

KUNDMALA



Notes

Many playwrights and poets have written works based on the story of Sita's exile from Valmiki's Ramayana. Bhavabhuti has also made this story on the basis for his play Uttaramcharitam. Based on this story, the play 'Kundamala' has been composed by Dingnag in the Sanskrit theater tradition. There is a lot of difference in viewpoint between Bhavabhuti's Uttaramcharit and Dingnag's Kundmala. Kundamala Natak is situated near Bhasa at the base of Nandi and the prologue. Just as Bhasa has used theatrical techniques for writing his plays, Dingnag is also seen using the same in Kundamala. The planning of 'shadow scene (Chhaya Drishya) makes Kundamala different and unique from other Sanskrit plays.

In Bhavabhuti's Uttararamacharitam, a lot of exaggeration (Atishyokti) has been used while presenting Sita as an ideal character, but in his play Kundamala, Dingnag shows Sita like a common woman. Bhavabhuti's Sita is an embodiment of idealism but Dingnag's Sita is very close to Valmiki. After Valmiki, Kundamala is the only play in which Sita has been shown in human form.



LEARNING OUTCOMES

After studying this lesson, you-

- know about Dingnaag, the author of Kundmala;
- know about the plot of Kundamala;
- know about the characters;
- know about the theatrical planning used in Kundmala; and
- understand the stage possibilities and theoretical application of Kundamala.



Notes

11.1 GENERAL INTRODUCTION OF KUNDAMALA

Scholars from South India have played a major role in the discovery of ancient texts. Bhasa's plays are also found in South India. Kundamala is also a drama which has been achieved through the efforts of scholars of South India. Till now, six hand written copies of Kundamala are found. Kundamala was first published in Madras in 1923. Due to its simple language and heart touching plot, this play had made its place among the readers in such a short time.

The time period of Dingnag, the author of Kundmala, has been fixed at 1000 AD. On the basis of the nature of Kundmala and the religious and social images found in this play, the position of the creator has been determined in this period. Dingnag was a resident of Araralpur in the far south. His place of residence is also mentioned in the preface of the play. He was basically a Brahmin and had full faith in Gods and Goddesses. In the play, he has praised Shiva and expressed his glory with an open heart. It is clear from this that he was a Shaiva Brahmin. Dingnag had a special love for music. Apart from Samveda, he also had special interest in Veena playing. He has also described the effect of music at many places in the play. Dingnag had complete authority over grammar, astrology, philosophy, Ayurveda and drama science. He always talks about the simple life of forests and ashrams from which we can infer that Dingnag, the author of Kund Mala, was a religious and solitary person.

11.2 MAIN CHARACTERS OF KUNDAMALA

The list of characters of the play is as follows-

Male Characters

Sutradhaar - Coordinator of the drama

Ram - Hero

Lakshmana - Ram's younger brother

Kusha - Ram's eldest son

Luv - Younger son of Ram

Valmiki - Great scholar, originator of Ramayana

Sumantra - Carrier of the king's chariot

Kaushika - Jester

Kanva - Disciple of Valmiki and childhood companion of Rama

Badarayana - Second disciple of Valmiki

Female Characters

Sita - Heroine, wife of Ram

Yajnavedi - Ashram Girl

Vedavati - ashram girl and friend of Sita

Muni Kanya - Ashram Kanya

Ram, Sita, Lakshman, Kush, Luv and Valmiki are the main characters in the play Kundmala. According to the story, Dingnag has depicted these characters very beautifully.

Ram

The hero of Kundamala is Ram who is Dhaerodatta type. He is humble by nature, sacrificial, egoless, steady minded, serious and determined. Even after being the king, Ram respects the wishes of his people. Even Rishis and sages never get tired of praising him for his love for justice. Fearing to save his clan from being tarnished, he does not hesitate in abandoning Sita, who is dear to him even with his life. Ram considers duty higher than his feelings. Like a human being, he is surrounded by grief after abandoning his wife Sita, but still, like an ideal king, he considers performing his duties towards the people as his ideal.

