśāmbī. In both the texts, the character and action of the king is a subject of analysis.

Both the works deal with the king's romance and love intrigues. The *Priyadarśikā* is a romantic drama in four acts. It depicts the king's desire for Priyadarśikā, the daughter of Dṛdhavarman, the king of Aṅga.³¹ The political history of ancient India is full of the kings, their warfare and mutual conflict. Therefore Act I brings the description of war between Dṛdhavarman, the king of Aṅga and the king of Kaliṅga over the possession of Priyadarśikā. While the latter want her hand, the former promised her in marriage to the king of Kauśāmbī (Udayana). This led to an open battle between the two, where the king of Kaliṅga inflicted number of blows upon Dṛdhavarman, ravaged his kingdom and took him as his captive. The faithful chamberlain of Dṛdhavarman somehow managed to rescue his master's daughter safely and placed her in charge of his ally, Vindhyaketu the king of the Vindhya forest. The tragedy reached its apex when chamberlain came back and did not find Priyadarśikā and he finds that Vindhyaketu has been attacked and slain by some unknown enemy. In the later part of the drama, it became clear that the attack was organized from the side of Vatsa king, Udāyana and his commander-in-chief, Vijayasena had successfully defeated Vindhyaketu and took beautiful maiden Priyadarśikā captive who was later asked by the king to be placed in charge of his queen

Svapnavāsavadatt etc are not religious in nature. One can find two different kinds of images of the king in the above mentioned sources.

²⁹ For all translation related details, see, *Priyadarśikā: A Sanskrit Drama by King Harsha*, G. K. Nariman, Charles J. Ogden and A. V. Williams Jackson (tran.), (Columbia University Indo-Aryan Series, ed. A.V William Jackson). New York, Columbia University Press, 1965 (Originally, 1923); M. R. Kale, *Priyadarśikā of Śrīharsadeva*, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1977 (Originally 1928).

³⁰ For all translation related details see, M. R. Kale, *The Ratnāvalī of Śrī Harsa-Deva*, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1984 (Reprint, First edition 1921).

³¹ The act second of this drama shows how the protector of dharma lost his sight when he heard the crying voice of Priyadarśikā .

Vāsavadattā, and instructed that he should be informed when the girl attains marriageable age.³²

The Act II brings the romance and the desire of the king. It highlights the king's personal affairs and his love for aesthetic beauty. When the king was walking through the palace garden with his companion, Vasantaka, he happened to catch the sight of Āraṇyakā³³, who came to garden with one of the Queen's attendants, Indīvarikā, to gather lotuses. The king was attracted by her beauty and he hides himself with his companion behind the bushes, just to hear the conversation between the two maidens. Later he came to know that Āraṇyakā was the daughter of his late enemy Vindhyaketu, who has approached her marriageable age. In the meantime, she is stung by bees, rushing out of the cluster of lotuses which she was plucking. It provides king an opportunity to love Āraṇyakā, and when she calls for help, the king out of his infatuation embraced her and retires only when Indīvarikā came to rescue her colleague.

The Act III is full of dramatic twist and suspense. It clearly shows the affection of both king and Āraṇyakā for each other. It is also discernible when Āraṇyakā in the garden was lamenting over her hopeless passion and wants all possible ways to see the king again. The queen comes to know of it described as part of the same theme in the act, thus ending the act by ordering to throw both Āraṇyakā and the jester behind the prison. The Act four is studded with more interesting twists turns and to the tale where the Queen is informed by her mother that the King Dṛḍhavarman, the husband of her mother's sister, is still a captive of the accursed Kaliṅga. She also narrates the whole story about how his kingdom was ravaged. Vāsavadattā later came to know about the loss of her cousin Priyadarśikā, of whom no trace could be found. In the meantime, the King and his jester tried their best in placating the Queen for securing Āraṇyakā's freedom. At the same time one of the Queen's attendants, Manoramā, informed Vāsavadattā that Āraṇyakā had consumed poison. Filled with remorse, the Queen orders that she be conveyed at once into the royal presence, in the hope that the King, being skilled in the use of magic spells that

³² Kale, *Priyadarśikā of Śrīharṣadeva*, 1977, pp. XXVI-XXVII.

³³ Priyadarśikā is called Āraṇyakā because of having been rescued from the forest (*āraṇya*). For detailed description see Act I of M.R. Kale, *Priyadarśikā of Śrīharṣadeva*, 1977 ; A. V. Williams Jackson (ed.), *Priyadarśikā*, 1965.

counteract the effects of poison, may save her life.³⁴ Thus, the King saved Āraṇyakā by his knowledge of magical spell. In the later section of the drama, Vāsavadattā came to know that Āraṇyakā who is put behind the prison is none other than her cousin, Priyadarśikā. At last when King restored the heroine to consciousness, Vāsavadattā rejoiced over it and pledges before the king to be a lawful wife, in accordance with the promise of Dṛḍhavarman.

The drama, *Ratnāvalī* is another important primary source of this dissertation. However, in general the closest of similarities of theme, characters, method of treatment exist between the two dramas (the *Ratnāvalī* and the *Priyadarśikā*) of Śrīharṣadeva. Ratnāvalī is the chief character in this drama and the daughter of the King of Ceylon who has been predicted to become the wife of the Vatsa King, Udayana who is already married to Vāsavadattā. The Act first shows how Yaugandharāyaṇ, the chief minister of the King Udayana managed to woo Ratnāvalī in a marriage for his master. Since the king had already a wife named Vāsavadattā, the King of Ceylon Vikramabāhu, the father of Ratnāvalī, refuted Yaugandharāyaṇa's proposal.

However, the minister spread a rumor that Queen, Vāsavadattā, perished in fire at Lāvaṇaka. By spreading the rumor of Queen's death, the only objection to the proposed marriage was thus removed; Vikramabāhu gave his consent and sent his daughter to Kauśambī. The author has extended the plot of drama by bringing the incidence of shipwreck in mid ocean, but was happily saved by a trader of Kauśambī who identified her by the Jewel-Necklace, which she wore. She was brought to the King's palace by Yaugandharāyaṇa and placed her in the keeping of Queen Vāsavadattā without revealing her real identity. She has been placed before them as Sāgarikā (as she has been rescued from the ocean, *sāgara*) and thus her real identity was not brought to the notice of others. She has been introduced into Queen's apartments as an attendant. The reason behind bringing Sāgarikā into the ambit of palace was to win Udayana's heart through her uncommon beauty. The Act vividly presents Cupid festival and the meeting of both King and Sāgarikā and their mutual love.

³⁴ Williams, 1965, Chapter 3, p. III.

However, Act II tells us about the lovelorn condition of Sāgarikā and she confesses her love for the king. In the last two acts, both Susaṃgatā and the king’s jester managed to arrange a meeting between the king and Sāgarikā secretly but are discovered by the Vāsavadattā, who once again ordered both Sāgarikā and king’s Jester to be thrown into prison at the close of Act III. In the last Act, a fire in the palace, caused by a magician’s artifice, put Sāgarikā into danger, but like Āraṇyakā, she was rescued by the king. At last, once again, Vasubhūtī (king Vikramabāhu’s minister) recognizes his princess in Sāgarikā and thus Vāsavadattā shows her regret over the treatment she gave to her cousin and finally accepted her as the king’s co-wife.

The study of both these dramas explores binaries in the storyline, illuminates points placed at the margins and shows gaps and silences from the plays to interrogate dominant social relations and reveal the material nature of affective bonds and aesthetic ideology. The literary works of Kālidāsa attempt to locate the institution of kingship within a cosmic framework and kings as bridge between the divine and the human realms.³⁵ In *Abhijñānaśākuntalam*, for example, the charioteer of Duṣyanta compares him to the bow-wielding form of Śiva, Pinākin, as he watches the king engrossed in chasing the deer.³⁶ A large number of writings have seen the ancient king as a sacred or ‘*dharmic*’ figure, while Śrī Harṣdeva in his literary works, especially in two of his dramas the *Priyadarśikā* and the *Ratnāvalī* gives a rather human nature of the king where he falls in love with Āraṇyakā and Sāgarikā respectively. Therefore, the king has been projected as the enjoyer of pleasure which brings the question of rulers’ *kāma* culture and a question mark on his sacred domain.

Udayana’s erotic impulses and intentions mentioned in the sources introduce an irony to the notion of *śāstra* and relationship between *śāstra* (“theory”) and its *prayoga*

³⁵ Here I am talking about his two most famous literary works, the *Abhijñānaśākuntalam* and the *Raghuvamśam*. The latter explicitly deals with the representation of kingship. For detail discussion see M. R. Kale (trans.), *The Abhijñānaśākuntalam of Kālidāsa*, Motilal Banarsidass, New Delhi, 1990 and Jyotibhushan Chaki and Ratna Basu (ed. and trans.), *Raghuvamśam*, Nabapatra Prakashan, Calcutta, 1981.

³⁶ Kumkum Roy, ‘Seeing and Hearing: Representation of Kingship in the *Abhijñānaśākuntalam* and *Raghuvamśam* of Kālidāsa’ in Saswati Sengupta and Deepika Tandon (ed.), *Revisiting Abhijñānaśākuntalam: Love, Lineage and Language in Kālidāsa’s Nāṭaka*, Oriental Blackswan, 2011, New Delhi, p. 131.

(“practical activity”) in Sanskrit tradition which is diametrically opposed.³⁷ The social identities³⁸ of the king are dual in nature in both the dramas. The king, in general, is supposed to function within the structure of the varṇa order and should marry a woman from an identical social background. The sustenance of the *varṇāśrama* was central to the Brahmanical notion of kingship and the existence of the king has been presented in all positive light. Both the dramas have equally emphasised on the point that the ideals of kingship reflected from the play puts a question mark on the notion of kingship mentioned in the *śāstra*.

The king acts in both the dramas as a playful erotic hero and betrays Vāsavadattā. His engagement in the enjoyment of pleasure and love for Āraṇyakā and Sāgarikā in the *Priyadarśikā* and the *Ratnāvalī* respectively till the last act of the drama shows his infatuation which is highly contradictory to the images of a king presented in the other dramas of ancient India.³⁹ The notion of the king as valiant, protector of his subjects and the adjudicator of temporal laws are completely subverted by the erotic component of the king’s character. The dual nature of the King’s character is evident from the acts of the dramas. In the Act II of *Priyadarśikā*, the king has been shown as a person who appreciates Queens’s love for himself, who is so affectionate that she keeps fast on the occasion of *madana* festivals.⁴⁰ But, in the next scene he can’t control his passion for Āraṇyakā and gets infatuated by her beauty. In this state of infatuation, the king’s companion, the Vidūṣaka played a significant role and informed the king of her beauty.⁴¹ The king in response started comparing her matchless beauty with all impossible ends

³⁷ For detail discussion see, Sheldon Pollock, “The Theory of Practice and the Practice of Theory in Indian Intellectual History”, *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 105, No. 3, July-September, 1985.

³⁸ All the personal behaviors get exhibited individually but the inferences are social in character. For detail discussion see Karl, Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia*, Routledge, London, 1997, (Originally published, Routledge & Kegan Paul 1936).

³⁹ In the *Raghuvamśam* of Kālidāsa, the king Dilīpa is highly concern for the welfare of his *prajā* (his subjects) even in the *Abhijñānaśākuntalam*, the king Duṣyanta, lost in the fantasies of Shakuntalā and fell in love with her and got married as per Gandharva marriage. But Duṣyanta left for his kingdom, promising to come back soon and take Shakuntalā with him. For complete story line see, M. R. Kale (ed. and trans.), *Raghuvamśa of Kālidāsa*, Motilal Banarsidass, (Reprint 1972, 1991), 1991, Delhi and M. R. Kale (ed. and trans.), *The Abhijñānaśākuntalam of Kālidāsa*, Motilal Banarsidass, (Reprint 1977, 1980, 1987, 1990), 1969 (tenth edition), Delhi.

⁴⁰ *Kṣāmāṃ maṅgalamātramaṇḍanabhṛtaṃ mandodyamālāpinīm āpāṇḍucchavinā mukhena vijitaprāstātanendudyutim sotkaṅthāṃ niyamopavāsavidhinā ceto mamo’ ikaṅthate tāṃ draṣṭum prathamānurāgajanitāvasthām ivā’ dya priyam.*

⁴¹ *Vidūṣaka (sakautukam) bho vassa, pekkha pekkha. Kā esā kusumaparimalasuandhaveṇīmahuarāvalī viddumaladāruṇahatthapallavā ujjalantataṇukomalabāhuladā saccaṃ paccakkhacarī via ujjāṇadevadā itthiā.*

and calls her as a Nāga-maiden⁴², arisen from Pātāla in order to view the earth. Later he interrogates it within his own self and asks: can moonlight be incarnate here?

The king's infatuation reached its apex level when Indīvarikā left Āraṇyakā all alone in the garden. The king describes her beauty in the most erotic manner where her glance gives pleasure which is as a continued shower of drops of nectar.⁴³ The chain of events precedes their love-making. In the absence of her companion (Indīvarikā), Āraṇyakā is suddenly attacked by bees lurking in the cluster of lotuses which she is collecting. Her call for help is projected as an apt situation for the king to show his love. But the plot of drama highlights the fact that a jester is not only the king's companion but he worked as catalyst in influencing King's behavior. He worked as an adviser to king and said:

“my dear fellow, your wishes are fulfilled. Before that slave-born girl can come, do you approach in silence, and she will think it is Indīvarikā coming, when she hears the sound of footstep in the water, and it will be you that she will cling to.”⁴⁴

The idea that a jester always keeps the king on high pedestal is also evident from the statement given by him. The king throws his arms around her neck, drives off the bees and embraces her. The fear of Āraṇyakā under the king's arms clearly points the social differentiation prevalent within the king's palace and it tells us about the fact that maidservant like Āraṇyakā and Indīvarikā are always meant for a particular kind of work in the palace of King and their desire is subject to suppression.

Norbert Elias's writing talks about the development of mechanisms of restraint—or 'civilizing processes'—such as manners and courtesy which have reflected social compulsions.⁴⁵ In trying to trace the history of manners in the medieval Europe beginning with the European Renaissance, Elias describes the coming into being of the Court

⁴² Pātālād bhuvanāvalokanaparā kiṃ nāgakanyo

⁴³ Nariman, 1965, Act II, p. 31.

⁴⁴ Nariman, 1965, Act II, p. 31.

⁴⁵ For discussion see introduction of Norbert Elias, *On Civilization, Power, and Knowledge*, Chicago Press, London, 1998. However Michel Foucault gives an alternative to the Elias model of restraint or civilizing processes. Foucault has argued that that this 'repressive hypothesis' is a perception of modern bourgeois societies, and he called it distorted self-perception. He studied the disciplinary practices in pre-bourgeois societies and does not call it restraint, rather as regimes of self-discipline connected with the formation of ethical subject hood and agency. For detail discussions see, Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison*, Random House, New York, 1975.

Society responsible for giving birth to the entire notion of right or civilized conduct. Greater control over one's emotions as well as their manifestations through the acts of body crystallized in the form of mannerisms characteristic of the Parisian café in the modern civilized Europe. There was clearly distinction based on class wherein the lower classes were supposed to behave in a particular manner that received the approval of the society while interacting with the members of the nobility or anybody coming from a social class superior to theirs.⁴⁶ The episode of tormenting bees is only a situation created by the dramatist to show how king's desire is not a subject of limitation while if someone likes him is always question of social status.

