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## NAGANANDA



Notes

In the previous lesson we have learned about Pratimanataka. In this lesson we will discuss about Nagananda Rupak written by Shri Harsh Vardhan. The period of the seventh century has been very important in the history of Sanskrit dramas. There is mention of Emperor Harshvardhan during this period. Harshvardhan is one of those great rulers who on one hand was a skilled ruler with a generous heart and a scholar and poet. On the other hand, he also had a special interest in the presentation and performance of visual poetry. Harsha has written three rupaka- Priyadarshika, Ratnavali and Nagananda. Of these, Priyadarshika and Ratnavali are Natika and Nagananda is the drama.



## LEARNING OUTCOMES

After studying this lesson, you-

- know about Shri Harsha;
- know about Nagananda Drama;
- know about the story of Nagananda;
- know about the characters of Nagananda; and
- knows about the stage possibilities of Pratimanataka.

## 10.1 GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO HARSH

There is no need to guess to determine the time of Shri Harshvardhan, the author of

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Nagananda drama. Harsha ruled northern India for a long time. On the basis of proven facts, the reign of Harsha is fixed from 606 AD to 646 AD. According to Banabhatta's Harshacharita, Harsha's father's name was Prabhakar Vardhan and mother's name was Yashomati. Yashomati gave birth to the eldest son Rajyavardhan in 588 AD. Harshvardhan's elder sister Rajyashree was born 2 years after Rajyavardhan and Shri Harsh was born 3 years after Rajyavardhan. By the age of 16, Harshvardhan and Rajyavardhan had received education in weapons and scriptures. Rajyashri also took education in arts like dance, song etc. When Rajyashri became a young, Prabhakar Vardhan married her to Graha Varma, son of Kshatriya king Avanti Varma of Maukhari dynasty.

Prabhakar Vardhan anointed his eldest son Rajyavardhan but after the sudden death of Rajyavardhan, Harshvardhan ascended the throne. Harshvardhan ruled under Chhatra from 606 AD to 648 AD. The great poet Banabhatta was his dependent poet in Harshvardhan's Rajya Sabha and he made Harshvardhan the hero in his poetry Harshcharita.

As mentioned earlier, three rupakas of Harsha are found - 1- Priyadarshika 2- Ratnavali and Nagananda. From the point of view of composition, the play Priyadarshika is the first creation of Harsh. In this composition the form of theatrical art appears a little less sophisticated. There is a clear influence of Abhijnanashakuntalam and Malavikagnimitram on the story structure and combination of events of this drama. The second composition is Ratnavali Natika which was very popular among dramatists. The extreme development of Harsh's dramatic art is visible in this play. Ratnavali proves to be a great play from all the points of view- maturity in dramatic use, beauty in language, use of imagination and excellence in character portrayal. Experts in drama often use the characters of Ratnavali to illustrate the story, elements of drama, hero-heroine etc. Harsh has made full use of Shringaar Rasa in his play.



**INTEXT QUESTIONS 10.1**

1. Who is Shri Harsh?
2. Who was Rajyavardhan?
3. Which are the two plays written by Shri Harsh?
4. Which drama is influenced by Abhijnanashakuntalam and Malavikagnimitram?

**10.2 STORY OF NAGANANDA**

In Nagananda Natak, the plot is divided into 5 acts. Lord Buddha had given the message of welfare of Bahujan to his followers. Many Jataka stories related to Buddha were popular among the people. One of those stories is the story of Jimutavahana. This story was later expanded into Sanskrit, Prakrit and folk traditions. Jimutavahana has been accepted as a Bodhisattva in folk tradition. Whose tragic story starts with donating Kalpavriksha for public welfare and ends with donating his body too. Harsh has made this story the basis of Nagananda. The main story of the play is centered around the love and marriage of Vidyadhar Rajputra named Jimutavahana and Siddha princess named Malayavati and Jimutavahana's attempt to save the life of a snake named Shankhachuda by sacrificing his life. The story of the play according to the score is as follows-

**Act-1**

In this act, Jimutavahana becomes enamored with Malayavati who is singing songs in the temple of the goddess. Even before this, Malayavati had seen Jimutavahana in her dream and had become enamored with him.

**Act-2**

Jimutavahana and Malayavati are deeply in love with each other and Malayavati's brother Mitravasu tries to get them married. Ultimately both of them get married.

**Act-3**

The third issue depicts Jimutavahana and Malayavati's Vihar.

**Act-4**

Jimutavahana sees a group of bones on the seashore. Friend Vasu tells him that these are the bones of serpents which are eaten daily by Garuda. Hearing the lamentation of a woman, Jimutavahana goes to her. When asked, the woman tells that today her son Shankachuda is going to make as food for Garuda. Jimutavahana consoles the woman and wears red clothes instead of Shankhachud and sits on the slaughtering stone. Garuda comes and takes him away.

