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DHRUVASVAMINI

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Jaishankar Prasad's name is important as a major playwright of modern Hindi plays. He has given a new dimension to modern drama writing. If we look at the Hindi playwrights before Prasad, he is mostly seen translating or adapting mythological, historical or English plays. Prasad's original works also deal with the subjects of present times. Jaishankar Prasad does not translate or adapt any previously written play nor does he recreate it. He has freely expressed his thoughts and feelings through drama.

Prasad's plays have often been put to the test of theatre. Sometimes it was called more theater and sometimes the need for a new stage technique was felt for Prasad's works. Prasad himself also says that if the plays are staged with modern theater techniques, then my plays are stageable. He is seen imagining future theater ahead of his time. Many subjects like a deep historical romantic vision, feeling of patriotism and women's discussion come forward openly in his plays. In this lesson, we will discuss the play Dhruvaswamini written by Jaishankar Prasad.

**LEARNING OUTCOMES**

After studying this lesson, you-

- know about the play Dhruvaswamini;
- know about the story of Dhruvaswamini;
- know about the characters of Dhruvaswamini; and
- know about the dramatic technics used in Dhruvaswamini.

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12.1 DHRUVASWAMINI

Dhruvaswamini is a famous play written by Jaishankar Prasad which was published in the year 1933. Dhruvaswamini is the last play of Jaishankar Prasad. Prasad ji has beautifully depicted the period of Samudragupta's death and Chandragupta's ascension to the throne in this drama. He has tried to decorate that historical time period in the story with his imagination. This play has been a realistic and impressive creation.

This play written by Prasad is of 3 acts. The heroine of the play is the female character Dhruvaswamini. This is a drama of historical nature. The plot of the play is related to the Gupta period. The roots of the story of this play can be seen in the Sanskrit play 'Devi Chandragupta' written by Visakhadutta. Through this play, Prasad has drawn the attention of the audience and readers towards history in its present time. They try to project India's present through its glorious past and national consciousness. Just as it has been the Indian tradition of drama writing that by adopting a historical or mythological story, the playwright definitely makes some changes in the original story with his imagination, in the same way, Jaishankar Prasad has also beautifully combined history and imagination in the play Dhruvaswamini.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 12.1**

1. When was the play Dhruvaswamini published?
2. How many acts are there in the play Dhruvaswamini?
3. The plot of the play is related to which period?
4. Dhruvaswamini play is related to which play of Vishakhadutt?
5. What is the purpose of the play Dhruvaswamini?

12.2 PLOT OF THE PLAY DHRUVASWAMINI

Dhruvaswamini is the main and central female character of the play. The entire story has been woven keeping this character at the center. It is shown in the story that Ram Gupta gets trapped in the conspiracy of Shikhar Swami and forcibly marries Dhruvaswamini and also usurps the kingdom. The villain of the play is Shakraj. He becomes infatuated with Dhruvaswamini after hearing about her beauty and demands Dhruvaswamini from Ramagupta as a treaty proposal. Ramgupta, demonstrating his cowardice, gets ready to hand over Dhruvaswamini, but Chandragupta does not accept

this. There is a dialogue between Chandragupta and Dhruvasvamini in which Dhruvasvamini expresses her feelings. At the end of the play, Chandragupta kills Shakraj and marries Dhruvasvamini. This entire story is mainly described in three acts. The story told in acts is as follows-

Act-1

Ramagupta's camp is shown at the beginning of this act. Dhruvasvamini enters the camp. Along with him comes a man and a woman carrying swords. The woman does not speak for some time in the beginning but later she tells Dhruvasvamini about Chandragupta. She also tells that Chandragupta loves Dhruvasvamini with all his heart. Along with this, she also informs Dhruvasvamini about Chandragupta's condition. Then suddenly Ramgupta enters the camp. He looks very worried. His dialogues reveal that he is filled with apprehension that Dhruvasvamini still loves Chandragupta.

While the conversation is going on between Dhruvasvamini and Ramgupta, suddenly a guard enters. He wants to give a sad news to Ramgupta but Ramgupta does not listen to him. He is worried only about Dhruvasvamini. Amatya Shikhar tells Swami Ram Gupta that Shakraj has sent a proposal for a treaty and in this proposal, he has demanded Dhruvasvamini for himself and the wives of the feudal lords of the Gupta Empire for his feudal lords. If this proposal is not accepted then he will attack the Gupta Empire and destroy everything.