The study of texts highlights the point that love-making was hierarchical in nature and falling in love depends on one birth, wealth, urbanity, and beauty, all together can be called social class. It is also evident in Daud Ali's writing when he says "that the institution of romantic love in India grew up with the evolution of a particular type of society".⁴⁷ Texts like *Priyadarśikā* and *Ratnāvalī* provide an interesting insight into the mentality of ruling classes of ancient India. They illuminate the engagement of King in the erotic love. The plots of dramas also provide insight into the practice of polygamy and the concept of possessing co-wives.⁴⁸

The enjoyment of pleasures thus not only depended on the release of libidinal impulse⁴⁹, as is clear from Vātsyāyana's eloquent argument in the *Kāmasūtra* that the *kāma* is not the application of 'means' (*upāya*) in order to fulfill one's sexual needs.⁵⁰ Rather it depends on one's social status, as it is evident from the plot of *Priyadarśikā*. The king was not only the enjoyer of pleasure but he also betrays. He was totally engrossed in the

⁴⁶ An in-depth analysis of the correlation between civilization and mannerism could be found in two of Elias's seminal works, *The Court Society* (published in English by Blackwell Publishers, Oxford in 1983, originally published in German in 1969) and *The Civilizing Process Vol. I* (published in English by Blackwell Publishers, Oxford in 1969, originally published in German in 1939).

⁴⁷ Daud Ali, "Anxieties of Attachment: The Dynamics of Courtship in Medieval India", *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (Feb., 2002), p.104.

⁴⁸ For discussion see, the translation of *Priyadarśikā* and *Ratnāvalī* mentioned above (especially Act IV of the *Priyadarśikā*)

⁴⁹ The fact of the existence of sexual needs in human beings and animals is expressed in biology by the assumption of a 'sexual instinct', on the analogy of the instinct of nutrition that is hunger. Every day language possesses no counterpart to the word 'hunger', but science makes use of the word 'libido' for that purpose. For detailed discussion see, James Strachey (trans.), *Sigmund Freud Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, Basic Books, New York, 1962. (Originally Reprint of the 1905 edition).

⁵⁰ Daud Ali, 2006, pp. 106-107.

beauty of Āraṇyakā and Sāgarikā in the *Priyadarśikā* and the *Ratnāvalī* respectively. The dramatist has aptly shown how the king Udayana enjoyed the pleasure of *kāma* in both the dramas while his lover's desire has always been a subject of repression.

Historians like B.N.S Yadava state that the post Gupta period was marked by fragmentation of sovereignty and it had left deep impact on the institution of kingship.⁵¹ The activities of the king represented in the texts of the period also points that he was more into his daily life. Thus the status of the king and the functioning of the institution of kingship had witnessed a change which is replaced by his desire as in the case of Kālidāsa's *Abhijñānaśākuntalam* and Srīharsadeva's *Priyadarśikā* and the *Ratnāvalī* etc.⁵² In *Ratnāvalī*, the king says 'the kingdom has all his enemies entirely vanquished ; the burden (of government) is placed on (entrusted to) a worthy (competent) minister ; the people, with all their troubles warded off, are tended with proper protection ; (and further-) Pradyota's daughter (for my wife), the season and yourself – with all these (advantages to complete my happiness), let *Kāma* have ample satisfaction by its name : but I, on my part, regard the great festival as mime.'⁵³

The king's engagements in other activities could be seen in the *Ratnāvalī*, where cupid festival or *madana* festival, observed in order to celebrate the feeling of love takes the form of a carnival which somehow offers an opportunity to Sāgarikā to give a vent to her feelings for King, Udayana. The carnival fulfills its role as a means of providing a platform to the lower classes for trying and bridging the gap that the prevalent social order would normally not allow, theme that was described as well as explained by the medieval French thinker, Francois Rabelais. Mikhae Bakhtin describes how Rabelais showed that the clowns and musicians in the carnival actually perform on themes that are critical of the current order, especially the role of the king and the nobility. Thus, an atmosphere of informality tries to eliminate the class differences, temporarily though. The feelings that would otherwise remain suppressed would get a vent during such

⁵¹ B. N. S. Yadava, *Society and Culture in North India*, Central Book Depot, Allahabad, 1973, pp. 115-117.

⁵² The daily activities of king discussed in Kauṭilya are the *Arthaśāstra* and the activities mentioned in dramas presents a contrast. For discussion on king's activities in the *Arthaśāstra* see M. B. Chande, (trans.), *Kauṭilya's Arthasastra*, Atlantic Publishers, 2004 and L. N. Rangarajan (trans.), *Kauṭilya's Arthaśāstra*, Penguin, New Delhi, 1987.

⁵³ M. R. Kale, 1984, Act I, p. 121.

periods of informality.⁵⁴ The texts like *Naiṣadhacarita* also talks about the activities of king in early medieval literature and text like *Mānasollāsa* is full of the king's *vinoda*, *bhoga and kṛīḍā* rather than the activities related with functioning of state.⁵⁵ Thus it seems that the pursuit of pleasure and enjoyment not only make a king betrayer but also divert him from the duties of state. Yadava states that the enjoyment of king grown at the expense of his duties.⁵⁶ This was probably the reason of increasing erotica in Sanskrit literature of post- Gupta period.

The King Udayana shares a strong attachment with his wife Vāsavadattā can be viewed from the plots of dramas. In Act II of *Priyadarśikā* he says 'my mind yearns, to-day to see that beloved of mine who is emaciated, who wears only the auspicious ornaments, who speaks slowly and with effort, who subdues the beauty of the morning moon by her face having a palish hue, and who is full of longing owing to the observance of the rules of her fast, as if she were in the condition produced by first love,'⁵⁷ The same came from the Act I of *Ratnāvalī* where the King raised the beauty of Queen to a higher pedestal and said 'surpassed by the lotus of your face that eclipses the splendor of the moon, the louses suddenly grow pale (lose their luster) ; and hearing the songs of the courtesans forming your train, the female bees are slowly lurking in the interiors of buds, as if smitten with same.'⁵⁸

However King's attachment for Priyadarśikā and the Ratnāvalī is not less a valuable subject to explore how sentiments of attachment , anxieties and their repression was so common in the ancient India that dramatist have projected these feeling in the form of dramas. An impartial analysis of the texts shows the attachment, anxieties, and repression of the desire of all four central characters (Udayana and his wife Vāsavadattā, and his lovers Āraṇyakā and Sāgarikā) in the dramas. Although the King has an upper hand,

⁵⁴ Bakhtin's thesis revolves around Rabelais's thoughts compiled in his work, *Rabelais and his World*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1965.

⁵⁵ Shalini, Shah, *Love, Eroticism and Female Sexuality in Classical Sanskrit Literature: Seventh-Thirteenth Centuries*, Manohar, New Delhi, 2009, p. 24.

⁵⁶ B. N. S. Yadava, 1973, p. 117.

⁵⁷ Kale, 1977, Act II, p. 8.

⁵⁸ Kale, 1984, Act I, p. 129.

where he engaged himself in satisfying his desire and embrace Āraṇyakā but he represses his desire in the fear of Queen's maid, Indīvarikā.⁵⁹

Interestingly, the repression of desire is amply visible in case of Āraṇyakā and Sāgarikā. Both the characters in the dramas are passionately in love with King Udayana and they act differently to fulfill their desire through inanimate activities. In the *Ratnāvalī*, Sāgarikā represses her desire and draws the painting of King, just to keep her close to him. She says

“I will gaze upon that coveted person drawn in a picture and then do as desired.’ Her fore hand tremble on account of nervousness, but she says ‘still as there is no other means of seeing that person (King), I will paint, just as I can, and behold him.’⁶⁰

The hopeless passion for King Udayana shows Sāgarikā's disappointment and anger. She has been seen accepting in the drama her inability to present her love for the king. She says

“What is the use of this persistent yearning after a person difficult to obtain, the only result of which is anguish? Moreover, you wish to see again the very person at whose sight your distress increases.”⁶¹

The activities inform us of her unfulfilled love and repression of her desire. Such a theme is common in ancient Indian dramas and the references for the same could be glimpse from the dramas of Kālīdāsa.

Thus the dramas of Srīharṣadeva are not mere plays of imagination, or product of his mind but they may be said to be transcript of contemporary manners or as representing certain kind social practices prevalent in the then ancient Indian society. The eroticism reflected in the dramas of ancient India thus reflects the *kāma* culture of the king and it also throws light on the king and his institution.

⁵⁹ Kale, 1977, Act II, pp. 8-16.

⁶⁰ Kale, 1984, Act I, pp. 131.

⁶¹ Kale, 1984, Act I, pp. 130-31.

CHAPTER 2

Ruler as an Epitome of Enjoyment: Erotica, Pleasure and Cities in Drama

Understanding Kāma

The word, *kāma* has been accorded major attention in Indian philosophy and thought. The concept of *kāma* has been used in a variety of sense. However, it basically means desire, wish or longing in Indian literature. *Kāma* is considered as an integral part of the world of material objects and desires. In the *Bhagavad-gītā* Kṛṣṇa talks about the origin of lust said to Arjuna that “it is lust only which is born of contact with the material mode of passion and later transformed into wrath, and which is the all-devouring sinful enemy of this world.”¹ According to the same text all living entities have some degree of lust.² Further the lust is also compared with the enemy, the enemy of the living entity’s pure consciousness. It is so pervasive in nature that it is eternal to one’s soul and it is never satisfied and keeps burning like fire.³ The *Gītā* speaks by drawing inferences from the *Manu-smṛiti*. Discussing about the erotic aspect of *kāma* it presents this material world as *maithunya-āgāra*, or the shackles of sex life.⁴

The nature of *kāma* is somewhat similar to fire which never extinguished by a regular supply of fuel. At the center of this material world, sex⁵ occupies a place of significance and on account of this it is called *maithunya-āgāra*. It captures all vital parts of the human body such as mind, senses and intelligence department, thus regulating the human activities under its influence.⁶

¹A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, *Bhagavada-Gītā As It Is*, Delhi, 1998, Chapter- 3, Verse No.37, p.183. The original Sanskrit text reads as: *Kāma eṣa krodha eṣa rajo-guṇa-samudbhavaḥ mahāśano mahā-pāpmā viddhy enam iha vairiṇam*. And for detailed description and discussion see Prabhupāda, Delhi, 1998, Chapter- 3, Verse No. 37. p. 183.

² The original Sanskrit text reads as: *Dhūmenāvriyate vahnir yathādarśo malena ca yatholbenāvṛto garbhas tathā tenedam vṛtam*. And for detailed description and discussion see, Prabhupāda, Delhi, 1998, Chapter- 3, Verse No. 38. p. 184.

³ The original Sanskrit text reads as: *Āvṛtaṁ jñānam etena jñānino nitya-vairiṇā kāma-rūpeṇa kaunteya duṣpūreṇānalena ca* And for detailed description and discussion see, Prabhupāda, Delhi, 1998, Chapter- 3, Verse No.39, p.185.

⁴ For detailed description and discussion see, Prabhupāda, Delhi, 1998, Chapter- 3, Verse No. 39.

⁵ The concept of *kāma* in literature has a very detailed and minute discussion. This verse particularly talks about the sexual aspect of it.

⁶ The original Sanskrit text reads as: *Indriyāṇī mano buddhir asyādhiṣṭhānam ucyate etair vimohayaty eṣa jñānam āvṛtya dehinam* And for detailed description and discussion see, Prabhupāda, Delhi, 1998, Chapter- 3, Verse No.40, p.186.

The study of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* and other literary works of ancient India point towards the fact that *kāma* is not all about sexual pleasure, rather this word has deeper meaning which includes almost every aspect of desire for consumption. The insatiable and unlimited nature of human wants that forms one of the most discussed themes of classical economics⁷ is nothing but a variant of the concept of *kāma* that leads a living entity into a never-ending lust for pleasure through material consumption. This sense of material consumption includes the lust for power, money and other bodily pleasures, the carnal desires forming only a part of the entire notion of *kāma*.

However, the use of the word, *kāma* generally implies sexual desire and longing in contemporary literature. The stereotype associated with Vātsyāyana's *Kāmasūtra* has largely portrayed *kāma* as sexual pleasure. Thus, the essence of the word in *Kāmasūtra* is missing in its various connotations, whether it refers to an object promoting voyeuristic tendencies (moving picture) or a written material. The concept of *kāma* within it means sensual pleasure originating from the cohabitation of male and female. But the concept more broadly refers to any desire, wish, passion, longing, and pleasure of the senses, the aesthetic enjoyment of life, affection, or love, with or without sexual connotations.⁸

The concept of *kāma* is so intrinsic to human feelings and activities that it makes its entry not only in religion, festival and literature of early India but it also encroaches upon the philosophies of ancient India. The cult of *kāmadeva* is an example of it. The first reference to *kāma* comes from the Ṛgveda.⁹ The hymn basically talks about creation and believes that all creation could be said to be the result of the first seed which was *kāma*. In spite of having a significant role in creation, *kāma* has been viewed negatively in the brahminical tradition. This could be inferred from the writing of Bhattacharji. He argues that although *kāma* plays a vital role in the process of creation, the god of *kāma*, *Kāmadeva* remains a late or minor god in Indian mythology, and could only occupy a position of reputation in the *Purāṇa*.¹⁰ A close analysis of Bhattacharji's assumption perhaps allows us to hypothesise that under brahminical tradition *kāma* had a lower

⁷ The theory on human wants has been propounded by classical economists such as Adam Smith and David Ricardo.

⁸ Joanna, Macy, "The Dialectics of Desire" *Numen*, Vol. 22, Fasc. 2 (Aug., 1975), pp. 145-160.

⁹ *Rig Veda*, Book 10, Hymn 129, Verse IV.

¹⁰ Sukumari, Bhattacharji, *The Indian Theology*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1970, p. 107.

status as compared to other *puruṣārthas*. The four proper goals of human life¹¹ includes *dharma*, (righteousness, moral values), *artha* (prosperity, economic values), *kāma* (pleasure, love, psychological values) and *mokṣa* (liberation, spiritual values).¹² However, when it comes to the significance, *dharma* is considered more superior than *artha* and *kāma* while *mokṣa* is considered as the ultimate ideal of human life. This led to the *trivarga* debate and discussion on the nature of *kāma* in the *dharmasāstra* and *kāmasāstrīya* texts.

In the *Purāṇic* narratives, the bodiless god of passion (*kāma*) has numerous names such as *madana* (intoxicator), *manmatha* (agitator of the mind), and *anaṅga* (the bodiless).¹³ He enjoys a very vivid description accompanied by others which includes the name of his friend, *vasanta* (spring), *rati* (sexual delight) and *prīti* (affection) being his two wives. The *Purāṇas* mention his *vāhana* (vehicle) as parrot and *makara* (crocodile) as the emblem of his banner (*makaraketana*, *mīnadhvajā*).¹⁴ Contrary to what Bhattacharji is saying, the study of *Śiva Purāṇa* shows that even in *Purāṇic* narratives *kāmadeva* was not venerated as a god of certain power and authority or if so, then his status always remains low in comparison to the major deities like Śiva. The evidences from *purāṇic* narratives¹⁵ and later literature¹⁶ composed on it shows the victory of Śiva over *Kāmadeva* who is burnt to death by the fire of Śiva's third eye as the deity of passion was trying to disrupt Śiva's *tapa* (meditation). In the same tradition *Kāmadeva* is referred to as *māra* or death.¹⁷

¹¹ The goals of human life (*puruṣārtha*), though treated as fundamental 'axiology' of Vedic religion, only appear in later ritual manuals like the *Hiranyakeśi Gṛhyasūtra* where *dharma*, *artha* and *kāma* are honoured as 'guests' attending rites related to Vedic studies. For relevant citations from śāstric literature, where they appear regularly, see P. V. Kane, *History of Dharmasāstra*, 5 vols., Bhandarkar Research Institute, Poona, 1968-75, (2nd edn, vol. II, pt. 1, pp. 8-9.) also see, Daud Ali, *Courtly Culture and Political Life in Early Medieval India*, Foundation Book, New Delhi, 2006, pp. 70-77.