Sita

Sita is the heroine of the play Kundmala. She is the wife of Ram. Dingnag has shown the heroine of Kundamala as an ideal woman. Sita is endowed with the qualities of sacrifice, purity of character, courage and tolerance. She is proud of the fact that her husband is an ideal king and performs his duties towards his people without any selfishness. Sita believes that Ram has unwavering love for her. She resists hearing criticism against Ram even from her friends. She has so much faith in her husband that she tells her friend Vedavati about holding the hand of another woman that Arya's heart is mine, even if he holds someone else's hand. Her friends are also surprised to see this confidence of Sita.

Laxmana

Lakshmana is Ram's favorite brother. By nature, he is obedient and considers Ram's orders as supreme. He is always ready to sacrifice even his desires for Ram. Despite his unwillingness, he obeys his elder brother's orders and comes to leave Sita in the forest. There is immense sorrow in his heart for Sita. He feels extremely guilty leaving Sita in the forest and says that it would have been better if he had been killed in the war



Notes

Introduction to India
Dramas

Notes

in Lanka. He feels sad seeing Ram sad and try to remove the sorrow. Basically, Lakshmana is soft hearted but due to circumstances he has to become tough.

Kush and Luv

Kush and Luv are the sons of Ram. They were born from Sita's womb during his stay in forest. Both are twin brothers. By nature, both are playful, polite and patient. The beauty of both of them is heart-wrenching and due to their beauty, they are the center of attraction for all the ashram residents. The feeling of self-respect is strong in both of them. They know how to follow etiquette.

Valmiki

Valmiki is a main character of Kundamala. The entire incident of the play revolves around him. All the incidents happen in his ashram. Valmiki is a kind, accomplished and great Maharishi by nature. When he hears from his disciples the news of a woman crying in the forest, he immediately goes to that place. Seeing the condition of Sita, he takes upon himself the responsibility of protecting her. Ram himself also bows his head before Valmiki. Valmiki loves justice and can take a fierce form to ensure justice is followed. He chides Ram for abandoning Sita without any reason.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 11.1**

1. Who is the author of Kundamala?
2. When was Kundmala published for the first time?
3. What is the time period of Dingnaag?
4. Where was the residence of Dingnag?
5. Who are the main characters described in Kundmala?
6. What is the main story of Kundmala?
7. Ram is the hero of which type in Kundamala?
8. In what form has Sita been depicted in Kundamala?
9. Who are Kush and Luv?
10. Tell us about Valmiki?

11.3 PLOT OF KUNDMALA DRAMA

In the Kundamala drama, the plot is described in a total of six acts. For the play, Dingnag has made the main basis of Uttarkand of 'Ramayana' written by Valmiki, in which there is the story of Sita's exile, but Dingnag gives a happy ending to the story with his devotion.

