

MEMORY, METAPHOR AND MYSTICISM IN KĀLIDĀSA'S ABHIJÑĀNAŚĀKUNTALAM. By Namrata Chaturvedi (Ed.). London: Anthem Press, 2020. 252 pp.

The book *Memory, Metaphor and Mysticism in Kālidāsa's Abhijñānaśākuntalam*, edited by Namrata Chaturvedi, locates Kālidāsa's *Abhijñānaśākuntalam* in a dialogic terrain to understand this literary masterpiece from various vantage points. The collection of essays in this volume also demolishes the traditional binary-based conception of the play that it is either a Hindu text or a simple love story narrated in an exotic oriental setting. One can say for certain that the book is definitely a sign of hope in the current academic context where classical literature and literary studies are often invoked either to criticize them blindly or to valorize them in an uncritical manner. Chaturvedi does not fall into this trap which a native scholar can easily get into. The current volume of essays deftly problematizes Kālidāsa's *Abhijñānaśākuntalam* with great academic rigor, and does not treat the play in the same old cavalier fashion in which the text is usually dealt with.

The book is divided into four sections which deal with four broad aspects of the play, the aesthetics and philosophy of the text, the reception of the text through commentaries, the aesthetics and politics of translation and finally its performance on the stage. The essays under these broadheads not only answer the questions that they take up, but also pose newer questions for scholars in this field to explore in the future. The first section—Meter, Structure and *Dhvani*—delves deep into the philosophical and aesthetic significance of the play in a manner hitherto unexplored. This is also an attempt to restore the play in its actual aesthetic and philosophical contexts. The essays in this section are contributed by scholars such as Ramkishor Maholia, Sheldon Pollock, H. S. Shivaprakash and Namrata Chaturvedi, and Felix Wilfred. Ramkishor Maholia throws light into the philosophical and spiritual significance of the metaphors used by Kālidāsa in *Abhijñānaśākuntalam*, and convincingly argues that Kālidāsa's choice of specific figures of speech and poetic meter is not random or accidental, but clearly planned and meditated so as to enhance the message he intends to convey through his verse. Pollock's article "What Happens in Śākuntalā: Conceptual and Formal Symmetries" is a powerful rejoinder to the reductionist moral reading of *Abhijñānaśākuntalam* made by orientalists through the reductionist lens of fate and chastity. H. S. Shivaprakash and Namrata Chaturvedi examine the poetic and theological resonance of Kashmir Śaiva tradition in *Abhijñānaśākuntalam* and brilliantly investigate the presence of the *shaivite* idea of recognition (*pratyabhijñā*) in the play. Felix Wilfred's article finds the thematic and poetic parallels between the *Bible* and *Abhijñānaśākuntalam* by analyzing the story of Hagar and the aesthetically brilliant Song of Songs vis-a-vis *Abhijñānaśākuntalam*.

The second section titled 'Commentaries and Criticisms' showcases the multifaceted manner in which the play *Abhijñānaśākuntalam* is received in various spatio-temporal locations through a thorough exploration of the commentaries on the play. This section contains essays by Wagish Shukla, Radhavallabh Tripathi, Godabarisha Mishra. Wagish Shukla explores the political and social significance of the *gāndharva* style of marriage between Duśyanta and Śākuntalā, and relates it to other forms of marriage found in texts like *Mahābhārata*. Considering the thematic specialty of Shukla's article, this would have been better suited in the previous section. Radhavallabh Tripathi takes us through the highlights of the major commentaries on *Abhijñānaśākuntalam* with a view to understanding the different reception of the same text in various cultural and temporal locations. Godabarisha Mishra's essay explores in detail *Sārāthadīpikā*, an *advaita* commentary of *Abhijñānaśākuntalam* where Parīkṣittu Tampurān, the king of Kochin, looks at Duśyanta through the paradigm of Advaita Vedānta.

The third section—'Varied Grammars of Love'—which includes essays by Sunil Sharma, Khalid Alvi and Gokul Sinha explores the politics and aesthetics of the various translations of *Abhijñānaśākuntalam*. Sunil Sharma critically analyzes the four Persian translations of *Abhijñānaśākuntalam* brought out in the twentieth century. Khalid Alvi talks about *Abhijñānaśākuntalam* in the Hindustani tradition by analyzing the poetic and dramatic translations of the play in Urdu in the nineteenth and mid-twentieth century. Gokul Sinha engages with the famous Nepali poet Laxmi Prasad Devakota's three translations of the play—two in Nepali and one in English—and answers the question why the great poet Devakota produced three translations of the same text. Sinha article also becomes a detailed investigation into the creative minds of these two great minds.

As we all know a drama is primarily meant to be staged. The last section of the book, 'On the Stage Personal Engagements with a Lived Tradition,' is a powerful engagement with the experience of actors who staged *Abhijñānaśākuntalam*. The two essays in this section are contributed by the two veteran actor scholars—Kamalesh Dutt Tripathi and J. Sreenivas Murthy. Kamalesh Dutt's article gives the readers a good glimpse into his life-long engagement with the text and challenges he faced while staging it for a modern audience. Murthy's essay deals with his experience of having engaged with the play in the classroom and on the stage. It shows how differently, yet uniquely, he dealt with the text both as a teacher and an artist. The essay which is interspersed with personal accounts also gives the readers an account of the pedagogical challenges and innovations one has to make to teach the drama in a classroom.

By looking at the same author and text from multiple vantage points, the book reterritorializes the traditional canonical boundaries set for reading *Śākuntalam*. Lucidly written and academically rigorous, Chaturvedi's book will certainly be an asset to the existing scholarship on Kālidāsa.

SREENATH V. S.

Department of Humanities and Social Sciences  
Indian Institute of Science Education and Research, Bhopal

TARUṆYAŚATAKAM OF KSHIROD CHANDRA DASH. By Subhasree Dash. New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2021, 391 pp.

**N**oted Sanskrit poet and professor Kshirod Chandra Dash's *Taruṇyaśatakam*, first published in 1991, is a collection of 102 independent metrical Sanskrit stanzas in six chapters on youth, beauty, and love. The present work is a translation in English and Odia by Subhasree Dash, a third translation in Hindi by Ajaya Kumar Patnaik, along with a *Prakāśikā* Sanskrit commentary by Braja Kishore Nayak.

The stanzas in *Taruṇyaśatakam* narrate a love story in verse form with jubilation and passion. They offer a miniscule account addressing exquisite moments and delicate facets of life in a light-hearted manner and portrays the central theme of love beautifully. The application of Puranic allusions, soliloquies, and epigrammatic expressions treats the poetic moods and events with sympathy and sensitivity. The connecting thread of *śṛṅgāra*/ semblance of *śṛṅgāra* presents a wreath of one hundred and two lyrical blooms, each with its distinguished glow, evoking the spirit of humour and mirth that unfolds romantic mood and communicates joy at leisure. Each stanza has a title of its own in Sanskrit with its English substitute that highlight the central theme of love inherent in it.

The first chapter of this book presents the background and theme of the work, the place of lyric in Sanskrit literary tradition, the objectives of the study, the Indian approach to poetry, and