¹² Patrick Olivelle, *The Āśrama System: The History and Hermeneutics of a Religious Institution*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1993, pp. 216-219; Thomas, J. Hopkins, *The Hindu Religious Tradition*, Dickenson Publishing Company, Cambridge, 1971, p. 78.

¹³ For discussion on his name see, A. M. Shastri, *India As Seen in the Kuṭṭanī-Mata of Dāmodaragupta*, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1975, pp. 77-78.

¹⁴ The god of love is presented as *madana* in the drama *Kumārasambhava* of Kālidāsa, the *Ratnāvalī* of Śrī Harṣa-Deva and in the *Kuṭṭanī-Mata of Dāmodaragupta*. The same is mentioned in the *Śiva Purāṇa*. However for detailed description of *kāma* see, Shalini Shah, *Love, Eroticism and Female Sexuality in Classical Sanskrit Literature Seventh-Thirteenth Centuries*, Manohar, New Delhi, 2009, pp. 78-83.

¹⁵ This episode finds mention in J. L. Shastri (ed.), *The Śiva Purāṇa*, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1970.

¹⁶ The *Purāṇic* myths in the course of time became the theme of several literary works. One such example is *Kumārasambhava* of Kālidāsa. For all detailed description see, Heifetz Hank *The Origin of the Young God Kālidāsa's Kumārasambhava*, Motilal Banarsidas, Delhi, 1990; M. R. Kale (ed. & tr.), *Kumārasambhava of Kālidāsa*, Motilal Banarsidas, New Delhi, 1981.

¹⁷ Shastri, 1975, p. 78.

The renunciation of *kāma* which is a prerequisite for starting an ascetic life seems to be only a norm prescribed by the writers of *dharmasāstra*. J. M. Masson in one of his writings on asceticism extols the role of asceticism in the following words: “asceticism as a defense – a mechanism whereby unacceptable urges and impulses can be warded off and never permitted to reach consciousness, let alone motility”.¹⁸ But these same warded-off impulses, these "strangled affects", as Freud called them in his first study on hysteria, will find distorted expression in one way or the other, either in a somatization (conversion) or in a symptom. Freud discovered something astonishing in this respect: the symptom contains the very impulse it was designed to ward off, albeit in a heavily disguised form. The "return of the repressed, “as Freud so pungently described it, can make its appearance in a dream, or in a symptom, or even in an absence.”¹⁹

The conflict with ascetic tradition has undoubtedly lowered the position of *kāma*. But the evidences of what Masson called “defense mechanism” and Freud considered it 'warded-off impulse' can be found in the *Śiva Purāṇa*. Śiva in *Purāṇic* narrative is not able to control his impulse of sexual urge, which might be the result of the erotic environment created by Kāmadeva or the beauty of Pārvatī. Thus the *Purāṇic* narratives have ruled out the brahmanical notion of *tapas* (meditation) and chastity and show how ascetics were more prone to the physical charm of the female. The myths of *Śiva Purāṇa* have shown how sexual excitement represented a threat against which an ascetic Śiva failed to control his desire.²⁰ Although in Hinduism asceticism is opposed to sexuality and fertility, in mythological terms *tapas* itself is a powerful force, a generative power of ascetic heat symbolising the thirst for sensual pleasure.²¹

This leads us to assume that the Vedic perception of *kāma* where it is regarded as a factor responsible for the creation of new life, became more pejorative in the later ascetic tradition. The god of love and passion was no longer venerated as promoting fertility. A proof of its final decline could be found in the system of *āśrama*. Moreover, the king's seductive remarks and instinctual desires in the *kāvya*s seem to be his repressed thought which became visible only

¹⁸J. Moussaieff, Masson, 'The Psychology of Ascetic', *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 04 (Aug., 1976), p. 615.

¹⁹Masson, 1976, p. 615.

²⁰ For detail discussion see, J. L. Shastri, ed., *The Śiva Purāṇa*, Part I, Section Second, *Rudra-Saṃhita*, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1970.

²¹Wendy, Doniger O'Flaherty, *Śiva The Erotic Ascetic*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1973, p. 41.

when he started moving away from the normative and prescriptive texts written centuries ago. In the next couple of pages an attempt has been made to see the relevance of *kāma* in the *dharmasāstrīya* and *kāmasāstrīya* texts. Going forward, a sub-theme of this chapter will explore how the king, if not totally, but to satisfy his instinctual desire, functioned outside the realm of divinely inspired laws formed by human agencies on the earth, paying less attention to the norms mentioned in the *dharmasāstra*.

The ancient Indian life span was divided into four phases called *āśrama*. The first stage involved the practice of *brahmacarya*, where a person in his student life disciplined himself for the rest of his life. Having mastered the Vedas, or a part of them, one came back to his home, where he led a family life, marrying, bringing up children, and thus becoming a householder (*gṛhastha*). In the third stage he detached himself, left for the forest to become a hermit (*vānaprastha*). And in the fourth and the last stage of his life he renounced worldly interests, freed his soul from material lust, a stage marked by one's penance and meditation. Eventually, at the very ripe age he left his hermitage, and became a homeless wanderer (*sannyāsin*), with no earthly ties.²²

The four stages of human life were guided by certain rules and precepts, and to better postulate these rules, the field of human conduct was divided into three distinct categories. These categories included *dharma*, *artha* and *kāma*. The superiority of these three categories in one's life is a subject of debate. For the writers of the *dharmasāstra*, the hierarchy and gradation within *trivarga* was necessary²³. Hierarchy here refers to the superiority of one category over the other and subordination of the latter with respect to the former. The two great epics had also established this hierarchy. The *Mahābhārata* states that "a wise man tries to secure all three but if all three cannot be attained he secures *dharama* or *artha* or only *dharma* if he has a choice of only one".²⁴ The *Sāntiparvan* of the *Mahābhārata* gives primacy to *dharma* and considers it the best among all three. It particularly states that '*dharma* is the best, *artha* is the middling and *kāma* is the lowest and the man should so act that *dharma* would be the principal goal of his life'.²⁵ The *Rāmāyaṇa* also gives primacy to *dharma* in the *trivarga* debate.²⁶

²²For detailed description and discussion on *āśrama* system sees, A. L. Basham, *The Wonder That Was India*, Rupa & Co, New Delhi (Third Revised Edition), 1967.

²³ *Trivarga* basically comprises three categories of human life i.e. *dharma*, *artha* and *kāma*, together called *puruṣārthas*.

²⁴Shalini Shah, *Love, Eroticism and Female Sexuality in Classical Sanskrit Literature Seventh-Thirteenth Centuries*, Manohar, New Delhi, 2009, p. 51.

²⁵Shah, 2009, p. 51.

²⁶Shah, 2009, p. 52.

The non-*dharmasāstrīya* texts such as the *Arthaśāstra* and the *Kāmasūtra*, considered *artha* and *kāma* as important as *dharma*, but could not completely accord supreme status to either of them. This is evident from the first *sūtra* of Vātsyāyana's *Kāmasūtra*, where the author pays homage, not only to *kāma*, but to all three components of the *trivarga*:

*dharmārthakāmebhyo namaḥ*²⁷ (1.1.1) {"I pay
my homage to *dharma*, *artha*, and *kāma*."}

In the next *sūtra*, Vātsyāyana explains the reasons for giving primacy to all three *puruṣārthas*:

*śāstre prakṛtatvāt*²⁸ (1.1.2) {"Because, that
is how it has been presented in the
sāstra."}

He further states that all three *puruṣārthas* are relevant to a *śāstra*, and also stressed the interconnection of all three *puruṣārthas* in his *Kāmasūtra*. He talks about the significance of a particular *puruṣārtha* in different periods of a person's life. It points towards the fact that a person's life is governed by his age, and the significance of a particular *puruṣārtha* depends on the person's age.²⁹ However, Yaśodhara in his *Jayamaṅgalā* commentary differs from Vātsyāyana and opines that *dharma* and *artha* are means of realization of *kāma*, which is the fruit (*phalabhūta*) of *dharma* and *artha*. Therefore, he puts *kāma* on a higher pedestal (*parama puruṣārtha*).³⁰ Though Vātsyāyana has established a hierarchy while placing the elements of *trivarga*, he stood against the norms prescribed by Pāṇini and others where *artha* comes first.

The reasons for his refusal of Pāṇini's *Aṣṭādhyāyī* rule, according to which *artha* is the most sought after among all three elements of *trivarga*.³¹ It is a subject of analysis and interpretation. However, this is beyond the scope of this study. Nevertheless, a study of *Kāmasūtra* surprises us owing to the fact that a text on *kāma*, opens with the word *dharma*:

²⁷References to the text of the *Kāmasūtra* are according to the edition, with Yaśodhara's commentary, *Jayamaṅgalā*, Kashi Sanskrit Series 29, Benaras, 1929; S. C. Upadhyaya (tr.), *Kāmasūtra of Vātsyāyana*, Taraporevala, Bombay, 1961.

²⁸For detailed description see, Upadhyaya, 1961.

²⁹The concept of age and primacy of a particular *puruṣārtha* is derived from Ludo, Rocher, The *Kāmasūtra*: Vātsyāyana's Attitude Towards *Dharma* and *Dharmasāstra*, *Journal of American Oriental Society*, Vol. 105, No. 3, Indological Studies Dedicated to Daniel H. H. Ingalls (July-Sept), p. 521.

³⁰For references of Yaśodhara see, *Jayamaṅgalā* commentary on *Kāmasūtra* by Yaśodhara, (ed. and tr.), Madhavacharya, 2 vols., Khemraja Shrikrishana Prakashan, Bombay, 1995, 1.1.1.

³¹Rocher, 1995, p. 522.

*Dharmam arthaṃ tathā kāmaṃ labhante...*³² {“they attain *dharmā*, *artha* and *kāma*”}.

The opening of a text on *kāma* with the term, *dharmā* raises certain important questions. It basically implies to the notion that the instinctual desires of human beings was sought to be governed by *dharmā*. Moreover, the positioning of *kāma* within *trivarga*, but primacy accorded to *dharmā* shows the predominance of *dharmā* in *shastric* literature. The study of both *Kāmaśāstrīya* and *dharmāśāstra* texts makes us realize that for the authors of these texts, the meaning and understanding of the concept of *kāma* is completely different. Yaśodhara in his *Jayamaṅgalā* commentary³³ states that *kāma* is necessary for human beings and their existence and compares it with food - both *kāma* and food are necessary to sustain the body.³⁴ While *Kāmaśāstrīya* texts present *kāma* as a requirement of human body, the Vedic literature and the *dharmāśāstra* seek to present it only in the context of procreation. The prescriptive texts suggest several measures for violating the rules related to *kāma*, which applies not only to commoners but also includes under its ambit the royal house-holder and the king. For example, it's necessary for the king to maintain purity by keeping himself aloof from the vice originating from two main sources - love of pleasure and wrath.³⁵ Manu states that a king who is attached to the vice originating from love of pleasure is sure to lose his wealth as well as his virtue. So he particularly restricts a king to enjoy the pleasure of hunting, gambling, sleeping during daytime, censoriousness, excess with women, drunkenness, an inordinate love for dancing, singing and music, and useless travel.³⁶ However Vātsyāyana says:

“*Kāma* is the enjoyment of appropriate objects by the five senses of hearing, feeling, seeing, tasting and smelling assisted by the

³²Rocher, 1995, p. 522.

³³*Jayamaṅgalā*, 1.2.37.

³⁴Rocher, 1995, p. 522.

³⁵For example Manu states that “let the king day and night apply himself to the conquest of his organs; for one whose organs are conquered is able to bring the people under control. Let him avoid with effort ten vices which arises from lust, and eight which arises from anger; (these) end ill. For a king devoted to vice which spring from lust is deprived of his wealth and virtue; but (if addicted) to those which arise from anger, of his self. Sport, dice, sleeping by day, gossip, woman, liquor, song, dance, (and) music, and vain wandering about, are the tenfold class (of vices) arising from lust. Malice, violence, injury, envy, calumny, mischief to property, abuse, and assault are the eightfold class (of vices) arising from anger. Drink, dice, women also, and hunting, let him know to be, in order, the worst four in the class arising from lust”. For detailed discussion see Arthur Coke Burnell (tran.), (ed. Edward W. Hopkins), *The Ordinance of Manu*, Munshiram Manoharlal, New Delhi, 1995, pp. 153-154.

³⁶Nikunja Vihari Banerjee, *Studies in the Dharmāśāstra of Manu*, Munshiram Manoharlal, New Delhi, 1980, pp. 75-76.

mind together with the soul. The ingredient in this is a peculiar contact between the organ of senses and its object, and the consciousness of pleasure which arises from that contact is called *Kāma*.”³⁷

Although Vātsyāyana in the very beginning of his text gives primacy to *dharma* and *artha*, he puts both of them into *alaukika* (supreme mundane) category and knowledge of both *dharma* and *artha* requires a *śāstra*. According to Vātsyāyana, *kāma* is natural and even among animals, comes naturally and hence, it does not require a *śāstra*.³⁸ Thus, it seems that the text like *Kāmasūtra* just celebrates *kāma* but fails to establish its significance prior to *dharma* and *artha*, therefore justifying the stand of *śāstric* tradition. It seems that he (Vātsyāyana) considers *kāma* subordinate to *dharma* and *artha* whenever these are in conflict. The only exception made is for the King and the courtesan for whom *artha* is rated higher than the other two.³⁹

In spite of saying *dharmam arthaṃ tathā kāmaṃ labhante*, Vātsyāyana emphasizes upon the neutrality of *kāma*, thus questioning the prevalent notion of *dharmasāstra* where *kāma* is altogether seen in a negative light and in a pejorative sense. Unlike the authors of *dharmasāstra*, he does not only emphasise *dharma* and *artha*, rather he insists that the *Kāmasūtra* promotes not one but all three elements of the *trivarga*:

*Dharmam arthaṃ ca kāmaṃ ca ... paśyaty etasya tattvajñāḥ*⁴⁰
rakṣan dharmārthakāmānāṃ sthitim svām lokavartinīm asya
*śāstrasya tattvajñāḥ*⁴¹

The study of both *kāmasāstrīya* and *dharmasāstra* literature highlights the personal interest and inclination of authors. For example, the latter advocates a sort of abstinence from enjoying *kāma*, the former deviates from a basic principle of *dharmasāstra*. However, unlike *dharmasāstra*, *kāmasāstrīya* texts do not suggest or prescribe several injunctions or penalties for violating the norms mentioned in the text.

The study of the nature of both categories of texts suggests the growing mentality of people towards the social rather than the religious. The conservativeness of *dharmasāstra* with regard to

³⁷Sir Richard Burton & F. F. Arbuthnot (tran.), *Kāmasūtra of Vātsyāyana*, Jaico Publishing House, Mumbai, 1989, p. XVI.

³⁸Rocher, 1995, p. 522.

³⁹Shonaleeka Kaul, *Imagining the Urban: Sanskrit and the City in Early India*, Permanent Black, Ranikhet, 2010, p. 199.

⁴⁰Rocher, 1995, p. 523.

⁴¹Rocher, 1995, p. 523.

kāma is highly questionable. Moreover, one obvious question which comes to our mind is: Why does *śāstric* tradition emphasise on the notion of sexuality in a pejorative manner? This also brings us to the question why sexuality is an area of interest for the writers of *dharmasāstra*? From ancient to modern and even postmodern thinkers like Foucault define sexuality and try to answer the above questions. According to Foucault, “sex was a means of access both to the life of the body and the life of the species”,⁴² and this is probably an important reason of targeting the notion of sexuality in both ancient and modern world. However, the study of early medieval literature shows that by the seventh century, the status of the *dharmasāstra* as canonical law was over. Nevertheless, the interest of reading the *dharmasāstra* and writing commentary on it did survive by that time, the most significant being Medhātithi’s commentary, *Manubhāṣya* on the *Manusmṛti* written in the ninth century. The diverse number of commentaries on original text is an indication of increasing diversity of opinion and interpretation.