Act- 1

At the beginning of the first act, there is a praise of Shri Ganesha under the Nandi Path, in which the Sutradhar is introducing the play and its creator to the audience by praying to the locks of hair of Lord Shiva for the protection of the audience, when suddenly in the background this story of Yavanika appears. Laxman's words are heard from behind. From the narrator, the audience learns that due to the long stay in Ravana's ashram, many questions have been raised about Sita's character and due to fear of public condemnation, Ram has abandoned the pregnant Sita. Lakshmana is going towards the forest to leave her. With this the establishment of the story ends. The chariot cannot pass through the forests on the banks of the Ganga which are surrounded by a network of trees and creepers. For this reason, Sita and Lakshmana are slowly walking on the banks of the Ganga. Being pregnant, Sita soon gets tired and sits in the shade of a tree. After resting, Lakshmana tells Sita that Shri Ram has abandoned her due to fear of public outrage. When Sita receives this harsh news, she becomes hurt and faints. After regaining consciousness, she protests against Laxman's abandonment without any reason and prepares to commit suicide. Lakshmana consoles Sita and says that Ram does not doubt her character nor has his love for Sita diminished in his heart. You have stayed in Ravana's ashram for a long time. Therefore, to save their clan from the stigma of rumors spreading about your character, he is abandoning you. Even while living in the royal palace, he will remain like a forest dweller. They will not marry anyone else for the rest of their life. Lakshman also stops Sita from committing suicide out of grief. He says if she does this then what will happen to Raghukul? Sita sends a message to Ram that he should be careful about his health and never deviate from his duty. Leaving Sita alone in the forest, Lakshmana prays to the forest gods, the sages, the protectors, the mountains and the Ganges to protect Sita. On the other hand, Maharishi Valmiki hears from his disciples about a crying woman and immediately reaches that place. There he is introduced to Sita and he learns about Sita through his yoga power. He takes the burden of Sita upon himself. They are taken to the ashram and here Sita prays to Mother Ganga that if her delivery is successful then she will offer a Kundmala to Goddess Ganga every day.

*Notes*

Introduction to India
Dramas

Notes

Act- 2

At the beginning of the second act, the ongoing dialogue between two ashram girls reveals that Sita has given birth to two sons in Maharishi Valmiki's ashram, whose names are Luv and Kush. Now they are 10 years old and reads Ramayana written by Valmiki. It is also revealed that Ram has organized Ashwamedha Yajna and invited sages like Valmiki etc. All this information is available to the audience through the presenter. Sita is immersed in sorrow in the ashram. His friend Vedavati consoles her and prevents her from feeling sad for the atrocities that Ram has done to her. Sita still has love for Ram. She believes that Ram still loves her the same way. She does not like to hear words like criminal, cruel for Ram from her friends and opposes the statement of her friend Vedavati. Vedavati tells them that Ram is organizing Ashwamedha Yajna and in this Yajna he will hold the hand of another woman. Then Sita says in a compassionate voice - I have the right over Ram's heart, not his hand. Vedavati still consoles him that his days in the forest are now over. Then suddenly a sage's voice is heard from the background asking all the ashram residents to reach Naimish forest for Ashwamedha Yajna. As soon as Sita receives this information, she leaves from there to prepare for the departure of Kush and Luv.

Act- 3

At the beginning of the third act, it is revealed through the introduction that Sita, Kusha and Luv have reached Naimish forest. Ram and Lakshmana are going towards Valmiki's ashram located in Naimish forest. On the way, Ram is seen sad for abandoning Sita without any reason. Laxmana is moving ahead while talking to him. To calm Ram's mind, Lakshmana draws his attention to the beautiful picture of river Gomti. Ram and Lakshman's gaze falls on a blunt flower garland floating in the river current. As soon as Ram sees the garland, he recognizes that it has been woven by Sita's hands. Ram and Lakshmana go in search of Sita in the direction from where the garland is coming. After going a little further, Lakshman's eyes fall on the footprints of a woman. Ram sees the mark and recognizes that it is of Sita's feet. Ram and Lakshman follow those footsteps. Those signs disappear when hard land comes ahead. And both of them sit in a creeper grove to relieve their fatigue. While Sita is plucking flowers, she hears their conversation behind a tree. Seeing Ram sad for her, Sita with great difficulty restrains herself from going in front of him. Then the sage Badarayana sent by Valmiki reaches that grove in search of Ram and Lakshmana, with this the third act ends.

Act-4

At the beginning of the fourth act, an ashram girl named Vedavati tells her friend Yajnavedi that an Apsara named Tilottama will go in front of Ram in the form of Sita and will

behave like Sita to assess the love for Sita in Ram's heart. When Yajnavedi tells her that their conversation has been overheard by Ram's friend Kaushik, Vedavati decides to stop Tilottama from doing so. The dialogue between these two also reveals that due to the influence of Valmiki, no man will be able to see the woman standing at the stepwell of the ashram and Sita nowadays sits on the banks of the same stepwell the whole day. After this conversation Vedavati goes to Tilottama and the Yajna Vedi goes to Sita. With this the introduction ends.

