

9

PRATIMANATAKA



Notes

In the category of Sanskrit playwrights, Mahakavi Bhasa is one such playwright who has enriched the tradition of Sanskrit theater with his dramatic style. The great poet Kalidasa himself was greatly influenced by Bhasa's drama art. He also praises Bhasa in the play named Malavikagnimitram. Not much information is available about the personality of great poet Bhasa. After studying the plays written by him and the texts of ancient poets, his time period has been determined. Bhasa himself does not write about his introduction in his plays. His aim was not to gain fame through his writings but to entertain the audience through his drama. 13 plays of Bhasa are found, out of which we will discuss about Pratima Natak.



LEARNING OUTCOMES

After studying this lesson, you-

- know about Bhasa;
- know about the Pratimanataka;
- know about the story of Pratimanataka;
- know about the characters of the play Pratimanataka; and
- knows about the stage possibilities of Pratimanataka.

*Notes***9.1 GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO BHASA**

The status of Bhasa has been controversial among scholars. In relation to any other Sanskrit playwright such capability is not achieved. Various scholars fix the time of Bhasa between the sixth century BC to the tenth century BC, but if the opinions of all the scholars are studied then the time of Bhasa is fixed as fifth-fourth century BC.

In the year 1909, Mahamahopadhyay Pandit T-Ganapati Shashi published 13 plays of Bhasa. There are 13 plays written by Bhasa on this basis. Bhasa has mainly taken his plot from Ramkatha, Mahabharata and folk. If we study his plays we will find that-

1. The basic story of Pratimanatakam and AbhishekNatakam is based on Ram Katha.
2. Similarly, he has adopted the stories of Madhyamvyayoga, Dutghatokach, Karnabharam, Dutvakyam, Urubhangam, Pancharatrama and Bal Charitam from Mahabharata.
3. He has taken the stories of Pratigyayogandharayan, Swapnavasavadattam, Avimaraka and Daridracharudatta from the inspiration of the people.

13.2 INTRODUCTION TO PRATIMANATAKAM

As is clear from the name itself, the basic story of the play Pratimanatakam is woven around Pratima. In the third act of the play, the incident at Pratimagriha has been described by the great poet Bhasa. After Ram went to the forest, when Bharata was returning from his maternal home to Ayodhya, he was filled with apprehension when he saw the statue of Maharaja Dasharatha among the statues of his ancestors in the temple. He feels the absence of his father. It is also noteworthy here that there is no such context in the original story of Ramayana in which the events of the Pratimagriha are described. The great poet Bhasa weaves this incident in Pratimagriha with his imagination and shows Bharat realizing his father's death without being informed by anyone. From this we can accept that Bhasa has created this story from his imagination even though its basis is Ramkatha. This play has been named Pratimanataka after imagining Pratimagriha.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 9.1**

1. What is the time period of Bhasa?
2. What is the number of plays of Bhasa?
3. What are the sources of the plots of Bhasa's plays?
4. What is the basic story of Pratimanataka?,
5. Where is the plot of Avimarak taken from?

9.3 THE PLOT OF THE PRATIMANATAKA

Bhasa has divided the story into seven acts in Pratimanataka. The story described in each issue is as follows:-

First Act

At the beginning of the first act, preparations are going on for the coronation of Ram by the orders of Maharaja Dasharatha. In the play we see the organization of auspicious songs and auspicious works with musical instruments on this occasion. Then suddenly these preparations for the coronation stop. Through her friends, Sita gets the information that the coronation of the kingdom has stopped because Queen Kaikeyi has asked Maharaja Dasharatha for the promise of kingship for her son Bharat and 14 years of exile for Ram. It is also reported that King Dasharatha fell unconscious after hearing these words of Kaikeyi. After this, Ram comes to Sita and tells this news as the truth. Then Lakshman also reaches there in anger and says that I will make this world inferior to women because a woman Kaikeyi is behind this entire incident. After listening to Lakshman, Ram explains to him with utmost generosity. And asks Lakshman to calm down. After this Ram informs Sita and Lakshman of his decision to go towards the forest. Sita and Lakshman also request Ram to accompany them to the forest. Initially Ram does not allow them but ultimately he has to accept this request of both of them. At the end of the first act, Ram, Sita and Lakshman head towards the forest.