Ramgupta, showing his cowardice, accepts this proposal. Dhruvasvamini strongly opposes this and requests Ram Gupta not to do this. But Ramgupta does not listen to Dhruvasvamini's words. When Chandragupta learns of this proposal, he chides Ramagupta for his cowardice and decides to go to Shakraj's camp himself in place of Dhruvasvamini. Ramgupta and Shikhar Swami also ask Dhruvasvamini to accompany them. At last, both Chandragupta and Dhruvasvamini prepare to go to Shakraj's camp.

Act-2

The venue of this act is Shakraj's camp. Koma is seen in Shakraj's camp who is Shakraj's girlfriend. Then suddenly Shakraj enters with a sword in his hand. He looks extremely worried. He waits anxiously for his messenger Khigil. Seeing Koma, he starts talking to her. He shares the confusion going on in his heart with Koma. Koma goes to get a cup of wine to calm him down.

Then Khigil enters. He gives the news to Shakraj that Ramgupta has accepted both his proposals. Shakraj is happy. Koma secretly overhears the conversation going on



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between them. Shakraj orders his feudal lords to celebrate the victory.

Shakraj becomes impatient at the thought of Dhruvaswamini's arrival. Khingil tells Shakraj that Dhruvaswamini's palanquin has arrived and he also tells that Dhruvaswamini has asked to meet Shakraj alone. Koma forbids Shakraj from going alone. But Shakraj, impatient with lust, refuses to listen to her and condemns her. He also insults his religious teacher Mihir. Mihir leaves taking Koma with him.

Dhruvaswamini and Chandragupta, disguised as Dhruvaswamini, enter the stage, conversing with each other. Both of them call themselves Dhruvaswamini. Shakraj sees both of them and gets mesmerized by their beauty. Then Chandragupta takes the opportunity and challenges Shakraj to a duel. There is a war between the two and in the end, Chandragupta kills Shakraj.

Act-3

The events of this act take place in the inner chamber of Shakraj's fort. Dhruvaswamini is on the stage when a soldier enters. She asks the soldier about Chandragupta's trauma. Suddenly the priest enters the stage. He calls Dhruvaswamini as Mahadevi and asks her to organize a special religious ritual for Swastyana, but Dhruvaswamini refuses to call herself Mahadevi. In her dialogues she expresses her feelings about the pitiful condition of the women described in the priests and their scriptures. The priest leaves saying that he will look at his theology again.

Mihirdev and Koma enter the stage and plead to take away Shakraj's dead body. Dhruvaswamini orders them to take away the dead body. Just then Chandragupta enters the stage and tells Dhruvaswamini that it is useless for him to stay here now.

Suddenly a noise is heard from the background. Mandakini enters and tells Chandragupta that Ramagupta's soldiers have killed Acharya Mihir and his daughter Koma while taking away the body of Shakraj. All the feudal lords are sad about this. He is condemning Ram Gupta in derogatory terms.

Ramgupta enters the stage and is very angry after knowing all this. He orders Chandragupta to be imprisoned. Dhruvaswamini condemns this act of Ramgupta and refuses to accept herself as his wife. Angered by this, Ramgupta orders Dhruvaswamini to be imprisoned as well. All this is unbearable for Chandragupta. He breaks the chains. Then, seeing the opportunity, Shikhar Swami comes to Chandragupta's side.

A meeting of the Council of Ministers is held. In that, all the ministers and feudal lords allow Dhruvaswamini to divorce Ramgupta and marry Chandragupta. In anger, Ramgupta attacks Chandragupta deceitfully but then a feudal lord sees him and kills

Ramgupta. The drama ends here.

In this way, Jaishankar Prasad has transformed the historical event of the Gupta period into a drama with his imagination. The only fact found in history is that Chandragupta attained the throne by killing his elder brother Ramgupta, but what was the reason due to which Chandragupta had to do this? Historians have no answer on this subject. Prasad ji made this question his basis and gave originality to the issue of women exploitation that has been going on in Indian society for centuries under the guise of tradition. The basic sentiment of the play contains many questions related to women's freedom and their rights which come out in the dialogues of Dhruvasvamini. A man considers a woman only as an object of enjoyment, a man can marry more than one, there is no question regarding a woman's will and reluctance regarding marriage, a woman is not allowed to remarry, there are many such things which come out in this drama. Jaishankar Prasad not only articulates women's problems with great skill but his other characters also seem to display rebellion against stereotypes by getting the opportunity. Just as Koma is tolerating the injustice done to her, Mandakini and Dhruvasvamini raise questions on the evil practices that have been going on against women for centuries. The play ends on a very ideal note.



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INTEXT QUESTIONS 12.2

1. About what thing is Ramgupta in doubt?
2. What proposal does Shakraj make to Ramgupta?
3. Who is Koma?
4. At what place does the incident in the second act take place?
5. How is Ramgupta killed?
6. What is the relation between Dhruvasvamini and Chandragupta?
7. What happens at the end of the play?