**Act-5**

The body of Jimutavahana is repeatedly injured by Garuda's beak. Even after being stained with blood, the Jimutavahana remains calm and motionless. Garuda is surprised to see this. And when he comes to know the real situation, he repents immensely.

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Jimutavahan's parents and wife also reach the place and mourn with compassion after seeing the condition of Jimutavahan. Moved by Malayavati's heart-wrenching prayer, Gauri (Matha Parvatai) appears and gives life to the dying Jimutavahan. Impressed by Jimutavahan's spirit of sacrifice and charity, Gauri brings the snakes back to life by showering them with nectar and finally vows to never eat the snakes in the future. The play ends with this happy ending.

Some changes have been made in the original story of Jimutavahana described in Kathasaritsagara by Shri Harsh as following-

1. In the original story, Jimutavahan used to donate Kalpavriksha for public welfare and due to the attack on his kingdom by enemies, he goes to Malayachal mountain with his parents, but in the play, Jimutavahan goes to the forest after his parents go to the forest. To serve, they leave the pleasures of the state and go to the forest. The playwright has made this change to show his love and devotion towards his parents.
2. In the original story, Jimutavahana finds out through his supernatural power that he is being attacked by his own brothers, whereas in the play, Shri Harsha imagines Matanga as the enemy and informs about the attack through Mitravasu.
3. Similarly, in the original story, Jimutavahana goes to Gauri temple and sees Malayavati there and gets complete introduction to her through her friend. But Shri Harsh has broken this by making the hero and heroine appear for a short time in the play. Due to this yoga, favorable conditions are created for Shringara Rasa in the second act.
4. Being unfamiliar with the heroine's name, he rejects the marriage proposal brought by Mitravasu to Malayavati. Due to this rejection, Malayavati becomes frantic and commits suicide. Here Shri Harsh has created a picturesque scene with his imagination.

In this way, Shri Harsh has tried to make the qualities of the character more effective by making slight changes in the original story of Jimutavahan.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 10.2**

1. How many acts are there in the play Nagananda?
2. Who is Jimutavahana?

3. Who is Mitravasu?
4. Who is Shankhachuda?

### 10.3 CHARACTERS OF NAGANANDA DRAMA

Jimutavahana, Malayavati, Mitravasu, Garuda are in lead roles in Nagananda drama. Shri Harsh has shown his theatrical expertise in the portrayal of characters.

#### Jimutavahan

The hero of the play Nagananda, Jimutavahan, is the hero of Dheerodatta type. He is very serious, forgiving, does not boast about himself, has a stable mind, does not have ego and is determined. In Natyashastra, this type of hero has been called Dheerodatta. In the play, Jimutavahan is shown to be devoid of the desire for victory. In the play, Jimutavahan says that can the person sitting on the throne be as beautiful as the person sitting on the ground in front of his father? Can the happiness that a son gets while pressing his father's feet be found in the state? Can the happiness that we get from eating the food left over from our father's food also be obtained from the enjoyment of the three worlds? For those who abandon their father, the kingdom is just an illusion. Is there any benefit in it? This statement does not reflect any desire for victory in the battle of Jimutavahan.

Jimutavahana is not a hero of calm nature. If he had been of a calm nature, he would not have loved Malayavati. His love for Malayavati is proof that he is not a silent hero. He has compassion for living beings in his heart. In fact, Jimutavahan appears before us as an ideal hero with many qualities. Basically, there are two important qualities in his character. Firstly, he is completely devoted to his parents and secondly, the spirit of philanthropy is embedded in him. Jimutavahan himself says in the play that he is happy only when he worships his parents. Jimutavahan is a character who leaves the pleasures and glory of the kingdom to serve his parents and resides in the forest. Friend Basu, while describing the qualities of Jimutavahana, says that he is the best in the dynasty of Vidya Dharma, intelligent, worthy of respect among gentlemen, handsome, brave, learned, young with polite behavior and a person ready to protect living beings.

#### Malayavati

The heroine of the play Nagananda. Although, Malayawati does not have any special role in the entire play but her character is definitely seen influencing us. Harsh has portrayed Malayawati as an ideal Hindu woman. For her, her husband is everything. She is beautiful, seeing the beauty of Malayavati in this form, the hero Jimutavahana is



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surprised and says that if this is a woman from heaven then thousands of eyes of Indra have succeeded. If it belongs to the Naga people then its main presence is not the Sun but the Naga people, the Moon. If he is a scholar then our clan, is going to conquer all other clans and if she belongs to the family of Siddhas then the Siddha people will become famous among all the three worlds. Along with Jimutavahan, the clown also praises the beautiful form of Malayavati. Another special quality of Malayavati is that she is very adept in playing Veena. The hero Jimutavahana himself is overwhelmed by her singing and playing Veena. Malayavati is a devotee of mother Gauri and is unable to tolerate Sakhi's criticism of Gauri and responds to her. Her character as a daughter-in-law is also important. She spends all her time serving her in-laws. When Malayavati comes to know about the incident of Jimutavahana's surrender, she faints. After the death of Jimutavahana, she begins to feel that life is a burden and at that very moment she gets ready to commit Sati by building a funeral pyre. She pleases Mother Gauri with her devotion and gives life to Jimutavahana. In fact, the character of Malayavati appears as an Indian ideal woman who is inspirational for other women.