Second Act

In the second act, mahamantri Sumantra returns to Ayodhya without Ram, Sita and Lakshmana. After that king Dasharatha becomes unconscious and finally giving up his life in separation from Ram is described. The people are very sad due to Ram, Lakshman and Sita going to the forest. Due to Ram going to the forest, King Dashratha

*Notes*

Introduction to India
Dramas



Notes

is lying in the gribhgriha in an impatient state. Kaushalya and Sumitra are advising Dashratha to be patient. Smantra went forest to drop Ram, Sita and Lakshman. Dashratha still hopes that Sumantra will convince Ram, Sita and Lakshman and bring them to Ayodhya back but the situation is opposite. Sumantra returns from the forest empty handed. Seeing him, Dasharatha sinks into despair and his remaining hope also vanishes. Suddenly he becomes unconscious and on regaining consciousness repeatedly asks about Ram, Sita and Lakshman. In the second act, there is mainly a dialogue between General Secretary Sumantra and Dasharatha in which Bhasa has made full use of Karun Rasa. Bhasa has given a poignant portrayal of the heart of a father saddened by the separation of his son in this act. During Ram's separation, Dasharatha begins to realize that his death is near and that his ancestors have come to take him with them. At last, bearing this sorrow, the king of Ayodhya sacrifices his life. This act comes to an end only with his death.

Third Act

In the third act, Bharat is returning from his maternal home and is apprehensive after seeing the statue of his father Dasharatha in the Devkula on the way. He fear that his father has died and become unconscious. Bharata is eager to go with his ministers to bring Ram back. At the beginning of the act, Bharat returns to Ayodhya from his maternal home after receiving a call from Ayodhya. To relieve the fatigue of the journey, they stop near the statue. Devkulik, the priest there, introduces him to this statue house and tells that the statues of all the kings of Ikshvaku dynasty who have existed till now are located in this statue house. Priest also describes the story of Maharaj Dilip, Raghu and today's success in front of Bharata. Suddenly Bharat's eyes fall on the statue of Maharaj Dasharatha and as soon as he sees it, Bharat becomes terrified. He anticipates his father's death. As soon as he realizes this, he becomes unconscious. Then his mothers also enter. Bharat becomes conscious due to her touch and as soon as he regains consciousness, he asks the complete story from Devkulika. He realizes that whatever has happened is because of his mother Kaikeyi. He criticizes his mother. On reaching Ayodhya, Vashishtha etc. propose to anoint Bharat as king of Ayodhya, rejecting which Bharat leaves with his ministers and associates to bring Ram back to Ayodhya. With this the third act ends. In this act, Bharat has shown the feeling of love, sacrifice and dedication towards Bharat's brother.

Fourth Act

In the fourth act, Bharat along with his general secretary Sumantra goes to the forest and meets Ram and requests him to return to Ayodhya. But Ram wants to convince

them and send them back. At last, respecting his elder brother's words, Bharat returns on the condition that he will have to accept his throne when Shri Ram returns to Ayodhya from the forest.

At the beginning of the act, Bharata and his chief minister Sumantra board a chariot and head towards the Dandaka forest. Reaches Ram, and Ram gets emotional seeing Bharat. In front of Ram, Lakshman and Sita, Bharat describes the work done by his mother Kaikeyi as bad. He tells Shri Ram to return back to Ayodhya. Ram explains to Bharat that he has decided to fulfill his father's promise. Then Bharat requests Shri Ram to get permission to live in the forest with Sita and Lakshman. Ram understands the condition of Bharat very well and advises him to follow his duties towards his subjects and other people. Eventually, after persuasion by Ram, Bharat returns but with the condition that he will accept his kingdom when Shri Ram returns to Ayodhya from the forest after 14 years. Ram asks for his Charan Paduka to rule Bharat during these 14 years, Ram accepts it and after that Bharat leaves for Ayodhya with his ministers and dear people, with this the fourth act ends.