12.3 CHARACTERS OF THE PLAY DHRUVASWAMINI

Dhruvasvamini, there are three female characters in the play Dhruvasvamini, Mandakini and Koma. The male characters are Ramgupta, Chandragupta, Shikharswami, Shakraj, Khigil, Mihir Dev and Purohit. Apart from these main characters, some other characters also enter the play like - Hijra, Dwarf, Hunchback, Pratihari, Khadagdharini, Kumar,

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Samant etc. But the story of the entire play focuses only on 3 characters - Dhruvaswamini, Ramgupta and Chandragupta. The entire action of the drama has been woven keeping them at the center. Now we will know about them in some detail-

Dhruvasvamini

The entire incident of the play Dhruvaswamini revolves around Dhruvaswamini. Dhruvaswamini is forcefully married by Ramgupta but in the end she accepts Chandragupta as her husband. Dhruvaswamini is the main heroine of this play. From the plot of the play, we come to know that Chandragupta and Dhruvaswamini are attracted to each other but due to the conspiracy of Shikhar Swami, Chandragupta's elder brother Ramgupta forcibly marries her and also fraudulently usurps Chandragupta's kingdom.

Dhruvaswamini's beauty is unique. She is so beautiful that Shakraj becomes enamored with her beauty. He wants to get Dhruvaswamini by any means, that is why he sends a treaty proposal to Ramgupta. It was because of her beauty that Chandragupta gave her his heart.

If we look at the beginning of the play, Dhruvaswamini appears as a woman who is completely dependent on the man. Despite falling in love with Chandragupta, she marries Ramgupta without any opposition. She accepts this situation and tries to adapt herself to the situation. But she is never able to accept Ramgupta from her heart. When Ram agrees to accept the secret treaty proposal and send Dhruvaswamini to him, Dhruvaswamini is heartbroken. She pleads with him again and again but Ramgupta rejects this too. Then she says- "Nothing, I just want to say that men have made it a practice to oppress women by considering them as their animal property, that cannot go with me. If you can't protect me, if you can't save your family dignity and woman's pride, then you can't even sell me." She further says- "I am not an object to be gifted, a cold gem. I have the liquid redness of blood. My heart is warm and there is a light of self-respect in it." When Ramgupta rejects the request of Dhruvaswamini, then these expressions burst from his heart. The feeling of protest within her becomes vocal but due to depression she gets ready to commit suicide.

Reading Dhruvaswamini's dialogues, one gets the impression that she is extremely practical and intelligent. He is very practical about life. She keeps the feelings of her heart hidden. She does not easily express her feelings in front of everyone. In Shakraj's camp, she uses her intelligence and helps Chandragupta to kill him. Due to her intelligence, she takes the people and all the feudal lords on her side. She also argues

with the religious leader and leaves him speechless.

Along with Dhruvaswamini, Prasad has also thrown light on many women's problems. In the story, Dhruvaswamini is conscious about her self-pride. This feeling is so strong inside her that even after marrying Ramgupta, she never accepts him because her soul never allows her to do so. To protect her self-respect, she first appeals to Ramgupta but later stands up herself. In the play, Dhruvaswamini is sometimes seen as a helpless woman and sometimes she is seen adopting a strong stance against injustice and oppression. She also condemns Ramgupta by calling him coward and weak.

Chandragupta

Chandragupta is the main hero of the play. His character has all the qualities of a hero. By nature, he is brave, dutiful and brave. Chandragupta's blood boils when Ramgupta agrees to send Dhruvaswamini to Shakraj's camp. He very fearlessly opposes this decision of Ramgupta. And not only this, he also gets ready to sacrifice his life to protect Dhruvaswamini.

Apart from being brave and valiant, Chandragupta is also patient, discriminating, kind and charitable making him even greater. He tolerates atrocities committed against himself but never tolerates atrocities committed against his own people. For the sake of dignity of the clan, he accepted the marriage of Dhruvaswamini and Ramgupta, but he did not accept at all the sending of Dhruvaswamini to Shakraj's camp. That is why he rebels against Ramgupta.

Another quality prominent in Chandragupta is sacrifice and contemplation. When Emperor Samudragupta declares Chandragupta as the future emperor, but after his death, Ramgupta takes over the power of the state. On this occasion, Chandragupta happily hands over his kingdom to Ramgupta. Thus, Chandragupta emerges as the best hero among male characters. Had Chandragupta not been there in the story, perhaps Dhruvaswamini would not have been able to be vocal to protect her independence and self-respect.