**Mitravasus**

Mitravasus is the son of Siddharaj Vishwavasus. He is the brother of Malayavati and friend of Jimutavahana. Mitravasus is extremely impressed by the qualities of Jimutavahana. Through his efforts, Jimutavahana and Malayavati unite and get married.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 10.3**

1. What are the main qualities in the character of Jimutavahan?
2. In what form has Malayavati been depicted?

**10.4 STAGE POSSIBILITIES OF NAGANANDA**

In Natyashastra, Acharya Bharat has stated the two main objectives of visual poetry - entertainment and education. Before Shri Harsha, whatever Rupakas (metaphors) are found in the tradition of Sanskrit drama, Shringara and Veer Rasa have been prominent. If we look at Bhas's plays, we can see the stories derived from Ramayana, Mahabharata and folk tales in his plays. After him, full application of Shringara Rasa is visible in the plays written by Kalidas. Sriharsha is a playwright who has created a beautiful coordination between two dharmas in his play Nagananda. The story of Jimutavahan is still popular in Bihar region under the name of Jiut. In the seventh century, Sriharsha through Nagananda play, orientated the audience towards philanthropy through drama.

Taking the story of Jimutavahana from Kathasaritsagara, he writes a play composed in 5 acts. In Natyashastra, the main characteristic of a drama under Rupak Vidhan is that there should be 5 or 10 acts in the drama. The hero should be courageous. The main Rasa should be Sringara, but in this play of Shriharsh-Naganand, the predominance of Veera Rasa is visible and even among the Veer Rasa, Danaveer is the main one. Fulfillment of Shringara Rasa has been used only in the love affair of Jimutavahana and Malayavati. Through this play, Shri Harsh underlines the spirit of philanthropy and talks about learning from the character Jimutavahan. From time to time, Naganand play was translated into different languages and performed on stage. There are many mentions of Nagananda's performances in modern theater also. Shriharsh has left plenty of space for acting in his theatrical craft. With his imagination he creates entertaining situations for the actor. With his natural style he makes the drama easy and comprehensible. It is this quality of his drama craft that attracts theater artists towards Naganand's performances.



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### WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNT

- The time period of Shriharsh is the first half of the seventh century.
- Along with Shri Harsh Raja, he was also an artist and a playwright.
- Harsha has written three Rupaka - Priyadarshika, Ratnavali and Nagananda.
- Priyadarshika and Ratnavali are Natika and Nagananda is drama.
- Priyadarshika is influenced by Abhijnana Shakuntalam and Malavikagnimitram.
- In the play Nagananda, the plot is divided into 5 acts.
- The story of Nagananda drama is taken from the story of Jimutavahana mentioned in Kathasaritsagara.
- The main story of the play centers around the love and marriage of Vidyadhar Rajputra named Jimutavahana and Siddha princess named Malayavati and Jimutavahana's attempt to save the life of a serpent named Shankhachud by sacrificing his life.
- The first act describes the love between Jimutavahana and Malayavati.
- The second act describes the marriage of Jimutavahana and Malayavati.
- The third act depicts Jimutavahan and Malayavati's Vihar.



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- In the fourth act, there is the story of Jimutavahana sacrificing himself to save the life of a snake named Shankhchud.
- In the fifth act, there is the story of Jimutavahana getting stained with blood from Garuda's beak and Garuda repenting.



## TERMINAL EXERCISE

1. What is the main story of Nagananda?
2. What did you know about Shriharsh?
3. Tell us about the character Jimutavahana?
4. What is the relation between Nagananda drama and Jataka stories?



## ANSWERS TO INTEXT QUESTIONS

## 10.1

1. Harsha's reign was from 606 AD to 646 AD. Along with being a poet, he was also a Sanskrit playwright.
2. Rajyavardhan was the elder brother of Shriharsh.
3. Two plays (Natika) written by Shriharsh are Priyadarshika and Ratnavali.
4. Priyadarshika is influenced by Abhigyanashakuntalam and Malavikagnimitram.

## 10.2

1. There are 5 acts in the play Nagananda.
2. Jimutavahana is the hero of the play Nagananda.
3. Mitrasu is the friend of Jimutavahana and brother of the heroine Malayavati.
4. There is a snake named Shankhachuda, in order to save his life, Jimutavahana hands himself over to Garuda.

## 10.3

1. The main qualities in the character of Jimutavahan are love for parents and charity.
2. Malayavati has been portrayed as an ideal Indian woman.