But if we look at the dramas of the period under discussion, they challenge the norms mentioned in *kāmasāstrīya* and *dharmasāstra* texts. *Kāma* is not only an area of interest for scholars of *śāstric* tradition; rather it has attracted the attention of dramatists, modern historians and scholars. The rulers of ancient India did not remain untouched with this pleasurable aspect of human life. The next section of this chapter particularly highlights the *kāma* culture of king and pleasurable aspects of his life.

King as Nāgaraka: Enjoyer of Pleasure

The King is presented as *yuddhavīra* (warrior), *dayāvīra* (compassionate), and *dānavīra* (munificent). However, not much has been written on the king’s sexuality and sexual orientations in general. In order to bring to light this aspect of the king’s behavior, the imagery of the king as depicted in the drama of ancient India needs to be studied in detail. A set of ideas and theories would explore this trait of his nature in this section. The story of the love of King Udayana of Kausāmbī and his queen, Vāsavadattā, seems to be very popular in ancient India, as it has been

⁴²Foucault, Michel, *The History of Sexuality*, Vol. I, Allen Lane, London, 1979, p. 146.

referred to by many poets and writers. But within the ambit of his love affairs, the king's character is a subject of analysis. He was not only a ruler but also an enjoyer of *kāma*. Hedonistic pleasure seems to play on the mind of the king, though he is supposed to act within the limits of *dharma* in order to protect and maintain the social order. Being human definitely compels the king to express his instinctual desires and personal emotions in whatever manner he could.

In this regard, Freud's analysis of the concept of *libido* marks a paradigm shift from the erstwhile understanding of sexuality and sensual pleasure. Thinking outside the shackles imposed by Victorian morality, Freud considered the vital role played by the *unconscious* which he referred to as *id*. Freud classifies the sensual part of human psychology called libido into 'ego-libido' and 'object-libido'.⁴³ In the context of *kāma*, it's the object-libido that plays a major part. The idea of an external object being the cause of erotic pleasure is very well brought out by Spinoza in his *Ethics* with the help of five essential concepts – Desire, Pleasure, Pain, Love and Hatred. He remarked, "Pleasure is the transition of a man from a less to a greater perfection."⁴⁴ With the emotions such as love and hatred revolving around the feeling of pleasure and pain. Spinoza claims that "Love is pleasure, accompanied by the idea of an external cause". Similarly, "Hatred is pain, accompanied by the idea of an external cause" where "Pain is the transition of a man from a greater to a less perfection".⁴⁵ Quite similar is Schopenhauer's argument about love. He draws examples from all corners of the world including dramas from India as well as Europe to show that the emotion called love has primarily been described as 'love of the sexes'. It's the dominant theme that has occupied the minds of poets and dramatists across the world, as a consequence of which Romeo and Juliet, La Nouvelle Héloïse, and Werther, have attained immortal fame. To Schopenhauer, love is nothing but expression of the term, passion⁴⁶.

The significance of a text as a crucial indicator of human behavior and tendencies has played a major role in revealing socialized behavior of human beings. Surprisingly, so far these texts are discussed from different perspectives where king's personal life and behavior has been kept away. This is partly due to the lack of interest in studying the sources related to his personal life

⁴³For detailed description, see, *A Primer of Freudian Psychology* written by Calvin S. Hall, published in 1999 by Meridian Books, a member of Penguin Putnam Inc., New York, pp. 57-60.

⁴⁴See, Spinoza's *Ethics*, Part III entitled 'On the Origin and Nature of the Emotions' (Project Gutenberg e-book published 2003) first published in 1677.

⁴⁵See, Spinoza's *Ethics*, Part III entitled 'On the Origin and Nature of the Emotions' (Project Gutenberg e-book published 2003) first published in 1677.

⁴⁶See, Arthur Schopenhauer's 'The Metaphysics of Love of the Sexes' in *The World as Will and Idea*, Volume 3, Kegan Paul, London, 1909, pp. 336-337.

and behavior. Literature in the form of prescriptive or didactic text talks about the daily activities of King, largely in terms of responsibilities and fulfillment of functions counted as daily necessities. Like other texts of ancient India, Kauṭilya gives primacy to king and his institution and believes that the Kingship and the King is central to the notion of justice i.e. *dharmapravartaka*.⁴⁷

Defining King's daily life, Kauṭilya states that he should divide the day into eight parts as also the night by means of *nālikās*,⁴⁸ or by the measure of the shadow (of the gnomon).⁴⁹ He explained king's engagement both during the day and the night. He discussed his daily schedule vividly where during the first of the eight parts of the day, he should listen to measures taken for defense and (accounts of) income and expenditure, in the second he should look into the affairs of the citizens and the country people, in the third he should take his bath and meals and devote himself to study, in the fourth, he should receive revenue in cash and assign tasks to heads of departments, in the fifth, he should consult the council of ministers by sending letters and acquaint himself with secret information brought in by spies, in the sixth, he should engage in recreation at his pleasure or hold consultation, in the seventh he should review elephants, horses, chariots, and troops, in the eighth he should deliberate on military plans with the commander-in-chief. And when the day ended, he should worship the evening twilight.⁵⁰

Kauṭilya further states that during the first of the eight parts of the night he should interview secret agents, in the second, he should take bath and eat his meals and engage in study, in the third, he should go to bed to the strains of musical instruments and sleep during the fourth and the fifth (parts). During the sixth, he should awaken to the sound of musical instruments and ponder over the teaching of the science, in the seventh, he should sit in consultation (with councilors) and dispatch secret agents, in the eighth, he should receive blessings from the priests, preceptors and chaplain, and see his physician, chief cook and astrologer and after going around a cow with her calf and a bull, he should proceed to the assembly hall.⁵¹

Among a number of prescriptive texts, the *Manusmṛiti* is perhaps one of the well-known texts of early India. The exact date of its composition is difficult to ascertain. But most sections of the

⁴⁷M. V. Krishna, Roa, *Studies in Kauṭilya*, Munshiram Manoharlal, New Delhi, 1979, p. 69.

⁴⁸The word *nālikā* is used as a unit of measurement in the *Arthaśāstra*. It measures 24 times, because the eighth part of a day comes to 3 ¾ *nālikās*. For detail discussion see, R. Shamasastri (tr.), *The Kauṭilya's Arthaśāstra*, 1905, p. 50.

⁴⁹R. P. Kangle (tr.), *The Arthaśāstra*, Part II, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1972, 9. 6, p. 46

⁵⁰Kangle, 1972, p. 46; Shamasastri, 1905, p. 50.

⁵¹Kangle, 1972, p. 46; Shamasastri, 1905, pp. 50-51.

text were written somewhere between second century B.C. and second century A.D.⁵² Like Kauṭilya, Manu also prescribed certain rules and regulations which a king needs to follow in his daily life. He has presented the king not only as an ideal ruler but has regarded him as a divine creation naturally endowed with sovereign power. The lust for pleasure, no matter from where and how it comes must always be restricted. The *Manusmṛiti* states that:

“a king devoted to vice which spring from lust is deprived of his wealth and virtue.”⁵³

Interestingly, the king’s character and nature mentioned in the above discussed prescriptive literature witnessed a contradiction when we read the plot of dramas like the *Priyadarśikā* and *Ratnāvalī*. It has already been stated earlier that the period of the then statutory laws which enjoyed the status of canonical law, could be said to have given way to another set of temporal laws which prescribed the rules of demeanor for the King by the seventh century A.D. The ancient Indian dramatists had started moving away from the laws mentioned in the *Kāmasāstrīya* and *dharmasāstrīya* texts. The dominance of *sāstric* laws were seemingly reduced to the ground by the concept of *rasa* in the field of aesthetics.

In the first chapter, we explore the emotional attachment of king with Vāsavadattā and other features of his personality. This section especially deals with the King and his pleasure, challenging the norms of *dharmasāstra*. This dissertation aims to uncover the identities of the king lost in the rules and norms of *dharmasāstra* and in fact look beyond it. This would be possible through the study of his personal life. It would be necessary to underline King’s activities in the context of the places he stayed. This leads us to the question of urbanism and its impact on popular culture and mentality of the king in particular and his subjects in general.

The characteristics of urban society have always been the subject of interest for scholars working on themes related with the study of city and urbanism as a way of life. The description of ancient cities has always attracted the attention of *kāvya*s. The mention of women in the description of city, engaging themselves in love and dalliance, and the men visiting courtesans’ quarter or flirting with maids have always been discussed in the secondary literature composed on the

⁵²G. Buhler, *The Laws of Manu* (Sacred book of the East, Vol. XXV), Delhi, 1964, p. cxvii; P. V. Kane, *History of the Dharmasastras*, Vol. I, Poona, 1968, p. 330.

⁵³Burnell (tran.), *The Ordinance of Manu*, Munshiram Manoharlal, New Delhi, 1995, p. 154.

original texts.⁵⁴ However, too little attention has been devoted to the erotic perspective of the king. Interestingly enough, the primary text like *Priyadarśikā* and *Ratnāvalī* is replete with the example of King's eroticism.

The king as *nāgaraka* presents him as an enjoyer of *kāma*. But before presenting the king as *nāgaraka*, it is important to discuss the term *nāgaraka*. The term *nāgaraka* is not very common in the *kāvya*s. However, the features of it are generally found in the male character of different *kāvya*s.⁵⁵ Vātsyāyana has used the term, *nāgaraka* in his text a number of times. He even named one of the chapters of his book as *Nāgarakavṛtti*, wherein he discusses the term in a very detailed manner and tries to understand it in its urban context. Since then a large number of scholars have defined the term in their translation of the text. Wendy Doniger and Sudhir Kakar's translation of the text defines the term as "the man-about-town" and presents *nāgaraka* as "a sophisticated connoisseur of the good life in general, of pleasure in particular, and of sex even more particularly."⁵⁶

The inferences drawn from *Kāmasūtra* situate *nāgaraka* within the ambit of pleasure, be it for sex or for other activities of daily life. The study of *Kāmasūtra* attributes two important characteristics to *nāgaraka*. These two characteristics, such as sexual attainment and cultural accomplishment, have directly linked the people under this category with urbanism.⁵⁷ The presentation of king as *nāgaraka* is based on his daily activities. In his daily life, he (king) behaves like a *nāgaraka*⁵⁸ unlike the works where king is depicted as a divine figure. The early Vedic literature and to some extent later Vedic period, contrast the image of the king mentioned in the dramas of early medieval India. In the former of the two categories of texts, deities like Varuṇa and Soma were identified with *rājas*.⁵⁹

⁵⁴For detail description see, Shonaleeka Kaul, *Imagining the Urban Sanskrit and the City in Early India*, Permanent Black, Ranikhet, 2010, pp. 143-152 and 195-208.

⁵⁵A large number of *kāvya*s shows the character of *nāgaraka*. Among these *kāvya*s are *Mṛcchakaṭīka* of Śūdraka, *Mālavikāgnimitra* of Kālidāsa, *Avimāra* of Bhāsa, *Cārudatta* of Bhāsa, *Kuṭṭanīmata* of Dāmodaragupta and *Mālatīmādhava* of Bhavabhūti.

⁵⁶Wendy, Doniger and Sudhir Kakar (tran.), *Vātsyāyana Mallanāga Kāmasūtra*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2002, p. XXV.

⁵⁷The study of *Kāmasūtra*, especially its chapter 4 of book 1, titled *Nāgarakavṛtti* or The 'Avocation of the Nāgaraka', featuring all urban context of the term. For more interesting details of *nāgaraka* see, Doniger and Kakar, 2002, p. XVII.

⁵⁸For activities of *nāgaraka* see, translation of the *Kāmasūtra*, Doniger and Kakar, 2002, pp. 131-139.

⁵⁹Kumkum, Roy, *The Emergence of Monarchy in North India As reflected in the Brahmanical Tradition* (Published Ph.D thesis), Submitted at Center for Historical Studies, School of Social Sciences I, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, 1991, p. 163.

The King's character mentioned in the text and the changing attributes of his character in the texts composed one after another is an interesting endeavor. The divinely inspired figure of Vedic and later Vedic King assumes the character of *nāgaraka* in the *kāvya*s composed during this period. The king no longer remains an authoritative power "asserting control over produce and productive resources and by attempting to divert and channelize exchange mechanisms as a result of which the distribution of resources became more and more inegalitarian".⁶⁰ The non-egalitarian society, wherein possibly the resources were unequally distributed among the masses, the social behavior of the king was no longer divinely inspired. The reading of texts, particularly that of the *kāvya*s probably bring to the light how king in his daily life indulged in the pursuit of pleasure.

The king's desire for *kāma* and luxuries of daily life puts him under the category of *nāgaraka*.⁶¹ His sexual inclination is well perceived by his statement to Vidushaka in the *Ratnāvalī* of Śrī Harṣa-Deva. He said,

"Oh the excess of passion for spot of the servant-girls! Of this intoxicated maid, sporting, regardless of the breaking of her waist bending under the weight of her breasts, the mass of hair, loosened and disheveled, is giving up, in pain as it were, the beauty imparted by the wreath of flower; here her two anklets, clinging to her feet, are crying, through uneasiness as it were, with a double force; and this her necklace, tossed about by continuous shaking, is, through constraint as it were, ceaselessly striking her bosom".⁶²

The unequivocal conclusion that seems to emerge from the above statement is that the *kāvya*s composed in post-Gupta period have completely undermined the high pedestal on which were placed the king and his institution of Kingship. The ruler, therefore, is often presented as an enjoyer of passion (*kāma*) and is portrayed as pursuing *kāma* with single-minded devotion. This is a theme that will recur in my analysis.

⁶⁰Kumkum Roy in her Ph.D. thesis shows King as a person responsible for making society inegalitarian in nature. For detail description see Roy, 1991, pp. 207-208.

⁶¹For *nāgaraka*'s daily life features see Kaul, 2010, pp. 131-139.

⁶²M. R. Kale, *The Ratnāvalī of Śrī Harṣa-Deva*, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1984 (Originally, 1921), p. 123.

The contextual analysis of texts like *Priyadarśikā* and *Ratnāvalī*, both composed by king Śrī Harṣa-Deva, in post-Gupta period⁶³ makes it possible to understand the king outside the Brahmanical framework, wherein the king is subservient only to God, himself being a divinely originated one on the earth. Both the dramas give a number of incidents where the king behaves like romantic *nāyaka*, hero of the drama and *nāgaraka* or urban sophisticate. This is probably one reason which propels scholars like Thomas Trautman to argue that though the text like the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, *Arthaśāstra* and *Kāmasūtra* were written earlier but probably they were compiled in their present form in the Gupta period.⁶⁴ The authenticity over the antiquity of the concept of *kāma* is not a question of doubt. S. C. Upadhyay in one of his work says that “Vātsyāyana on the origin of knowledge of *kāma* says that the antiquity can be traced from the Vedic deity Prajāpati, who recites 1000,000 chapters on the three goals of human life, of which *kāma* is one of them”.⁶⁵ This attests to the significance of *kāma* since its origin.

So the King who forms the part of both courtly culture and aestheticized life style depicts an aesthetic world of pleasure. The growing urbanism of the period provides ample opportunity to his pursuit of pleasure. The fragmentary evidences from the texts like *Ratnāvalī* suggest the continuity of trade and growing urbanization. The story line of the drama says that the king of Siṃhala named Vikramabāhu had a daughter Ratnāvalī. A sage (*siddha*) had predicted that a person who would marry her would be a paramount sovereign (Sārvabhauma). Yaugandharāyaṇa, the chief minister of King Udayana wanted his King to marry the daughter of Vikramabāhu. He played the game of trick as his King had already a wife named Vāsavadattā. He got the rumour spread that Queen Vāsavadattā perished in a fire at Lāvāṇaka. The only hindrance to King’s marriage was thus removed.⁶⁶

The story further leads to a situation where Vikramabāhu gave consent, and sent Ratnāvalī to Kauśāmbhī on board a ship. A shipwreck took place in the mid-ocean; however, Ratnāvalī was rescued by a trader of Kauśāmbhī. He brought it to the notice of the king’s minister who did not announce the identity of Ratnāvalī. He brought her to the Queen’s apartments, where she started

⁶³Both the texts are composed during the reign Harṣa of and standard book on political history of ancient India put Harṣa rule in post Gupta period. For complete information on chronology see, Hemchandra, Raychaudhari, *Political History of Ancient India Commentary by B. N. Mukherjee*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1996.