Sita is sitting on the banks of the stepwell wearing the clothes gifted by the forest goddess of Chitrakut, during her 14 years of exile and crying remembering her sorrows. Yajnavedi calms her down and entertains her by showing a pair of swans. Then Ram's childhood friend Kanva arrives to entertain Ram by showing the beauty of the forest on the orders of Valmiki. When Kanva leaves Ram alone, Ram goes to the stepwell to wash his face to remove the burning sensation in his eyes caused by the smoke. Then there he sees the reflection of Sita. Not finding Sita in front of him, he becomes unconscious. Then Sita touches him and brings him back to his senses. Ram requests Sita to come forward. Sita also answers him. When Ram is not successful in his attempt, he again becomes unconscious. This time Sita blows air with her aanchal and brings it into the hose. As soon as Ram comes to conscious, he pulls off the clothes worn by Sita and recognizes that she is Sita. He covers her with great respect and drops his shawl which Sita picks up. As soon as evening comes, Sita returns back to the ashram. Ram is thinking about this whole incident with surprise when the clown comes and tells him about the conversation between Vedavati and Tilottama. Ram becomes convinced that Tilottama herself has done this mockery to him.

Act-5

The next morning the clown gathers the ascetics. And takes Ram with him towards the assembly hall. Ram is thinking about the previous incident. His mind could not believe that it was all an illusion. Because seeing Sita's reflection had awakened a new consciousness in his mind. He was remembering Sita again and again. The jester blames him that he love Sita only with their words and not with their heart. Otherwise, why would he abandon her? Ram proves himself innocent. The time for the arrival of the ascetics is near, Ram sees the clown outside and asks him to come. As soon as the clown goes out, seeing two ascetics, he tells Ram that outside there are two children standing exactly in the shape of Ram and Lakshmana, who have come to narrate the story of Ramayana written by Valmiki. Ram is moved upon hearing this and orders to bring them inside quickly. Seeing Kush and Luv, strange feelings start rising in his mind. Tears come to his eyes. Ram seats them in his lap on the throne and embraces them lovingly. Looking at them he thinks that if Sita had also given birth to a son, then his

NATYAKALA (285)



Notes

Introduction to India
Dramas

Notes

child would also be of the same age. Then suddenly the clown shouts that Ram should take down Luv and Kush because whoever sits on that throne other than the Raghuvanshis gets his head shattered. Rama immediately takes them down and is surprised to see that he remains unharmed even after sitting on the throne. He ask them. Both are twin brothers. They say that we are Suryavanshi and our Guru is Maharishi Valmiki. They also tell that their mother calls their father cruel names. Their mother is called Valmiki Vadhu and other ashram residents call her Devi. From all these things, Ram guesses that both of them are Sita's children. Now his mind becomes even more strange. Then suddenly a voice comes from the background asking Luv and Kush to start singing Ramayana and Ram sends a message to gather there with his friends to listen to Ramayana. With this the fifth issue ends.

Act-6

After gathering in the Sabha Mandap, with the permission of Ram, Kush and Luv narrate the story of Ramayana from the marriage of Dashrath to the exile of Sita. A doubt comes in Ram's mind that perhaps due to Sita's death, Valmiki might not have told the story further. He calls Kanva to know the further incident. Kanva tells them that Kush and Luv are the children of Ram. On hearing this news, Ram, Lakshmana, Kush and Luv become unconscious. Then Sita enters with Valmiki. Both of them bring everyone to their senses. Valmiki scolds Ram in harsh words for abandoning Sita at the request of some people even after taking Sita through the fire test and then orders Sita to give proof about her character. Sita prays in the gathering that Goddess Earth should appear and tell everyone whether Sita is of good character and devoted to her husband or not. The goddess Earth appears from Sita's glory and fascinates Ram about Sita's character. Ram accepts Sita. On the advice of Lakshman, Ram makes his son Kush the successor of the kingdom and appoints Luv as the crown prince, with this the play ends.

