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Adherence to the *Dharma* for Environmental Harmony in K lid sa's
Abhijn nas kuntalam

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the Degree of Master of Arts in English

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Letter of Recommendation

Laxmi Prasad Kandel has completed his thesis entitled “**Adherence to the Dharma for Environmental Harmony in K lid sa’s *Abhijn nas kuntalam*”**, under my supervision. I recommend this thesis be submitted for *viva-voce*.

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Letter of Approval

The thesis entitled “**Adherence the *Dharma* for Environmental Harmony in K lid sa’s *Abhijn nas kuntalam*”** Submitted to the Central Department of English, T. U by Laxmi Prasad Kandel has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research committee.

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Abstract

This research explores the concept of harmony in universe between creations of nature embedded in Hinduism. It investigates the righteous deeds from human domain to the entire natural realm. It takes references about righteousness from Hindu holy scriptures like *Vedas*, *Mah bh rata*, *Bh gvadgeet* , *Upanishad s*, *Ramayana* and a few other Hindu texts. It shows the connection between life, actions and deeds of Kalidas 's characters of play with the doctrines in such texts, and finally it figures out the meaning of *dharma* in human life. Kalidas 's play *Abhijn nas kuntalam* expresses Hindu ideals for jovial coexistence between human and nature. The setting, characters, both human and nonhuman, and the entire plot of the play convey the message of harmony and assume the world an extended family. The heroine, Śakuntal , adheres to the concept of *vasudhaiva kutumbakam* (extended family) in the play. She moves within the frame of *dharma* with this concept to maintain affinity with natural phenomena. She expresses compassion to all the natural entities, and, therefore, her every deed moves on the ground of *dharma*. Similarly, the male protagonist, Dushyanta also learns to develop compassion towards animals after being in contact with Śakuntal .

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I. *Dharma* in Hinduism and Nature in Sanskrit Literature

Adveṣṭa sarbabh t naṁ maitraḥ karuṇa eva ca

nirmamo nirhankaraḥ samaduḥkhasukhaḥ kṣami

santustaḥ satataṁ yogi yat tm dṛḍhaniścayaḥ

mayyarpitamanobuddhiryo madbhaktaḥ sa me priyaḥ (Bh gvadgeet ,

12. 13, 14)

One who has no ill-will to anyone, who is friendly and compassionate, free from egoism and sense of self, balanced in pain and pleasure, patient, the yogi who is always content, having control over himself, determined, with a mind and understanding devoted to Me —is dear to me.

While speaking on *dharma* with Arjun in the context of pure devotee Lord Krishna highlights the qualities of a *bhakta* (devotee). Krishna demands the foremost qualities; love, compassion, kindness, reverence, free from ill-will, and helpfulness. With these qualities a human can be a *dharmic* devotee for Lord Krishna. *Dharma* refers to the righteousness. *Ahimsa* (non-violence), good conduct, and compassion are the basic foundations of righteousness as *Mah bh rata* states *ahimsa paramo dharma* non-violence is the supreme form of righteousness (*Mah bh rata* 13.115.13).

Mah bh rata claims the adherence of *dharma* leads to the betterment of universe, *dharanat dharma etyahu dharmo dharayati praja* righteousness is that nurture the subjects and in turn the society (*Mah bh rata* 12.109.11). It further puts *aanishasyam parodharma* the compassion itself is ultimate righteousness (*Mah bh rata* 3.373.76).

In addition, *Manusmriti* advocates *aachara: paramo dharma* good conduct is the supreme righteousness (*Manusmriti* 1.108). Implementing such spirit in life and respecting to all *bhhutas* (entities) of the nature is to adhering *dharma* in life.

Therefore, a widely recited Sanskrit *sloka* condenses the eighteenth *puranas* by answering what is *punya* (merits) and what is *papa* (demerits). It states:

Astadasa puranesu byasaya bachandyam

Paropakaraya punyaya papaya parapidanam

In eighteen Puranas, Byasa mainly deals with the two points: helping other is gaining *punya* (merit), and harming other is gaining *paapa* (demerit). (Dwebedi P. 32)

Merits stand for *dharma* (righteousness), demerits stand for *adharma* (unrighteousness). In the same sense this stanza reveals the eighteen *purana's* meaning as benevolence with merit and malevolence with demerit. Benevolence is regarded as the primary weapon to adhere the *dharma* in life. With this concept of faith as universal law of nature, both, human and non-human including the natural substances of the play *Abhijn nas kuntalam* by K lid sa follow the lane of *dharma*. It is *dharma* as Hinduism instructs human being in life which lead of universe. Hindu *dharma* is known as *Vaidika Dharma*, meaning “religion of the Vedas”, the ancient Hindu scriptures. The original name of Hindu dharma is *San tana Dharma*, or “universal religion.” Although it is difficult to translate the complete meaning of *dharma*, the *Mah bh rata* defines the common usage of the term “dharma” as following:

Dharma exists for the general welfare (*abhyudaya*) of all living beings; hence, that by which the welfare of all living creatures is sustained, that for sure is dharma. (*Shantiparva* 109.10)