⁶⁴Daul, Ali, *Courtly Culture and Political Life in Early Medieval India*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2004, pp. 71-72. See footnotes on the given pages for detail discussion on Thomas idea of the antiquity of the concept and its composition in later period.

⁶⁵Upadhyay, 1961, p. 47.

⁶⁶For details of the story line see, Kale, *The Ratnāvalī of Śrī Harsa-Deva*, Delhi, 1921 (rpt. 1984).

working as a female attendant maid named Sāgarikā (as she was rescued from the sea). The hiding of her real identity and prophecies of the sage are integral to the dramatic art depicted in this drama which keeps the interest of audience going.

But the question which remains untouched is about targeted audience of the *kāvya*s. Were the *kāvya*s written for a particular section of society? The shipwreck and the rescue of Queen's life by a trader of Kauśāmbhī and later her introduction into the Queen's palace is a subject of interest. The inferences drawn from the Act one of the drama, the *Ratnāvalī* shows a link between urbanism, court, the king's behavior, and pleasure. The city which was the seat of the king's authority did not remain aloof from the ongoing process of urbanization. This is also evident from the plot of the *Ratnāvalī*, the geography of the play reveals the fact that the short drama of four acts was composed at Kauśāmbī, the capital of King Udayana.⁶⁷ The urban character of Kauśāmbī where the scene of the play is laid out is also evident by the fact revealed in the Act I of the drama. Vikramabāhu gave his consent and sent *Ratnāvalī* to Kauśāmbī on board a ship which later wrecked.⁶⁸ The presence of the trader who saved the princess's (*Ratnāvalī*'s,) life puts a question mark on the scholars working on or those who have already worked on the feudal model.⁶⁹ The topology and the chronology of the drama states that it was written in the post-Gupta period and possibly in the region of Kauśāmbī. This leads us to a hypothesis that trade and trading activities, if not across the border, were a feature of the city at the local level. The presence of trader is indicative of the continuity of trading activities at the local level.

Hence, the depiction of the king in an urban setting devoid of the constraints of the pre-ordained *sāstric* texts aims at studying the king and his *kāma*-centric characterization. The king's presence

⁶⁷Kale, 1984, p. XXXVI.

⁶⁸Kale, 1984, p. XXVIII.

⁶⁹The concept of feudalism to Indian history is not new. Since the publication of R. S. Sharma's *Indian Feudalism* has attracted the attention of scholars both from India and abroad. This theory states that the Gupta and the post-Gupta period were marked by the emergency of the landlord class and the subjection of the peasantry, decline of cities and decay of urban centers and collapse of trading classes, further leading to a closed economy where barter system was prevalent. However, there are those who would question the use of word "feudalism" at all in describing the Indian experience. The recent research has shown that the Indian situation is rather different in important aspects from that of Norman England, Carolingian France, or the Kamakuru period in Japan. The feudal economy and debate over it is not the main concern of this paper. So for further detailed discussion one can see the book mentioned below. R. S. Sharma, *Indian Feudalism c. A. D. 300- 1200*, Macmillan India Limited, New Delhi, 1956 (rept. 1980); R. S. Sharma, *Urban Decay in India (c.300- c.1000)*, Munshiram Manoharlal, New Delhi, 1987; R. S. Sharma, *Early Medieval Indian Society A study in Feudalisation*, Oriental Longman, 2001, Kolkatta, 2001; Harbans, Mukhia (ed.), *The Feudalism Debate*, Manohar, New Delhi, 1999; Gian Chand, Chauhan, *Origin and Growth of Feudalism in Early India From the Mauryas to AD 650*, Munshiram Manoharlal, New Delhi, 2004.

in city is vividly discussed in a number of *kāvya*s. The King's pleasure revolves under the ambit of city, thus once again making the kings of ancient India highly elitist in nature. The reason behind enjoying pleasure in the city once again brings to light the materialistic differences between the life in the city and the life in the countryside. The representation of city and pleasure in the *kāvya*s is in contrast with the description mentioned in the modern English literature. In the early modern English literature, pleasure is associated with the countryside, while in the *kāvya*s pleasure gets its representation in the city.⁷⁰ The presentation of pleasure in the *kāvya*s of ancient India does not keep the countryside away from the pursuit of pleasure though. However, it also indicates that the cities were the center of literary activities and thus the portrayal of pleasure in the *kāvya*s revolves mostly around urban themes.

Another text describes the city of Kāñcī as *bhukti-mukti-dā*, a giver of pleasure and salvation.⁷¹ The *kāvya*s define the city as a place of social intermingling. Hence, one may come up with the observation that the cities of ancient India were totally away from the *dharmic* norms mentioned in the *dharmasāstra*. A case of the king enjoying *kāma* is an example of it. On account of this reason, Shonaleeka Kaul perceives the city as an “unstructured” social space,⁷² a place where one can act according to free will and desire. Contrary to this, scholars like Keith and Van Buitenen have presented the *kāvya*s of ancient India as highly brahmanical in nature, seriously bound within the limits of brahmanical rules of *dharmic* nature.⁷³

The activities of the king within the cities are an untouched area of scholarly work.⁷⁴ A large number of *kāvya*s describe the pleasure of the king. The king in his daily life was not only responsible for the subjects of his kingdom; he too has to satisfy his sexual instinct. Major works on the king and kingship in ancient India depict the *rāja* as a divine authority, keeping his

⁷⁰Raymond, William, *The Country and the City*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1973, p. 17.

⁷¹U.N. Roy, *Studies in Ancient Indian History and Culture*, Vol. I, Radhakrishan Prakashan, Allahabad, 1969, p. 107.

⁷²Kaul, 2010, p. 201.

⁷³This is a mere reference from their writings which I have quoted mainly to bring to the notice that how content of *kāvya*s are not always same for both scholars from the East as well as from the West. For detailed description see A. B. Keith, *The Sanskrit Drama in Its Origin, Development, Theory and Practices*, Oxford University Press, London, 1964, pp. 276 & 281.

⁷⁴Kaul's writing is a major work on the description of urban characteristics of ancient Indian cities. She uses a number of *kāvya*s to postulate her hypothesis that the cities of ancient India were vibrant and consumed a variety of life within their sphere. Considering *kāvya*s as an important historical source of interpretation, she allows us to see the distinctive ways of thought and behavior that relates to tradition, morality, and authority. But what is significantly not discussed is the pleasurable aspect of King's life –king as an enjoyer of *kāma*.

character away from hedonistic pleasure.⁷⁵ The inferences sketched out from the story line of drama like the *Priyadarśikā* presents the king as an enjoyer of passion (*kāma*). Like the *Ratnāvalī*, the central character in this drama is king Udayana. The name of the drama is based on the name of Dṛdhavarman's (the king of Aṅga) daughter named Priyadarśikā. The beautiful daughter of Dṛdhavarman became a cause of rivalry between the two dynasties of Aṅga and Kaliṅga. The king of Kaliṅga wanted to marry Dṛdhavarman's daughter Priyadarśikā, but her father had promised her in marriage to king Vatsa of Kauśāmbī. The envious king of Kaliṅga attacked and ravaged the kingdom of Anga and made Dṛdhavarman his captive. Ensuring her safety, the daughter was carried away safely by a chamberlain who was faithful to king Dṛdhavarman and kept under the supervision of Vindhya Ketu, king of the Vindhya forest.⁷⁶

The drama is full of political rivalries. The king of Kauśāmbī who was supposed to be the husband of Priyadarśikā and who was held as prisoner by King Pradyota of Avanti eloped with Pradyota's daughter, Vāsavadattā. In another scene the king's minister Rumanvat and commander-in-chief Vijayasena arrived, who had been sent to attack the forest King, Vindhya Ketu. Both of them narrated the story of his defeat and later presented before King Udayana a beautiful captive maiden (referred to in drama as Aranyikā) who according to them was supposed to be Vindhya Ketu's daughter. The King ordered that the girl be placed under the eyes of his queen, Vāsavadattā.

The King's interest in the pursuit of pleasure is clearly evident from the Act I of the same drama. The Vidūṣhaka or the court jester has always played a significant role in Sanskrit drama. The story line of various dramas has portrayed Vidūṣhaka as king's companion, accompanying king on various occasions. Bharata in Nāṭyaśāstra defines the Vidūṣhaka in the following manner:

*Pratyutpannapratibhū narmakṛtaiḥ narmagarbhanirbhedaḥ/
cekavidūṣitavacano vidūṣako nāma vijñēyah||*

Chapter XXXV (*Bhūmivikalpa*. Verse 93)

⁷⁵For reviews of writings on king and kingship in ancient India see historiography of this dissertation.

⁷⁶For details of story line of the drama see *Priyadarśikā : A Sanskrit Drama by King Harsha*, G.K. Nariman, Charles J. Ogden and A.V. Williams Jackson (tran.), (Columbia University Indo-Aryan Series, ed. A.V William Jackson). New York: Columbia University Press, 1965 (Originally, 1923); M.R. Kale, *Priyadarśikā of Śrīharṣadeva*, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1928 (rpt. 1977).

This is translated by N. P. Unni as: “The Vidūṣaka may be known as the one who pleases the audience with his unexpected remarks and explanations by seemingly insignificant words and also by cleverly finding fault with them.”⁷⁷

However, he acts as a catalyst in influencing King’s behavior. Contrary to Bharata’s description of the role of the Vidūṣaka as a character who contributes three kinds of *hāsya*, *śarīrahāsya*, related with the deformity of the body, *kāvyaḥāsya* characterized by creation of comic effect and *veśahāsya*, which is physical accoutrement such as the wearing of old and ugly dresses, carrying a wooden stick etc.⁷⁸, Sanskrit drama carries many instances when the Vidūṣaka is not an agent of generating *hāsya*. In the drama of Bhāsa and Śrī Harṣa-Deva he acts as a central figure in instigating the king’s pursuit of *kāma*. A Vidūṣaka like Vasantaka in *Svapnavāsavadatt* of Bhāsa, acts as a friend and companion of the king in his love affair.⁷⁹

The seducer Vidūṣaka in the *Priyadarśikā* aroused the king’s passion. Both of them saw Araṇyikā when she was gathering full-blown lotuses from the pond. Vidūṣaka said to the king with curiosity,

“O friend, behold- who is this female that is seen, with a cluster of bees round her braid fragrant with the perfume of flower, with tender hands red like a coral-creeper, and with her creeper-like arms radiant, thin and delicate, - like the very garden-nymph moving in a visible form, with a row of bees for her braid, fragrant &c., having the sprouts for her hands rosy like &c., and the bright, slender and delicate creepers for her arms?”⁸⁰

The king’s reply to his companion is in high contrast with his image. He said observing with the same curiosity,

⁷⁷C. M. Neelakandhan, ‘The King’s Companion The Figure of the Vidūṣaka in Abhijñānaśākuntalam’ in Saswati Sengupta and Deepika Tandon (ed.), *Revisiting Abhijñānaśākuntalam: Love, Lineage and Language in Kālidāsa’s Nāṭaka*, Oriental Blackswan, 2011, New Delhi, p. 207.

⁷⁸Madhusudana Sastri (ed.), *Nāṭyaśāstra with Abhinavabhāratī*, Varanasi, Banaras Hindu University, 1975, Vol. II, pp. 1068-69.

⁷⁹For complete discussion see, M. R. Kale (ed. and trans.), *Svapnavāsavadatta of Bhāsa*, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 2002.

⁸⁰Kale, 1977, Act I, pp. 11-12.

“Friend, she is one who gives rise to many surmises by the grace of her unsurpassed beauty.”⁸¹

The King was not able to identify the maiden whom he himself had asked to be kept under the eyes of his queen, Vāsavadattā, who had grown up by now. He compares her beauty with the moon⁸² and in the next scene Vidūṣaka hides himself and the King as Queen’s maid servant, Indīvarikā appears on the scene. Thus it seems that the excitement in love and passion of *kāma* is a subject of interest both for King and his companion.

The notion of dharma which is binding upon King’s behavior is a subject worthy of discussion. The inferences drawn from the *kāvya*s of ancient India puts a question mark on *dharmasāstra*. It seems that in the post-Gupta period, the rules mentioned in the text concerned with rules and regulations started losing its ground. This is evident from the King’s statement to Vidūṣaka in the drama, *Priyadarśikā*. Looking at Araṇyikā he said:

“Friend, this is indeed, a maiden, to look at whom is not sinful. We shall see her now without hesitation (or freely).”⁸³

We may also look at another incident from the same drama. Here the King wishes to touch Araṇyikā and her sight enralls him to say:

“Friend (Vidūṣhaka), blessed, indeed, will be he who will be the object of the happiness of the touch of her body.”⁸⁴

The King’s companion, Vidūṣaka not only accompanies him but also functions outside the Brahmanical framework, where a brahmana is not a follower of dharma. His suggestion to King is an indicator of the changing attitude of the post-Gupta society. The kind of morality that seems to have held complete sway upon the psyche of even the powerful classes such as the ruling classes apparently gave way to a different kind of morality which was based largely upon the pleasure principle⁸⁵. In the *Priyadarśikā* when Araṇyikā was collecting lotus and was later stung by bees, rushing out of the cluster of lotuses which she was plucking, Vasantaka asked his king to embrace her. He said,

⁸¹Kale, 1977, Act I, pp. 12.

⁸²Kale, 1977, Act I, pp. 12.

⁸³Kale, 1977, Act I, p. 13.

⁸⁴Kale, 1977, Act I, p. 13.

⁸⁵For detailed description see, *A Primer of Freudian Psychology* written by Calvin S. Hall, published in 1999 by Meridian Books, a member of Penguin Putnam Inc., New York.

“O friend, your wishes are fulfilled. Before that daughter of a born slave comes, you too, being silent, approach her. She, on her part, knowing Indīvarikā to be coming from the movement of feet indicated by the sound of water, will just cling to you.”⁸⁶

The eroticism seems to have maintained the same fervor since the days of *Ratnāvalī* to the modern times of *Lolita* authored by Vladimir Nabokov. Nabokov adds a remarkable sensuality to his novel in the opening line itself: “Lolita, light of my life, fire of my loins. My sin, my soul”.⁸⁷ However, the character of the text has changed with time. The pleasurable aspect of the King’s behavior is also evident from the Act III of the drama, *Ratnāvalī* wherein King Udayana was lost in the beauty of Sāgarikā. The comparison of maiden beauty with natural elements for an aesthetic description of beauty is one of the most common examples of the pleasure principle found in Sanskrit drama. In his attempt to praise Sāgarikā, King Udayana said,

“Your face is the moon; your eyes are (but) two (blue) lotuses; your hand imitate the day- lotuses; your pair of thighs are like plantain-stocks and your arms bear resemblance to lotus-shoots; O you, all of whose limbs are thus delight-giving, come, come, and having quickly and without hesitation embraced me soothe my limbs languid on account of the fever of love.”⁸⁸

These lines from the drama clearly portray the king’s pursuit of pleasure. However, on the whole, the authenticity of *kāvya*s as a source of history is a question worth posing. The dearth of writing on the personal behavior of the king seems to be marked by the lack of faith in dramas and their content.