11.4 THEORETICAL APPLICATION OF KUNDAMALA

Dingnag has used a simple and theatre-friendly style in his play Kundamala. The dramatic planning used by him in expressing emotions prove to be successful. There is no complexity in his language and he does not use long dialogues to make the dialogues simple and interesting. There is plenty of space for acting in the dialogues. Like other Sanskrit playwrights, he does not use artificial style. He does not exaggerate the character. Ram, Sita, Lakshman, Luv and Valmiki are shown as common people. On the basis of the plot, he is often compared with Bhavabhuti but there is a lot of difference between Bhavabhuti and Dingnaag. Even though both of them write their plays based on the same plot, still there is a lot of difference between them regarding the treatment

of the play. The tricks used by Dingnag in the play make the play interesting and attractive.

If we look at Dingnag's dialogues, he has his own distinct characteristics. Dialogues are like life for visual poetry. These dialogues provide momentum to the story. It is an absolutely essential quality for theater that the dialogues should be simple and understandable. Long dialogues create a fear of burdening the audience and at the same time these long dialogues also hamper the impact of emotions. That is why Dingnag does not describe any emotion in detail in his play Kundmala, but only expresses it poignantly. The dialogues are short and interesting from beginning to end. That is why Dingnag's play seems closer to theatre.

Ultimately, we can say that Kundamala is a drama based on Karuna Rasa. Dingnag has expressed the Karuna Rasa very beautifully. While reading and watching his play, the readers and viewers easily empathize with Sita and Ram. Their sorrow becomes the sorrow of the viewer. Thus, Kundamala is a play of Sanskrit literature which takes the story of Sita's exile as its basis but does not use it as it is. Rather, poet Dingnag, with his imagination, transforms the end of that story into a happy ending and writes the play keeping in mind the craft of theatre.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 11.2

1. How many total acts are there in Kundmala play?
2. What happens at the beginning of the first act?
3. In which act is the information about the birth of Kush and Luv?
4. In which act is the shadow technique used?
5. In which act is the Ramayana story described?
6. Does Sita enter the womb of the earth at the end of the play Kundmala?



WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNT

- Kundamala is a Sanskrit play written by Dingnag.
- The time period of Dingnag has been fixed at 1000 AD.
- The basic story of the play is the story of Sita's exile described in Ramayana.
- The basis of naming of the play is an incident in the third act in which Ram



Notes

Introduction to India
Dramas

Notes

Lakshman sees a Kundmala flowing in the water stream of Gomti. Seeing that garland, Ram feels sad remembering Sita. Due to this incident the play has been named Kundamala.

- There are six acts in the Kundmala play.
- The Kudmala play has a happy ending. In this, Ram and Sita are united.

**TERMINAL EXERCISE**

1. Write about Sanskrit playwright Dingnag?
2. Write about the basic story of Kundmala play?
3. Write about the naming of Kundmala?
4. What is the difference between the story of Kudmala and Uttarramcharitam?

**ANSWERS TO INTEXT QUESTIONS****11.1**

1. Dinnag
2. 1923
3. 1000 AD
4. Araralpur situated in far South India
5. Ram, Lakshman, Sita, Kush and Luv and Valmiki etc.
6. The story of Sita's exile described in Ramayana
7. Dheerodatta
8. As an Indian ideal woman who has deep respect for her husband in her heart.
9. Son of Ram and Sita
10. Valmiki is a merciful and accomplished Maharishi who provided protection to Sita in his ashram after her exile.

11.2

1. Six acts
2. At the beginning of the first act, Lakshman is going to leave Sita in the forest.
3. Second act
4. Fourth act
5. In the sixth act
6. No.