Ramgupta

Ramgupta is the main male character of this drama. Most of Dhruvaswamini's questions are related to Ramgupta. Ramgupta's character is weak, incompetent, cowardly and lustful. Many characteristics related to Ramgupta come to the fore in the play. Like he is a drunkard, neglectful towards his wife and inhuman and luxurious. Even when Ramgupta interacts with other characters, many things come to light. Like his nature is suspicious. He always has this suspicion that Dhruvaswamini loves Chandragupta.



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Like his dialogue is- "The woman who lives under someone else's rule and loves any other man must have a deep and wide-ranging passion in her, but not the same one who would love Chandragupta. Who knows when that woman might get hurt? Who knows how many evil circles will start revolving within. Ramgupta is not brave and courageous, that is why instead of fighting and putting his life in danger, he is ready to hand over Dhruvasvamini and feudal wives to Shakraj.

Shakraj

Shakraj Dhruvasvamini is a minor but major character in the play. He appears in the second act. Due to its presence, there is a conflict in the plot of the play. Shakraj is a foreign ruler. He has come from Shaka country. He is a self-willed, ill-mannered and barbaric person by nature. Shakraj is a skilled warrior in warfare and also a skilled ruler. He surrounds Ramagupta's camp and blocks the path of his opponents by blocking the mountain path. In this way he defeats Ramgupta.

Mihirdev

Mihirdev appears in the play as a real religious leader, affectionate, a seer of the future, self-respecting and of high character. He is against deceit, fraud, injustice and oppression in politics. When Shakraj, corrupted by his position, sends Dhruvasvamini's proposal, then Mihirdev tells Shakraj not to lose his hands on politics for the sake of politics, which has a wide connection with the human world. By achieving success in ordinary events of politics, you can consider yourself clever for a moment. You may make a mistake of understanding. Heavenly light resides between two loving hearts. Mihirdev is also the father of Koma. Koma is his daughter. He loves Koma more than life. Jaishankar Prasad has planned this character as a visionary of the future. Shakraj wants to ignore his daughter and make Dhruvasvamini his own. Mihirdev expresses his disagreement on this immoral policy of Shakraj.

Koma

Koma represents the stereotypical traditional form of an Indian woman for whom her husband is the only purpose of life. There is no one else in the world except the husband. Koma is a combination of tenderness and sentimentality. His entire love is based on emotions only. His mind cannot see atrocities on anyone. Shakraj's harshness and cruelty towards him is also unbearable. He is very cool by nature. His heart is soft. Koma appears in the play as an ideal girlfriend with a generous heart. He has inherited intelligence and thinking. At the heart of Koma is generosity and concern for humanity. He has love in his heart for other women. Despite not worrying about herself, she

opposes Shakraj for Dhruvaswamini. She is prudent, fearless, ascetic, peace-loving and of sacrificial nature.

Mandakini

Mandakini is the third and important female character. Although he is not so important in the main story but still it is necessary to discuss him. Mandakini is discreet. With her intelligence she can easily understand even the most complex situations. He is also fearless. She is not afraid to speak truth and justice even if there is a king in front of her. In the last scene of the play, she rebukes Ramgupta for his despicable act in front of the State Council. She says- "The fear of the king cannot strangle Mandakini. If you people had any sense, you would not have sent your family member of dignity to the enemy's fort like this.

The spirit of service is also very strong in Mandakini. Despite adverse circumstances, she remains engaged in the journey of taking Chandragupta to Dhruvaswamini. Mandakini strongly opposes the conservative view of religious scriptures, injustice and weakness of women. Throughout the play she is seen raising her voice to protect women's rights. His dialogues express the oppression of women, their cries and compassion. There is a feeling of rebellion in his mind for the religious scriptures. According to him, religious scriptures are the main reason for the miserable condition of women.

12.5 DHRUVASWAMINI'S DRAMATIC STYLE

We get all the information about any character from the text of the play. Often writers present details about characters in their play. These details are made the basis for characterisation. From this we come to know about the character's appearance, colour, costume, nature etc. There is another way to know and understand the characters, in which we get a lot of information about the character from the dialogues spoken by him. The work done by them reveals their inner self. Jaishankar Prasad has presented the characters independently in his plays. In the plays written before him, the characters were often of divine and demonic nature and sometimes reflected the playwright's own point of view. Jaishankar Prasad has rejected such stereotypical characters. The characters used in his plays express their personal self. They are free and there is no charge of any kind on them. Like in Dhruvaswamini, Dhruvaswamini and Chandragupta are independent in themselves and the anti-hero or villain of the same play, Ramgupta and Shakraj, are completely different characters.