These examples not only tell us about the plot of the drama where an actor as a character of drama plays a role, they also tell us about the changing norms of society—a subject which perhaps remains untouched by the scholars both from India and abroad working on the king and his institution of kingship. Moreover, the incidents suggest a couple of points about the urban social order. One, that there was not a single universal rule followed in the society. The dramas which are well considered as the mirror of society in fact provide impetus to such notion. We can consider four important dramas of ancient India such as the *Abhijñānaśākuntalam*, the

⁸⁶Kale, 1977, Act I, p. 14.

⁸⁷One of the most famous opening lines of literary works of all times. Vladimir Nabokov used the theme of erotic love with a tinge of incest in *Lolita* published in English in 1955 in the city of Paris.

⁸⁸ Kale,1984, Act III, p. 153.

Raghuvamśam, the *Priyadarśikā* and the *Ratnāvalī*. The first two dramas situate kingship within a cosmic framework- king as a follower of dharma and justifying the concern of the *Arthaśāstra*, where author states that “in the happiness of the subjects, lies the happiness of the king and in what is beneficial to the subjects his own benefit. What is dear to himself is not beneficial to the king but what is dear to the subjects is beneficial to him.”⁸⁹ Similarly, Kālīdāsa in the *Raghuvamśam* portrayed the king as functioning within the framework of the *varṇa* order.⁹⁰ However, the king (Duśyanta) of the *Abhijñānaśākuntalam* is shown as indulging in the pleasure of youth.⁹¹ But the notion of upholding the *varnāśrama* order was central to the brahmanical understanding of kingship which met with a more visible challenge in both the *Priyadarśikā* and the *Ratnāvalī*.

To this I would like to add for consideration that the story line of drama is a subject of dramatist’s choice, but the variation in character of the king needs special attention. Is this variation possible because of the personal inclinations of the author? Or was it merely an imagination of the author’s mind? The question of authenticity is difficult to trace or establish. But the changing attitude of king is a subject of analysis and interpretation.

I have already stated earlier in the same section that *kāvya*s have projected the city as the seat of the king’s authority. But at the same time it unravels the limitation of society. The *kāvya*s have mentioned the king and his activities, thus pushing back the implementation of laws mentioned in the *dharmaśāstra*. The king himself or his court poets have described their life style which definitely provides us with ample evidence to analyze the functioning of the society. But the subjects who remain silent must be studied in order to determine whether the rules of the *dharmaśāstra* were implemented upon common people during the same period when the king’s

⁸⁹K. J. Shah, ‘Of Artha and the Arthaśāstra’ in T. N. Madan (ed.), *Way of Life King Householder, Renounceer Essays in the honour of Louis Dumont*, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, p. 63.

⁹⁰The themes of dramas like the *Abhijñānaśākuntalam* and the *Raghuvamśam* of Kālīdāsa presents a contrast to each other. The King of *Raghuvamśam* named Dilīpa exemplifies unqualified obedience to the brahmanical order. Whereas the King of *Abhijñānaśākuntalam* though in the beginning is presented as the one lost in the beauty and charam of Śākuntalam later realized his dharma which further set the themes of play. For detailed description of *kāvya* see M. R. Kale (ed, and tran.), *Raghuvamśa of Kālīdāsa*, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1972, (rpt. 1991).

⁹¹See Act I of M. R. Kale (ed.), *The Abhijñānaśākuntalam of Kālīdāsa*, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1969, (rpt. 1977, 1980, 1987, and 1990), and pp. 1-54.

domain could be seen as enjoying immunity from it. If it is so, then the behavior of the King needs special attention. One has to see his behavior in the broader spectrum of power relations where the King was working according to his choice and desire. His stay in power decides his activities. But if fragmentary evidence suggests that the implementation of *dharmaśāstra* rule was not even binding upon the common people, then it surely points towards the fact that the classical age of the *dharmaśāstra* was on the wane. The internal dynamics was self-sufficient to control the society-once again posing challenge to the dominant theory of urban decay and decline.

CHAPTER 3

The Madness of Affection in Drama: Identifying King as a Locus of Obsession and Jealousy

We have seen in the previous chapters how the image of a king appears completely different from how it is portrayed in the *kāmasāstrīya* and *dharmasāstra* texts. Our discussion in these chapters shows that the ancient Indian king is no more a follower of *dharma* and love; pleasure and sexuality, on the other hand, become integral to his character. In this chapter, I shall focus especially on the concept of obsession and jealousy in the Indian drama. I will not put the king directly at the center of this chapter; rather, he revolves around the periphery, as a subject of obsession and jealousy, though these concepts are highly psychological in nature. Instead this chapter will analyse how these terms are historically significant and have been used in dramas of ancient India. But historical analysis of such psychological terms requires their basic understanding. It is difficult to define the terms with all their precision. But we shall see below a basic outline of the conceptual understanding of obsession and jealousy.

The Literary Representation of Reality: Women in Literature

Women have often been portrayed as lover, chaste wife (*pativratā*), virtuous housewife, shy, modest, self-sacrificing etc. As against these notions, they are also portrayed as seductive, cunning, infidel (*kulaṭā*) as well. The portrayal of women in the texts clearly points towards the bipolarity in their behavior. They could either be good or bad. The ambivalence in women's character is amply visible in dramas, poems and works of fiction. The question of interest is: who composed these texts? Were they all written with a pre-decided mentality?

Imagining of women in literature has been primarily a male enterprise. From the *Abhijñānaśākuntalam* of Kālidāsa to *Priyadarśikā* and *Ratnāvalī* of Śrīharṣadeva in ancient India to *Devadās* and *Charitraheen* of Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay and *Lolita* of Vladimir Nabokov in the modern period, women occupy a central place and without

their role all such dramas and fiction remain incomplete. Hence, their status in these literary works is worthy of discussion. The portrayal of women only in terms of bad or good both in ancient and modern period shows the continuation of Brahmanical high tradition. And the bipolarization of women's behavior seems to be an outcome of Brahminical system.

It seems that canonical laws became more or less fragile in the post-Gupta period. This is also evident from the personal activities of king reflected in the dramas. And thus the king was functioning outside the laws created by human agency. But the representation of women both in dramas of ancient India and fiction of modern period indicate their inability to break the dominant paradigm of society. Women in ancient drama have been portrayed in different ways, both in time and space and all such representations seem to be the male projection of women. In the Vedic times, some women have also been held as icons of scholarship and high status. These were the Brahmvādinīs such as Gargi, Maitreyī, Apālā and Lopāmudrā etc.¹ However, women like Ahalyā and Draupadī in myths were exemplified as *pātivratya* in spite of the activities which are against the prevalent norms mentioned in prescriptive and normative texts.² Due to the limitation of time it will not be possible to bring in to light the huge number of women imagined in texts and oral literature. However, this section particularly deals with the representation and imagination of women in some of the popular dramas of ancient India.

The dramas not only present the social conditions of women, they also highlight the mental plight of women. Among many other characteristics of Sanskrit *nāṭakas* the dissimulation of female erotic desire is a subject of interest among the playwrights. The examples come from the *Abhijñānaśākuntalam* of Kālidāsa and the *Priyadarśikā* and *Ratnāvalī* of Śrīharṣadeva. The central characters of *Abhijñānaśākuntalam* are the upper

¹ Vijaya Ramaswamy, 'Re-Searching Icons, Re-presenting Indian Women' in Vijaya Ramaswamy (ed.), *Re-Searching Indian Women*, Manohar, 2003, Delhi, p. 19.

² In the story of Ahalyā, she was punished for a sexual transgression by her husband Gautama Rishi. The unchastely behavior of Ahalya was brought to the knowledge of Gautama Rishi by Indra, who came to her in the guise of her husband (Gautama Rṣi). The curse motif in ancient Indian mythology creates a chain of narratives and this can be seen in various myths. Ahalyā's story is an example of it wherein becoming aware about Ahalyā's deed Gautama Rishi cursed her to turn her into a stone and she regained her natural form only when she felt the purifying and redeeming touch of Rāma.

caste, upper class *rasika* king Duṣyanta and Śakuntalā.³ The suppression of desire is amply visible in the play of the *Abhijñānaśākuntalam* when Śakuntalā watches Duṣyanta. The Act three of drama stated that Śakuntalā, too, is now affected by the malady of love, but she dissimulates her desire. Rather than showing her love to Duṣyanta, she prefers to share it with two of her female companions Anasūyā and Priyamvadā. She says to her friends:

“Friend, ever since that royal sage, the defender of the penance-grove, came within the range of my sight – (here breaking off, shows bashfulness) Since then, on account of my longing for him, I have been reduced to this state.”⁴

The similar instance of dissimulation could be glimpsed in the dramas of Śrīharsadeva. In *Priyadarśikā*, the tormenting episode in which Āraṇyikā was stung by bees while rushing out of the cluster of lotus which she was plucking seems to be the personal choice of the author where he wanted to engage King Udayana in one-sided affection as Āraṇyikā was unaware of the fact that the person who embraced her was none other than the king of Kausāmbī whom her father wanted to marry her. The next scene of the drama is full of emotional jerks where one finds Āraṇyikā lamenting over her love-sick condition, in hopeless passion for the king.⁵ She dissimulates her feelings as she knows the difference between a king and a maid, who in fact was not a maid. Thus, she suppresses her passion for king Udayana and shares her grief and sorrow with one of her friends named Manoramā. She says:

“To whom, indeed, shall I relate this matter and make the pain of my misery somewhat bearable? (Reflecting) Or why! I have my dear friend, Manoramā, who is not different from my heart. But to her even I

³ For the detailed description of drama see, M. R. Kale (ed.), *The Abhijñānaśākuntalam of Kālidāsa*, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1969, (rpt. 1977, 1980, 1987, and 1990).

⁴ Kale, 1969, Act III, p. 99.

⁵ For all detailed description and discussion see M. R. Kale, *Priyadarśikā of Śrīharsadeva*, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1928.

am not able to tell this through bashfulness. All considered, whence can there be solace to my heart other than death.”⁶

In her hopeless passion for the king, Āraṇyikā recalls the memory of past, the incidence of bees attacking her and later the embracement of the king. She was lost in nostalgia and passion engraved on her mind. She says filled with longing:

“This is the spot where, tormented by the bees, I was supported by the great king and comforted in the words”- “O timid one, be not afraid”.⁷

The *Ratnāvalī* also carries theme of dissimulation of love. The instance of emotional jerk could be seen from Act I of the drama. The central character of drama, Ratnāvalī is known as Sāgarikā as she was rescued by a trader of Kausāmbī from the Sāgar (Sea). She was later introduced into Queen Vāsavadattā’s apartments, where she worked as an attendant maid.⁸ The affection of Sāgarikā for the King is amply visible from Act I of the drama, when in her first glance of the king, she was enticed by his charm and her affection reached its climax. Hearing and turning back with joy, and looking longingly at the King. Sāgarikā says:

“How now! This is king Udyana, to whom I was betrothed by my father. (Sighing deeply). So my life, although degraded being in another’s service, has become highly estimable now, by (my having obtained) his sight.”⁹

It is beyond doubt that the King and Sāgarikā had developed feelings and love for each other but social restrictions and restraints of royal household never allowed Sāgarikā later to express her feelings and desire for the king. The repression of instinctual desire became discernible on canvas when Sāgarikā portrays her hero on the canvas just to gaze

⁶ Kale, 1928, Act III, p. 17.

⁷ Kale, 1928, Act III, p. 17.

⁸ For plot of drama and any detailed discussion see, M. R. Kale, *The Ratnāvalī of Śrī Harsa-Deva*, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1921. The storyline of drama has already been discussed in the previous chapter of this dissertation.

⁹ Kale, 1921, Act I, p. 129.

at him. She rebuked herself and god of passion (Kāma) for making her restless. She expresses herself in the following words:

“Again, O you exceedingly cruel heart, how don’t you blush to follow a person known to you only after a moment’s sight, forsaking this person brought up with you from birth?”¹⁰

“Well I will rebuke Anaṅga (Joining the hollowed palms) Divine wearer of flower-weapons, being one who has conquered all the gods and the demons, how are you not ashamed to strike at womankind! (Reflecting) Or why, you are without a body (and hence also feelings).¹¹”

The portrayal of king Udayana on canvas by Sāgarikā and later of Sāgarikā by one of her friend Susaṃgatā is interesting from the point of view of how women understand the feeling of other women. However, this paradigm of gender history could be a subject of criticism and challenge as it prevents men from seeing the life of women with the same lens as they use for theirs, thus creating difference between the two sexes. Moreover, we find references from texts where affection for a particular man among two ladies could lead to jealousy and obsession. The same would be discernible in dramas where one woman exploits other woman for her own desire and passion for the King. This theme is the subject matter of the second sub theme of this chapter and it will be discussed there in greater details.

The representation of King Udayana and Sāgarikā on canvas is also interesting from the point of view of comparison. Sāgarikā portrays King as god Anaṅga while Susaṃgatā draws a picture next to the one drawn by Sāgarikā and depicts her as Rati. Susaṃgatā asked her friend Sāgarikā:

“O! Friend, who is this that is drawn by you here?”¹²

¹⁰ Kale, 1921, Act II, p. 131.

¹¹ Kale, 1921, Act II, p. 131.

¹² Kale, 1921, Act II, p. 132.

Sāgarikā replied blushinglly:

“Friend, god Anaṅga, now that the Madana-festival is being celebrated”.¹³

The comparison of the king with god Anaṅga by dramatist king, Śrīharṣadeva not merely shows King Udayana on canvas, rather it points towards a significant shift in the interpretation of ancient Indian king. When a dramatist King in his writing, presents the king as god Anaṅga, it clearly shows and thus justifies the idea that the kings of ancient India were enjoyer of *kāma* as Anaṅga is another name for the god of love and desire – Kāmadeva. However, one can raise a question by bringing other dramas at the center of the discussion where king has been presented as obedient to *dharma*.¹⁴ All those dramas are subject to critical analysis which show the king as the follower of *dharma* and project his institution of kingship as divinely ordained where his personal desires have been pushed back to the periphery. But the dramatist king, Śrīharṣadeva invokes the character of King Udayana from a lived experience because he was himself a king. Thus, the portrayal forms a part of his own imagination, which is based on his own lived experience. Hence, the description of king’s characteristics sounds more logical as he himself was a king and aptly suited for describing the feature of a king.¹⁵

Once again the comparison of Sāgarikā with Kāmadeva’s wife Ratī brings the question of women’s sufferings. Ratī who holds an important place in Indian mythology was born from the sweat of Dakṣa who later presented her to Kāma as his wife.¹⁶ According to a Purāṇic story, the demon Tārakāsura had created havoc in the universe. The son of Śiva could only kill this demon. But the problem surfaced when Śiva became ascetic after the

¹³ Kale, 1921, Act II, p. 132.

¹⁴ One example of such drama is the *Raghuvamśa* of Kālidāsa. For detailed description see M. R. Kale (ed. and trans.), *Raghuvamśa of Kālidāsa*, Motilal Banarsidass, (Reprint 1972, 1991), 1991, Delhi.

¹⁵ In this context, I came across a very interesting differentiation between the same word experiences, which I think makes some definite difference to our understanding of anything that’s going around us. All our experiences are somewhere divided between the two, lived and the other is just experience through some external source. In the German language we find two different words, *erleben* and *erfahrung* which describe lived experience and external experience respectively. So when we talk about Kālidāsa and his presentation of king and his institution, Śrīharṣadeva seems closer to the reality as he was himself a king. And this is why I think these two dramas are significant and his description of the character of king is important from historical point of view.