Fifth Act

In the fifth act, there is the incident of Ravana cutting off the nose of his sister Shurpanakha and abducting Sita by deceit to avenge the killing of Khara Dushan. At the beginning of the fifth act, Ram is immersed in thoughts about performing the annual Shraddha of his father Dasharatha. Sita consoles him and tells him that Bharat will perform the Shraddha of her father with full rituals. Then suddenly Ravana, disguised them, arrives as a guest. Seeing Ravana in the guise of a monk, Ram respects him. Ravana expresses his desire to Ram to perform his father's Shraddha by donating the pindadan of the golden deer. Sometimes Marich appears there in the form of a golden deer. Lakshman is not there for some reason, so Ram himself sets out to catch the deer. Knowing Sita is alone, Ravana assumes his true form and abducts her. Sita cries and wails. And hearing this, Jatayu, the king of vultures, comes to save her. In this act, Bhasa has made some changes in the story of Ram and has completely rejected the incident of Sita being lured by the golden deer and has created this incident with his own imagination.

Sixth Act

At the beginning of the sixth act, Ravana has a fierce battle with the vulture king Jatayu who has come to save Sita. In the end, Jatayu gets martyred by getting injured at the hands of Ravana. Ravana succeeds in taking Sita to Lanka. On the other hand, Ram and Lakshman are searching for Sita. Then two ascetic Kumar narrates the story of



Notes

Introduction to India
Dramas

Notes

Sita's kidnapping. After this there is friendship between Ram and Sugriva and Ram Lakshman spends a few days in Kishkindha. Meanwhile, Bharat again sends his general minister Sumantra to seek attention of Shri Ram. After reaching there, Sumantra gets the news of Sita's kidnapping. He returns and requests Bharat. At the same time, Kaikeyi also informs Bharat about the curse given to Maharaj Dasharatha by the sage and resolves the allegations against her. Kaikeyi also asks Bharat to help Ram. Bharat prepares to help his elder brother Rama and declare war against Ravana, approaching Rama with an army. The incident described in this act is also different from Shri Ram Katha. Great poet Bhasa has made many changes through his imagination.

Seventh Act

At the beginning of the seventh act, Bharat prepares to reach with his army to help Ram, but before reaching there, Bharat gets information from the ascetic about Ram's victory over Ravana. The ascetic also tells him that Ram has reached Tapovana after anointing Vibhishana as the king of Lanka. People are very happy with the killing of Ravana. Hearing this good news, Bharat reaches the forest and meets Ram and coronates him there as the king of Ayodhya. Mother Kaikeyi is also very happy and expresses her wish for Ram's coronation after returning back to Ayodhya. Ram accepts it. After this he boards the Pushpak Viman and leaves for Ayodhya. With this the seventh act ends. Bhasa expresses his wish for everyone's well-being with the sentence of Nata.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 9.2**

1. How many acts are there in Pratimanataka?
2. In which act is the Pratimagriha described?
3. In which act is the incident of Sita Haran?
4. In which act does Kaikeyee discuss the curse received by Maharaj Dasharatha from the sage?

9.4 CHARACTERS OF PRATIMANATAKA

Great poet Bhasa has described the main characters of Ramkatha, Ram, Sita, Bharat, Lakshman, Dashratha, Kaushalya, Kaikeyi etc. in his play Pratimanataka. Here we will study about the main characters described in Pratimanataka.

Ram

The main hero of the drama is Ram. If we assess Ram in the hero category from the point of view of drama, then he is a hero of Dhairrodatta nature. We find all the qualities of this Dhairrodatta hero in Ram. Dhananjay has also said in his book Dasharupaka about Dhairrodatta Nayaka - one who is unaffected by the world, has a serious nature, gives forgiveness to others, does not praise himself, always has a stable nature in situations like happiness and sorrow. One who is not arrogant, has patience and completes his work with determination is a Dhairrodatta hero. If we talk in the context of Pratimanatak, we see all these qualities in Ram. He is not saddened when he learns that Kaikeyi has taken a promise from King Dasharatha that he will be sent to exile for 14 years. He calms the anger of his brother Lakshman. This is because Ram is serious and patient.