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The specialty of Prasad's plays is that they have an entertaining coordination of both history and imagination. He also brings the characters to life with historical events and reflects the present times through these historical events. Jaishankar Prasad has been a romanticist poet. Some important qualities are visible in his characters. Such as feeling of self-pride and self-respect, women empowerment, feeling of freedom and equality of women as well as romanticism of love and beauty. That is why his plays are not only called historical plays but also called historical romantic plays because he is seen making a thrilling impact on the present through the characters of history.

The plays written before Dhruvasvamini have some variation in craft. There are only three acts in this play and there are not many scenes. In previous plays, Jaishankar Prasad did not make maximum use of ranga symbols, but in Dhruvasvamini, he uses ranga symbols in abundance. Unlike earlier plays, there is no laxity in the tightness of Dhruvasvamini. He has skilfully molded the plot into the craft of drama. All the earlier plays are romantic in outlook but Dhruvasvamini is half romantic and half realistic play.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 12.3**

1. What qualities are seen in the characters of the play Dhruvasvamini?
2. What is the specialty of Prasad's plays?
3. What is the specialty of Prasad's character?
4. What is the difference between Dhruvasvamini as compared to earlier plays?
5. What nature of drama is Dhruvasvamini?

**WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNT**

- Dhruvasvamini is the last dramatic creation of Jaishankar Prasad.
- Dhruvasvamini was published in the year 1933.
- The main basis of the play Dhruvasvamini is a historical story in which Samudragupta, Chandragupta and Ramgupta are the main characters. The only mention in this story is that Chandragupta ascended the throne after killing Ramgupta, but why he did so is unknown. Prasad has made this question the basis of his imagination.

- Dhruvasvamini There are three female characters in the play Dhruvasvamini, Mandakini and Koma. The male characters are Ramgupta, Chandragupta, Shikharswami, Shakraj, Khigil, Mihir Dev and Purohit.
- The heroine of the play is the female character Dhruvsvamini. This is a drama of historical nature. The plot of the play is related to the Gupta period.
- There are only 3 acts in this play and there are not many scenes.
- In Dhruvasvamini, Prasad uses color cues extensively.
- Chandragupta is the main hero of the drama. His character has all the qualities of a hero. By nature he is brave, dutiful and brave.
- Most of Dhruvasvamini's questions are related to Ramgupta. Ramgupta's character is weak, incompetent, cowardly and lustful.
- Koma represents the stereotypical traditional image of an Indian woman for whom husband is the only purpose of life. There is no one else in the world except the husband. Koma is a combination of tenderness and sentimentality.
- The roots of the story of this play can be seen in the Sanskrit play 'Devi Chandragupta' written by Visakhadutta. Through this play, Prasad has drawn the attention of the audience and readers towards history in its present time. They try to project India's present through its glorious past and national consciousness.



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TERMINAL EXERCISE

1. What is the importance of Dhruvasvamini in the series of Sanskrit drama writings?
2. Tell us about the basic story of the play Dhruvasvamini?
3. Tell about the naming of Dhruvasvamini?
4. Tell about the application of Dhruvasvamini?



ANSWERS TO INTEXT QUESTIONS

12.1

1. In 1933

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2. There are three acts in the play Dhruvaswamini.
3. Gupta period
4. Devi Chandragupta
5. To draw the attention of readers and viewers from the past to the present.

18.2

1. Ramgupta is in anger regarding the love affair between Dhruvaswamini and Chandragupta.
2. Shakraj has sent a proposal for a treaty and in this proposal he has demanded Dhruvaswamini for himself and the wives of the feudal lords of the Gupta Empire for his feudal lords. If this proposal is not accepted then he will attack the Gupta Empire and destroy everything.
3. Koma is the lover of Sha Karaj.
4. The incident in the second act takes place in Shakraj's camp.
5. In anger, Ramgupta attacks Chandragupta deceitfully but then a feudal lord sees him and kills Ramgupta.
6. Dhruvaswamini liked Chandragupta but Ramgupta forcibly married her.
7. At the end of the play, Dhruvaswamini and Chandragupta get married.

12.3

1. Some important qualities are visible in the characters. Such as feeling of self-pride and self-respect, women empowerment, feeling of freedom and equality of women as well as romanticism of love and beauty.
2. What is the winner of Prasad's plays?
3. The specialty of Prasad's plays is that they have an entertaining coordination of both history and imagination. He also enlivens the story with historical events and reflects the present times through these historical events.
4. In previous plays, Jaishankar Prasad did not make maximum use of color symbols, but in Dhruvaswamini, he uses color symbols in abundance.
5. Dhruvaswamini is a romantic and realistic play.