¹⁶ The *Kālikā Purāṇa* narrates the story of Ratī’s birth. According to the same text Kāmadeva was born from the mind of Brahma.

death of Satī. Here Kāma was instructed and was sent on a mission to make Śiva fall in love, an idea which could cause Śiva to procreate. The attempt brought the death of Kāma as Śiva glanced at him with his third eye's agitation burning him into ashes.¹⁷ The death of Kāma had left Ratī in the grief-stricken condition. A similar theme could be found in the episode of Sāgarikā who, in spite of knowing this fact that her beloved is alive, still cried in his fascination of not making her his own. The love for a person could reach a state where one wants to destroy herself. Sāgarikā in conversation with Susangatā says the following before fainting:

“Friend, love for a person unattainable, (the sense of) shame very great, and self under the power of another: (thus) dear friend, this love is unequal; is not death the only best refuge then? (or death alone is the best refuge).”¹⁸

The use of the term, “death the only refuse” in the above line is highly sentimental and raises numerous questions on the feelings of women. A woman in love finds it easy to embrace death deliberately than to see her beloved with other woman. This brings us to the conclusion that the concept of polygamy was prevalent in ancient Indian society.¹⁹ While polyandry was in existence²⁰ but it was not as frequent as polygyny. Whatever evidences of polygamy come from texts, they basically raise a significant question: was the privilege of having more than one wife only applicable to the kings of ancient India as we have rare examples of polygamy among the commoners? Or, is it possible that the texts have rarely mentioned the life and affairs of common masses?

Unlike Śakuntalā of *Abhijñānaśākuntalam* of Kālidāsa²¹, both Āraṇyikā and Sāgarikā are mute spectators of King's desire. They are presented as weak and situation-driven women

¹⁷ For detail discussion see J. L. Shastri, ed., *The Śiva Purāṇa*, Part I, Section Second, *Rudra-Saṁhitā*, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1970. The same story becomes a theme of number of plays and poems. The most famous among them is the *Kumārasambhava* of Kālidāsa.

¹⁸ Kale, 1921, Act II, p. 133.

¹⁹ The textual reference of polygamy comes from the *Rāmāyaṇa* where king Daśaratha is presented as having three queen-consorts, namely Kaushalya, Sumitrā and Kaikeyī.

²⁰ The great epic like the *Mahābhārat* has an episode where Draupadī, the "fire born" daughter of Drupada, King of Panchala and became the common wife of the five Pandavas.

²¹ In the *Abhijñānaśākuntalam* of Kālidāsa, Duśyanta deliberately forgets his marriage with Śakuntalā. She responds to it angrily and accusing Duśyanta of lying like a commoner.

who found it difficult to argue for their own plight before the King's Queen, without any fault whatsoever.²² The deviation of King from the path of *dharma* is shown in both the dramas. He was caught up in a tension between *kāma* (desire) and *dharma* (duty). The notion of extra marital affair which is considered as a recent development finds a place in ancient dramas. The two dramas *Priyadarśikā* and *Ratnāvalī* of Śrīharṣadeva carry examples of such relationship. The King is found lost in the erotic oblivion thus moving away from his royal duties as well.

Opposed to the carefree lifestyle of the king (who although needs to follow the rules mentioned in the law books), women in drama were presented more bound by the rules. The plots of both the dramas of Śrīharṣadeva have raised an interesting question: Why were the *nayikas* shown as working for the royal household in spite of having a good background?²³ Was their affection for King compelling them to face all hardship in their life? Or in reality was it the patriarchal society which exploited them?

A large number of literary sources present ancient Indian society as patriarchal in nature. It is beyond doubt that women were subjected to exploitation; women suffered and were exploited, it has been argued that this behavior of men towards women strengthened patriarchy in society. The analytical study of the dramas of ancient India shows the suffering of women. However, the subjugation and suppression of women probably seems to be the problem of power relations. They were subjects of exploitation not by virtue of being women but mainly because of the king and the power structure within which he was functioning. As a well-known fact, for a king a subject remains subject, be it man, woman, old, young, rich, poor, etc. It's a matter of fact that the king in power sometimes realises his folly. The evidences can be gathered from the *Abhijñānaśākuntalam* of Kālidāsa. The Sanskrit speaking Duṣyanta falls at the feet of a Prākṛit speaking Śākuntalā²⁴ and says:

²² For discussion on this theme see second sub theme of this chapter.

²³ The plot of drama the *Priyadarśikā* shows Āraṇyikā as a daughter of Dṛdhavarman, king of Aṅga while in the *Ratnāvalī*, Sāgarikā is presented as daughter of Siṃhala king Vikramabāhu.

²⁴ This is an irony, or perhaps a well-established practice of the dramatist in ancient India that even though Śākuntalā was brought up by and in the āśrama of a great sage like Kaṇva, the writer makes her speak in Prakrit instead of in Sanskrit in the drama.

“It is I who have to plead now to be recognized by you”²⁵

Moreover, the cruelty against women not only comes from the opposite gender. Sometimes, the suppression comes from within the same gender group. Many incidents of interest from both the dramas of Śrīharṣadeva sufficiently show the exploitation of a woman by another woman. The second sub-theme of this chapter provides thorough evidence to support the notion.

When the King Becomes a Source of Contestation: The Question of Affection

The discussion over the king and the institution of kingship continues to attract the attention of present-day historians. However, less attention has been focused upon the king as a subject of study. The king has always been seen as a source of power and authority and most of the works have been written from the perspective of analyzing his crucial institution of kingship through which relations of power and authority are structured in specific societies. Historians as well as social scientists have attempted to portray the king as an individual in a world of his own full of human desires and passion. This concern is also evident in epic like the *Mahābhārata*, when in the *Śānti Parvan*, Yudhiṣṭhira said to Bhīṣma “O grandfather Bhārata, tell me how this word *rājā*, which is so prevalent, originated. (The *rājā*) has hands, head, neck, back, arms, stomach, intellect, and senses, and is as prone to grief and joy as any of us (and yet) how does he alone protect the entire earth, full of noble and brave men, and do people desire to earn his favour?”²⁶ This particular statement highlights the special privileges enjoyed by *rājā* in spite of having all similarities with common people.

Both the dramas, the *Priyadarśikā* and the *Ratnāvalī* have dominantly been read as a love intrigue between King Udayana, Vāsavadattā and the ‘third character in performance’.²⁷

With plays such as these, the historical perspective arguably introduces the idea that in an

²⁵ Sengupta and Purkayastha, “When the King is the Subject The Play of Power in Kālidāsa’s *Abhijñānaśākuntalam*”, in Sawati Sengupta and Deepika Tanton (ed.), *Revisiting Abhijñānaśākuntalam Love, Lineage and Language in Kālidāsa’s Nāṭaka*, Oriental Blackswan, New Delhi, 2011, p. 160.

²⁶ Kumkum Roy, *The Emergence of Monarchy in North India Eight - Fourth Centuries B.C.: As Reflected in the Brahmanical Tradition*, Oxford University Press, 1994, New Delhi, p. 1.

²⁷ Here third character in performance points to the character of Sāgarika (in the *Ratnāvalī*) and Aranyikā (in the *Priyadarśikā*).

authoritarian society where the king was functioning according to his will, women have found it hard to express themselves in love, which first emerged as affection, later converted into obsession and finally into jealousy for other women. This section seeks to provide a gateway to new avenues of inquiry and to offer fresh insights for investigating and conceptualizing the idea that the king of ancient India was not only responsible for shaping power relations, rather imagined as a commoner, he could be seen as a factor in affecting social relations of the feminine world in ancient India.

Secondary literatures on the topic have seldom emphasized the role of king and his institution as a catalyst in influencing the personal lives of women who happen to form a part of the king's life. The dramas of ancient India are full of examples, where king's personal desire has impacted the life of women. The best can be seen in the *nāṭaka* of Kālidāsa, the *Abhijnānaśākuntalam*. The drama presents Śakuntala as an object of erotic desire. The same is the case of Āraṇyikā and Sāgarikā.

History stands witness to the fact that love has not only created affection for one another but it also leads to serious jealousy. Both the dramas of Śrīharṣadeva presents king not only as a protector of *dhamma*, rather as a factor responsible for jealousy and obsession. In general, jealousy is state of mind arising from suspicion, apprehension, or knowledge of the unfaithfulness of a wife, husband, or lover,²⁸ while obsession is the inability of a person to stop thinking about a particular topic or feeling or a certain emotion without a high amount of anxiety.²⁹ The writings of Śrīharṣadeva describe both the states of mind. Our discussion here does not underline a psychological point of view; rather it simply attempts to show how king as a human being, is responsible for developing the feeling of obsession and jealousy in his wife Vāsavadattā's mind.

The King's love for Āraṇyikā in the *Priyadarśikā* is evident from the discussion above. The same text has also brought to light Āraṇyikā's hidden passion for the king. However, the next plot of the same drama shows how like Vidūṣaka of Sanskrit drama, one of Āraṇyikā's friends planned a meeting of the lovers. The meeting of lovers was

²⁸ Both the Merriam Webster and Oxford dictionaries have defined jealousy in similar manner, in different ways. According to the context of chapter the definition mentioned above is apt and suitable.

²⁹ For detail descriptions see, Daniel M. Wegner, *White Bears and Other Unwanted Thoughts: Suppression, Obsession, and the Psychology of Mental Control*, Guilford Press, 1994.

premeditated through a performance of the play. One of Vāsavadattā's friends, Sāmkṛtyāyanī decided to perform the drama for the amusement of Queen called *Udayanācarīta*. In this play Āraṇyikā is to play the part of Queen Vāsavadattā and the Queen's attendant, Manoramā, is to appear in the role of King Udayana. However, in the final hour before the play, it is decided that the King shall play his own part instead of Manoramā playing it. The play began as scheduled; a few lines of Vāsavadattā shows that the King was in his role quite perfectly, whom the Queen thought as Manoramā, performing his husband's role. She says:

“Sitting down with a smile of embarrassment, what! This is Manoramā
! I thought it was my husband, bravo. Excellently acted.”³⁰

The tinge of delight came to an abrupt end when Queen's friend Sāmkṛtyāyanī reveals the reality and says:

“Princess, rightly, indeed, was confusion caused in you by Manoramā. Consider – Here is the same form (of Vatsarāja), the cause of delight to the eyes; the same is the splendid costume; self-same is this her gait here, that characterises an intoxicated elephant; the same is the exceedingly lofty dignity; her grace the same, and the very same is her voice that resembles the rumble of water- charged clouds: here is presented before us, in his very person, the lord of the Vatsas himself by her, clever (in acting).”³¹

The statement had immediate effect on the behavioral aspect of Queen Vāsavadattā. The strong relation whom she shares with her husband does not allow her to see the King performing all romance with Āraṇyikā. She states to Sāmkṛtyāyanī:

“Revered lady, you see the representation. I, for myself, cannot bear to see what is false”³²

³⁰ Kale, 1928, Act III, p. 25.

³¹ Kale, 1928, Act III, p. 25.

³² Kale, 1928, Act III, p. 29.

Not realizing the truth that her husband is performing the role and it is not Manoramā who was supposed to perform the same in the guise of the king, Queen reached out to Vidūṣaka as he is the only one who knows everything about her husband. Observing him carefully she says:

“This is Vasantaka, indeed. (Reflecting) The king also must be here. So having roused him I will ask him. (Wakes him up)”³³

Vidūṣaka in the condition of drowsiness says:

“Manoramā, has my friend (King) come back after having played his part; or is he acting still?

This makes the queen believe that her husband is acting in the drama and she began to look for Manoramā. She (Queen) satirically praised her. This makes her feel guilty later for her deeds and trembling in fear she bent unto her feet saying:

“Your Highness! It is not indeed my fault in this case. By this rascally fellow standing at the door I was detained here, after taking the decoration from me. And again, my voice, as I cried, was not heard by anyone, as it was drowned in the sound of the tator.”³⁴

The falling of Manoramā at the feet of another lady (Queen Vāsavadattā) clearly shows that women were not only subject to male subordination. Rather, they were also victimized by the same gender. It also highlights the power enjoyed by the women of royal household. The power enjoyed by the women of royal household is also evident by the plot of the drama where Vāsavadattā asks Indivarikā, to seize Vāsavadattā as she dared to perform with her husband, the King Udayana. The distressed Āraṇyikā was not so much pained on account of being put behind the bars. She was more aggrieved as she was unable to have a glance of her beloved- the Vatsa King Udayana. Manoramā who was an eye witness of her condition says:

³³ Kale, 1928, Act III, p. 29.

³⁴ Kale, 1928, Act III, p. 29.

“Oh the long continuity of the Queen’s anger! She does not take pity on my dear friend Āraṇyikā, though confined for so long a time. The poor girl is not distressed so much by the hardships of her own imprisonment as by her despair to see the King. And such is her affliction that to-day I prevented her with great difficulty from killing herself. I have come having asked Vasantaka to communicate the matter to the king.”³⁵

The similar instance of obsession and jealousy can also be found from the *Ratnāvalī* of Śrī Harṣa-Deva. The lovelorn Sāgarikā who draws the picture of King Udayana to satisfy her mental condition by gazing at it, in the end, meets a fate similar to that of Āraṇyikā of the *Priyadarśikā*.³⁶ She was also caught by Queen Vāsavadattā and faced her wrath. In the *Priyadarśikā*, the Queen later came to know about the love affair of both Āraṇyikā and his lord. However, in the *Ratnāvalī*, the same Queen Vāsavadattā in the very early phase of the drama realized that the maid, Āraṇyikā has some kind of liking for the King. This is evident from his instruction to Āraṇyikā where she insisted the latter to stay back in the palace.

“Vāsavadattā – (Observing, to herself). Oh the carelessness of my servants! She will fall within the view of him from whose range of sight she has been assiduously kept away. Well, I will say this much: (Aloud) Maid, Sāgarikā, Why have you come here, leaving away the Sārikā (canary bird) when all attendants are entirely occupied with the Madana festivals? So, you go there quickly. Deliver all these materials of worship into the hands of Kānchanamālā.”³⁷

The Queen wanted to keep away Sāgarikā from the sight of the King which brings a kind of obsession for King and jealousy towards Sāgarikā together. The concern of Vāsavadattā clearly shows her deep affection and love for the king. But it also raises a question over the point: Can we visualize king as an object of obsession and jealousy?

³⁵ Kale, 1928, Act IV, p. 32.

³⁶ A very detailed discussion on the same theme is mentioned in second chapter of this dissertation. For further discussion on the theme see chapter second of this dissertation.

³⁷ Kale, 1921, Act I, p. 126.

In both the dramas, the central cause of plight of both Āraṇyikā and Sāṅgarikā is their longing for the King, once again breaking the popular paradigm where king is always presented in hard bound social structure, away from the daily activities and remains away from the non-divine activities, a world where he largely remains to administer his domain, performing rituals on the name of divine, a semi-divine figure on this earth. His love for Sāṅgarikā in the *Ratnāvalī* shows his humanly behavior. He said:

“Who is this, committed to painting, outshining Lakshmī by her grace and declaring her great love for me, that enters (captivates) my heart, as a female royal swan enters the Mānasa (lake), agitating the lotuses in her sportive movements, and indicating to us the great flapping of her wings?”³⁸

The Act of the drama has proved that the King was also prone to sexual inclination. At a number of places, he looked at Sāṅgarikā with a lustful eye. For instance, at one place it seems he was unable to control his passion for Sāṅgarikā and narrated his desire:

“My sight, having travelled beyond her pair of thighs with great difficulty and wandered for a long time over her expansive hips, remained fixed on her middle, uneven with the three wave-like folds; and now having eagerly (lit. as if it were thirsty) mounted her lofty breast, it has been wistfully looking again and again at her eyes shedding drops of tears.”³⁹

Like the *Priyadarśikā*, in the *Ratnāvalī* too, the Vidūṣaka and one of Queen’s attendant maids, Susaṅgatā arranged a secret meeting of both King and Sāṅgarikā. The secret was heard by another maid of Queen named Kānchanamālā who later narrated it to Madanikā. Kānchanamālā found Susaṅgatā saying to Vidūṣaka:

“I shall take Sāṅgarikā with me, appareled as the Mistress with the dress which was presented to me by the Queen, as she placed Sāṅgarikā

³⁸ Kale, 1921, Act II, p. 139.