Sita

Sita is the main heroine of this play. She is of gentle nature and generous nature. In the very first act, after seeing the Valkal objects, Sita asks her chetis to wear those objects. This is a reflection of his simple nature. She behaves generously with their hostesses. While joking, she does not give the impression of being the bride of her royal family. In the drama, Sita has been portrayed as an ideal woman who supports her husband even in happiness and sorrow.

Bharat

Bharat is the main character of this play. Sacrifice is their main character trait. Bharat is the epitome of sacrifice and penance. He has no desire for state happiness. When he comes to know that his mother Kaikeyi has sent Ram into exile and has demanded the throne for him due to which brother Ram had to go into exile, he strongly opposes this act of his mother and without any time he tries to bring Ram back to Ayodhya. His heart is honest and clean. Tears flow from his eyes as soon as he sees Ram in the forest. Without his elder brother, he could not enjoy the royal pleasures. Bharat's character shows the culmination of devotion and love for his elder brother Ram.

Laxman

Bhasa has made some changes in the character of Laxman in Pratimanataka. While on one hand Lakshman described in Ramayana has been shown to be very angry, patriot-loving, brave and enthusiastic, on the other hand, in Pratimanataka, Bharat has shown him to be simple, easy-going but of aggressive nature. Like Ramayana, he is brotherly and obedient. He does not do any work without Ram's permission. Despite being hurt

*Notes*

Introduction to India
Dramas

Notes

by Kaikeyi, he does not put an arrow in his bow when he does not get Ram's permission. He is very dear to his elder brother Ram. Like Bharat, Lakshman has also renounced pleasures. For the sake of his brother, he gives up the pleasures of the kingdom and goes to the forest, this is the result of his sacrifice.

Dasharatha

Dashrath is shown as a promise keeping king in the drama. Ram is dear to him. When Kaikeyi asks him for 14 years of exile for Ram, he is unable to refuse due to his determination to keep his word. Helplessly he has to fulfill his vow. The biggest characteristic of their character is that he loves his children very much.

Kaikeyi

Kaikeyi is the main female character of this play. The plot of this entire play focuses on two promises demanded by Kaikeyi. Bhasa changes the character of Kaikeyi as described in the story of Ramayana with his imagination. In the story of Ramayana, Kaikeyi, out of love for her son, demands exile for Ram and throne of kingship for Bharat, but in Pratimanatak, it is said that this happened due to the curse of the sage. Bhasa has modified and presented the character of Kaikeyi.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 9.3**

1. What is special about Ram's character?,
2. Write a note about Bharat?
3. Write a note about Sita described in Pratimanataka?
4. What is the difference between Kaikeyi of the original story of Ramayan and Kaikeyi of the Pratimanatak?

9.5 THEATRE POSSIBILITIES OF PRATIMANATAKA

Bhasa has a unique identity of his own in the series of Sanskrit playwrights. He is the first among Sanskrit playwrights, and playwrights like Kalidas praise him openly. Bhas's plays reveal diversity and multiplicity as well as the playwright's theatrical craft and its originality. Even though he may not have completely followed the rules of Rupaka described in Natyashastra in his plays, still there is no dearth of attraction and interestingness in his plays. The biggest feature of Bhas's plays is that he gives enough

space for acting in his plays. Minimal use of textual dialogue provides more space for acting. Angika, Vachika and Sattvika, these three are found in the Rupaka of Bhaas. Bhas also starts the monologue metaphor.

From the point of view of the story, Bhasa may have taken the help of Purana, Itihaas, Ramayana, Mahabharata, Krishna Katha, but with his creativity and folk wisdom, he makes the story suitable for theater with his imagination. The structure of the plot is kept in such a way that the performance on the theater is not interrupted anywhere. In his plays each character communicates only as much as is necessary. His dialogue scheme gives momentum to the plot. This is the reason why Kerala's theater director KN Panikkar reveals many of the images contained in the written text through extra-curricular lessons from the point of view of drama and folk and gives a new dimension to the staging.



WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNT

- Bhasa is the first among Sanskrit playwrights who has adopted stories from Ramayana, Mahabharata and folk tradition and used them in rupaka from his imagination.
- The period of creation of Bhasa is 4th-5th century BC. Kalidas himself also praises Bhasa's writings.
- Pratimanataka is a seven-act play composed by Bhasa.
- In Pratimanatak, the story starts from the coronation of Ram, the killing of Ravana and his return from the forest till the coronation.
- Bhasa has named this play 'Pratimanatakam' giving importance to the incident of keeping the statues of the dead kings of Ikshvaku clan in the Devkula.
- In the first act, there are preparations for Ram's coronation, Kaikeyi's exile of Ram for 14 years and Bharat's demand for the throne and the exile of Ram, Lakshman and Sita.
- In the second act, the story of King Dajaratha sacrificing his life due to separation from Ram.
- In the third act, Bharat is returning from his maternal home and is apprehensive



Notes

Introduction to India
Dramas

Notes

after seeing the statue of his father Dasharatha in the Devkula on the way. He comes to know about his father's death. He moved towards the forest to bring back Ram.

- In the fourth act, Bharat along with his General Secretary Sumantra goes to the forest and meets Ram and requests him to return to Ayodhya but Ram wants to convince him and send him back. At last, respecting his elder brother's words, Bharat returns on the condition that he will have to accept his throne when Shri Ram returns to Ayodhya from the forest.
- In the fifth act, there is the incident of Ravana cutting off the nose of his sister Shurpanakha and abducting Sita by deceit to avenge the killing of Khar Dushan.
- Giddhraj, who came to save Sita in the beginning of the sixth act, has a fierce battle between Ravana and Jatayu and in the end Jatayu gets injured at the hands of Ravana and attains martyrdom. Rama learns about Sita's abduction, meets Sugriva and Bharat prepares an army to help Rama.
- At the beginning of the seventh act, Bharat prepares to reach with his army to help Ram, but before reaching there, Bharat gets information from an ascetic about Ram's victory over Ravana. He goes to the forest with Kaikeyi and coronates Ram there.
- Ram, Lakshman, Bharat, Sita, Dajaratha, Kaikeyi are the main characters of this drama.
- Bhasa has made some changes in the original story of Ramayana in this play as per his imagination.

**TERMINAL EXERCISE**

1. What is the main story of the play Pratimanataka?
2. Write a note about Bhasa, the creator of Pratimanataka?
3. What is the special about the character of Bharat in the drama Pratimanataka?
4. What is the difference between the story of Pratimanataka and the original story of Ramayana?



ANSWERS TO INTEXT QUESTIONS

Introduction to India
Dramas*Notes*

9.1

1. Fourth to fifth century BC
2. There are 13 plays of Bhasa.
3. The sources of the plot of Bhasa's plays are Ramayana, Mahabharata and Lok.
4. The basic story of Pratimanataka tells the story of Ram's coronation, exile, abduction of Sita and his ascension to the throne of Ayodhya after Ravana's murder.
5. The plot of Avimaraka has been taken from the popular story of Krishna Katha.

9.2

1. There are seven acts in the Pratimanataka play.
2. The statue is described in the third chapter.
3. The incident of abduction of Sita is in the fifth act.
4. Kaikayi discusses the curse received by Maharaj Dasharatha from the sage in the sixth chapter.

9.3

1. Ram is portrayed as an obedient, forgiving, generous, determined, devoid of ego, loving brothers, brave and intelligent man.
2. Bharat is patriot and has been shown as an embodiment of sacrifice and dedication.
3. Sita has been portrayed as an ideal woman who supports her husband even in happiness and sorrow.

Introduction to India
Dramas



Notes

4. In the original story, Kaikeyi, out of love for her son, had asked for two promises from Dajaratha, whereas in the Pratimanataka, she does so due to the curse of the sage.