³⁹ Kale, 1921, Act II, p. 140.

under my charge, her suspicion being roused by the incident of the picture-board, and myself, dressed as Kāñchanamālā, will come here, at dusk. You too shall wait for me just here, at the entrance to the picture-hall. Then the meeting of Master with her will take place in the Mādhavī bower.”⁴⁰

The same is informed to the Queen by Kāñchanamālā. In the meantime, the Queen too came to know about the plot and she reached there. The King and his Vidūṣaka confused her for being Sāngarikā. The King becomes aware of his mistake and tries to reconcile her, but the Queen in wrath left the place immediately. The real Sāngarikā (dressed like Vāsavadattā) who came later, realized the situation and contemplated committing suicide by making a noose of the Mādhavī creeper, and hanging herself from the Aśoka tree. She said in despair:

“Alas father, ho mother, here I, an unlucky creature, forlorn and helpless, die. (With these words throws the noose round her neck).”⁴¹

The King now mistakes her for Queen Vāsavadattā, and when he approached her, he realized his mistake and rejoiced over being unexpectedly united with his beloved. The unexpected touch of Sāngarikā and the King’s response to it shows his deep affection for her. Even under sorrowful state, the king enjoys the situation as he came to know the reality that the person in his arms is none other than his love-Sāngarikā . He wishes to throw the noose round her neck again.⁴² Lost in the oblivion of passion and affection, the *rasika* King Udayana said:

“(Observing closely, with joy to himself) How now! It is darling Sāngarikā! (Removing the noose from her neck), Away, away with extremely desperate act of thine; do then throw away quickly, this creeper noose: for a moment, O mistress of my life, twine the noose of thy arms round my neck to stay my life though set out (to go).”⁴³

⁴⁰ Kale, 1921, Act III, p. 148.

⁴¹ Kale, 1921, Act III, p. 157.

⁴² Kale, 1921, Act III, p. 158.

⁴³ Kale, 1921, Act III, p. 158.

The above line from the text clearly shows the King's affection towards Sāgarikā. The two dramas clearly show the king's affection for a woman other than his wife. Quite evidently, royal households had numerous wives. This attests the rule of *dharmaśāstra* which sanctioned polygamy. More substantive evidence comes from *antaḥpura* or *strīniveśa*, where polygamy is amply visible as numerous wives of king lived in separate quarters (*antaḥpura* or *strīniveśa*). The royal households had bridal hierarchy, the ranking between the new and old brides, and king's interest in one particular wife among the whole lot formed the themes of numerous dramas.⁴⁴ However, in the case of the *Priyadarśikā* and the *Ratnāvalī*, the King Udayana did not accept Āraṇyikā or Sāgarikā as his wife. It particularly shows that the King had not married any of them in spite of the prevalence of polygamy. It also points to the idea that for a king, keeping a woman as a wife and having a love affair with another woman had different meanings. This probably would be a reason for the Queen's jealousy towards other ladies of the royal household.

The Queen's jealousy for maids (Āraṇyikā and Sāgarikā) of royal household brings a significant idea into light that the Queen was highly obsessed with her husband.⁴⁵ The counter to this argument would be the Queen's loyalty, where she does not want her love to be shared with anyone except her husband and she wants the same from him in return. Both the dramas show in instances of shifting loyalties where the King falls in love with another woman. The inclination of both Āraṇyikā and Sāgarikā towards the king in the two dramas has been brought to light just to show that the choice of the king was subject to restriction. Falling in love with the high-born King of both girls working as maids, display their strong desire which might be due to aesthetic pleasure or material wealth. But, was such behavior of girls (employed as maids) a common phenomenon limited to the royal household or was it a common phenomenon in the society?

The exploitation of Sāgarikā and the brahmin, Vidūṣaka by a woman of the royal household definitely puts a question mark on the historians and scholars writing on patriarchy and showing ancient Indian society as highly patriarchal in nature where

⁴⁴ For all detailed discussion on this theme see, Daud Ali, *Courtly Culture and Political Life in Early Medieval India*, Foundation Books, New Delhi, 2006. pp. 51-56.

⁴⁵ Though the use of strong word like obsession is highly alarming and pejorative but the Queen's role in two of the dramas of Śrīharṣadeva shows her obsession for King. As depicted in the dramas she tortured both Āraṇyikā and Sāgarikā as they developed love for her husband.

women are subjects of exploitation under male domination.⁴⁶ The two dramas which reflect the ongoing activities of society in which it was composed have completely shifted the notion mentioned above. In the *Ratnāvalī*, the Queen Vāsavadattā, on coming to know about the intimacy shared between his husband and Sāgarikā was convinced by the brahmin Vidūṣaka. He said:

“Madam wrongly led to believe, by the similarity of dress, that you were destroying yourself by hanging, I brought my dear friend here. If you do not believe what I say, then see this creeper-noose.”⁴⁷

The Queen angrily responds to the brahmin and ordered one of her maids, Kāñchanamālā to chain the brahmin. She also punished Sāgarikā for sharing intimacy with her husband. She said:

“Kāñchanamālā, secure this Brahmaṇa by binding him with this very creeper-noose; and place this ill-bred girl in the front.”⁴⁸

And it might be possible that the rules mentioned in the prescriptive texts were becoming non- acceptable in the early medieval society. This loosening of rules was not only confined to the King,⁴⁹ rather the Queen in her authority was also rejecting the laws prescribed in the texts. Being familiar about the fact that Vidūṣaka was a brahmaṇa, Vāsavadattā did not hesitate in ordering Kāñchanamālā to bind him with creeper-noose

⁴⁶ In the last couple of decades, gender studies have attracted the attention of scholars both from India and abroad. It is assumed that the subordination of women was shaped through the powerful instrument of religious traditions. A number of works have been written on the social condition of women in ancient India. For a detailed study on the theme of gender and women, see Uma, Chakravarti, ‘Conceptualizing Brahmanical Patriarchy in Early India: Gender, Caste, Class and State’, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 28, No. 14, 3 April, 1993, pp. 579-85; Kumkum, Roy, ‘Where Women are Worshipped, there the Gods Rejoice’ in Tanika, Sarkar and Urvashi, Butalia (ed.), *Women and the Hindu Right: A Collection of Essays*, Kali for Women, Delhi, 1995; Vijay, Nath, ‘Women as Property and their Right to Inherit Property up to Gupta Period’, *The Indian Historical Review*, Volume XX, Number 1-2, pp. 1-15; Kumkum, Roy (ed.), *Women in Early Indian Societies*, Manohar, New Delhi, 1999; Mandakranta, Bose (ed.), *Faces of the Feminine in Ancient, Medieval and Modern India*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 2000; Uma, Chakravarti, *Everyday Lives, Everyday Histories: Beyond the Kings and Brahmanas of ‘Ancient’ India*, Tulika Books, New Delhi, 2006; Kumkum, Roy (ed.), *Insights Essays in Honour of Uma Chakravarti and Interventions*, Primus Books, New Delhi, 2011.

⁴⁷ Kale, 1921, Act III, p. 159.

⁴⁸ Kale, 1921, Act III, p. 159.

⁴⁹ In the previous chapters of this dissertation it has already been discussed that the early medieval period marked a radical shift, the rules of *dharmasāstras* and *dharmasūtras* were no more acceptable to the King.

and thus causing him to suffer. This is evident from the statement of Vidūṣaka who despairingly looks at the King and said:

“O friend remember me-a helpless person-subject to misery owing to the Queen’s captivity.”⁵⁰

In both dramas (the *Priyadarśikā* and the *Ratnāvalī*) of Śrī Harṣa-Deva, the third character i.e. Āraṇyikā and Sāgarikā respectively has faced subjugation, suppression and mental trauma at the hands of Queen Vāsavadattā. In the *Priyadarśikā*, Āraṇyikā was put behind the bars where she consumed poison in the hope of ending her life while in the *Ratnāvalī*, the depressed Sāgarikā could have become the victim of magical fire.⁵¹ Undoubtedly, the King opens her love for both Āraṇyikā and Sāgarikā in the last act of both the dramas. In the *Priyadarśikā*, when the King realized the critical condition of Āraṇyikā after she consumed poison, he lamented by uttering the following words:

“She is closing this pair of her eyes (but) the quarters have been dark to me; her throat is choked; these words of mine escape me with difficulty; her breathing has stopped (lit. is taken away); my body has become paralysed (lit. come to be in a state of motionlessness); I think the effect of poison only is hers; but mine is all the affliction caused by it.”⁵²

In the *Ratnāvalī*, the valiant King saved Sāgarikā by bringing her out of the fire. One can easily visualise his love for Sāgarikā as he says the following while entering the fire:

“Fie, fool Sāgarikā is being destroyed; why is life still sustained? (Having acted entering the fire and gesticulating being overpowered by smoke) Desist, desist, O fire; give up this continuous column of smoke;

⁵⁰ Kale, 1921, Act III, p. 160.

⁵¹ In the story of the *Ratnāvalī*, the Queen circulated a false message that Sāgarikā was sent to her father at Ujjayini, while she kept her secretly in a prison attached to her palace, just to prevent her from being seen by anybody, especially keeping her away from the King’s eyes. The drama became more interesting on account of a magician who creates a magical fire. And when Vāsavadattā came to know about it that a fire having broken out in the royal household became worried over the fact that Sāgarikā might lose her life in the fire, she opened the secret and asked the King to save her. The King successfully saved her life and later it was discovered that the fire was unreal, having been the work of that magician.

⁵² Kale, Delhi, 1928, Act IV, p. 40.

why do you display this lofty circle of flames? What (harm) will you do to me who was not consumed by the fire of separation from my beloved, having the burning heat of the fire at the time of universal destruction?”⁵³

Sāgarikā who has lost all hope of life sitting in the midst of the fire once again revived her feelings when she saw the King coming to save her.

“On seeing him I have again got a desire for life. (Aloud) let master save, let master save!”⁵⁴

However, the King met with a surprise as the fire was suddenly extinguished. Later it was accepted by Vidūṣaka that the fire was an episode set by the magician, just to see your highness. But the fire episode could be a strategy set by Vidūṣaka to unite the King with his beloved Sāgarikā. Though the dramatist King, Śrī Harṣa-Deva does not reveal this idea.

Both the dramas close with a happy ending, where Vāsavadattā was regretting over her deeds. But the question to be raised over the point is: Is she feeling guilty on the sufferings of Āraṇyikā and Sāgarikā? Or, was she feeling bad over the fact that the two girls were none other than her cousins in both the *Priyadarśikā* and the *Ratnāvalī*?⁵⁵ The acceptance of both of them as co-wives implies that the Queen was heartily attached with the King, where he cares for the King’s desire.

The idea of romantic comedy is perhaps the most popular form adopted by playwrights around the world, irrespective of whether they hailed from the Orient or the Occident. Plays and dramas being perhaps the only mode of entertainment in ancient times, had to conform to the tastes of the audience who had to be amused by the performance, while at

⁵³ Kale, Delhi, 1921, Act IV, p. 171.

⁵⁴ Kale, Delhi, 1921, Act IV, p. 172.

⁵⁵ The plot of the two dramas has brought to light the fact that Āraṇyikā and Sāgarikā are her two cousins from two different royal families of Aṅga and Siṃhala, who were promised to become the wives of Udayana. On account of the political rivalries, both Āraṇyikā and Sāgarikā reached the King’s palace in two different instances. They joined the palace as Queen’s maid and served there just to keep their feelings alive, an unfulfilled love for the Kausāmbī King Udayana. At last the Queen came to know about her mistake and accepted both Āraṇyikā and Sāgarikā as co-wives.

the same time the dramatist bore the responsibility of showcasing the reality of the society without painting an illusory picture of it. Thus, the two dramas discussed as part of this study are studded with twists and turns just to keep the audience glued to their seats, a happy ending taking them into a cheerful mood. However, from the viewpoint of art criticism, one can say that no work of art could perhaps be a popular one if the audience does not think that the work somehow depicts their own story, the interplay of emotions being close to their own heart. Thus, despite being romantic comedies, both the *Priyadarśikā* and the *Ratnāvalī*, do not only entertain the audience, rather they illuminate a vital aspect of the society in the post-Gupta period that saw a decline in the social norms being interpreted and enforced strictly in accordance with the *dharmashastras*. The king could be seen to deviate from textual prescriptions that mark the onset of a paradigmatic shift in the behavior of the king which forms the core argument of this study. The king's character underwent a shift from an unerring, semi-divine creature to an ordinary mortal exhibiting behavior according to his impulses and passion.

CONCLUSION

The Sanskrit dramas have different layers to present. The life depicted here has to be interpreted in different ways. The two interesting dramas of Śrī Harṣa-Deva have completely changed our understanding of ancient Indian king and his institution of kingship. Chapter One of this dissertation discusses the king of ancient India as a human figure. His behavior matches in general with the human tendency where he has been seen as a lover and betrayer. The desire of *kāma* became a dominant theme of Chapter Two where King Udayana is presented as engaging himself in the pursuit of *kāma*. In the next chapter, Three, the same king becomes a cause of obsession and jealousy; the king thus is the central theme of this chapter. It also challenges the predominant notion of patriarchal society, where women are subject of male domination and exploitation. In the end, it also shows how in a male dominated society sometimes women are also subject of exploitation from the same gender, that is, exploitation of women by women as an accepted practice has not been elaborated much in research works.

Thus the idea of a romantic comedy is perhaps the most popular form adopted by playwrights, not only in ancient India but around the world. Plays and dramas, being perhaps the only mode of entertainment in ancient times, had to conform to the tastes of the audience who had to be amused by their performance, while at the same time the dramatist bore the responsibility of showcasing the reality of the society, even if sometimes they painted an illusory picture of the society. Thus, the two dramas discussed as part of this study are full of twists and turns, perhaps to keep the audience glued to their seats, and a happy ending taking them, possibly, into a cheerful mood. However, from the perspective of art criticism, one can say that no work of art could perhaps be a popular one, if the audience does not think that the work somehow depicted their own story, the interplay of emotions being close to their own heart. Thus, despite being romantic comedies, both *Priyadarśikā* and *Ratnāvalī*, do not only entertain the audience; rather, they attempt to illuminate a vital aspect of the society in the post-Gupta period that saw a decline in the social norms being interpreted and enforced strictly in accordance with the *dharmasatras*. The king could be seen to deviate from textual prescriptions that mark the onset of a paradigmatic shift in the behavior of the king which forms the core

argument of this study. The king's character underwent a shift from an unerring, semi-divine creature to an ordinary mortal exhibiting behavior according to his impulses and passion.

Numerous examples could be cited, based on a study of the two dramas, where the traditional norms of *dharma* and morals were violated by the king. What makes it even more interesting is the fact that the king indulged in such peculiar behaviour owing to his inner conflict either consciously or unconsciously. While the conscious of the king's personality ought to exhibit a behavior, which goes according to the *dharmashastras*, the unconscious could be forced by an instinctual drives which may have compelled him to digress and express his carnal desires, especially his love for women. There are occasions when the king who is generally depicted as the custodian of canonical law and the preserver of the social order, seems to adopt a different line of behavior. While taking a walk in the garden or during festivals, his desire for the possession of womanly love exhibits itself in various forms, sometimes in the form of poetry admiring the beauty of a woman passer-by, sometimes in the form of an informal talk with his companion called *Vidūṣaka*. Such behavior is uncalled for in the context of the king, if one looks at it according to the *dharmashastras*. It is this theme that forms the main point of argument in this dissertation. The king could also be seen through the lens of the common everyday humanfolk guided by his 'inner world' challenging the dominant paradigm of studying the institution of kingship and king from the viewpoint of the Brahmanical order in ancient India.

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