Peace and harmony ultimately lead to the welfare in universe which is the fundamental doctrine of *dharma*. It focuses for the happiness of every being in the universe. It is believed in eastern Hindu philosophy that when the values of *dharma*

are drowned then a God will come in this world and protect it. Therefore, Krishna in the course of instructing the *dharma* with Arjuna states:

Yad yad hi dharmasya gl nirbhawati bh rata

Abhutth naadharmasya tad tm narñ srj myaham

Paritr ñ ya s dhun rñ vin ś ya ca duşkrit m

Dharmasamsth pnarth ya sambhav mi yuge yuge

Whenever there is a deterioration of Righteousness (*Dharma*) and unrighteousness (*adharma*) reaches the zenith, I assume an incarnation

(*Bh gvadgeet* 4.7, 8)

Lord Krishna declares so because his entire discourses in myth of *Mahabharata* leads towards the victory of virtue over vices. *Dharma* focuses for unity and integrity as the basic constituents for harmony. There are numbers of interconnections between human and nature which should be understood in proper way for the establishment of harmony. To identify with such bond in proper way is primary duties of human in life. By focusing to understand the responsibilities and relationship between the creatures Dwivedi defines:

Dharma can be considered an ethos, a set of duties that holds the social and moral fabric together by maintaining order in society, building individual and group character, and giving rise to harmony and understanding in our relationships with all of God's creation. (13)

The main rationale of the *dharma* is to establish and preserve the order, peace and harmony in the society. It is the duty of human being. When it is shadowed by other human's unrighteousness activities then the world falls in to the crisis. Generally, it is assumed that the deeds which human perform in the worldly life are the credits for

gaining merits. Good deeds never die. They remain forever. It is a widely accepted belief in the Hindu world view as Amma Raj Joshi writes:

The body dies and years pass

Virtuous deeds remain and multiply

[.....]

Body is just a means to perform meaningful deeds. (69)

Worldly affairs and pleasure are temporary. The body is ephemeral. The time never waits but *satkarma* (meaningful deeds) remains always same and goes for reproduce which play vital role to keep peace and harmony in the life and world itself.

Duty toward humanity and God's creation is an integral part of Hindu ecology and *dharma*. Humanity means not only the issues concerned with the human being rather it is the issues or responsibilities of human concerned with any types of phenomena or all the creatures of the world. Its main goal is to involve for the betterment of all other beings. In humanity, good deeds are the primary things. Those who perform the humanly behavior to all— including living and non- living, are the perfect followers of *dharma*. While all other species conduct themselves according to the *dharma* of their kind, only human beings, because of free will, think that they are very powerful and act in an *adharmic* manner. Such acts are to be avoided, a *rishi* Markandeya says in *Mah bh rata* during a conversation with Pandavas:

O king, all creatures act according to the laws of their specific species as laid down by the Creator. Therefore, none should act unrighteously (*adharma*) , thinking, "It is I who is powerful." (*Karnaparva* 13.108)

Dharma also tells human about how to treat plants, animals, and the earth so as to achieve an ecological balance in this universe. First of all, Dharma requires that one considers the entire universe an extended family with all living and non-living beings

in the universe as members of the same household. Only by considering the entire universe as a part of one's extended family can one develop the necessary maturity and respect and compassion for all other living beings. It is a perfect adherence of *dharma* stated in the Hindu mythologies which is followed the modern school of ecocriticism as Pankaj Jain claims "the traditional Hindu notion of dharma is naturally extendable to include the modern notion of ecological order and balance" (252).

Earth is seen as the abode of a family of all beings. The concept of *Vasudhaiva kutumbakam* (*Hitopadesha* 1.3.71) is one of the prominent ideals for human described in the Hindu tradition. *Vasudha* means "this earth," and *kutumba* means "extended family." Every entity and organism is a part of one large extended family system presided over by the eternal Mother Earth. The earth is treated as the mother in the Hindu text. Mother Earth supports its creations with her abundant endowments and riches. When she angered by the misdeeds of her children, Mother Earth would punish them with serious natural disasters. Therefore, for the betterment from the behalf of the Mother Earth which establishes the happiness to all creatures, *Atharva Veda* puts:

O Mother Earth! Sacred are thy hills, snowy mountains, and deep forests. Be kind to us and bestow upon us happiness. May you be fertile, arable, and nourisher of all. May you continue supporting people of all races and nations. May you protect us from your anger (natural disasters). And may no one exploit and subjugate your children. (12.1.11)

With the concept of regarding the earth as an extended family, Hindus develop intimacy with all the other living beings. With this concept in mind Hindus do not harm to those who have such close relationship with them. In this way, peace can be

fully realized and harmony can be found between humans and nature in such bond.

When thinking of the environment as their home and all of its members as our family, humans know that conserving nature needs devotion, love, and respect. Therefore, stressing for the friendly affiliation between Earth and human, *Atharva Veda* advocates:

O Mother Earth! You are the world for us and we are your children; let us speak in one accord, let us come together so that we live in peace and harmony, and let us be cordial and gracious in our relationship with other human beings. (12. 1. 16)

Unity of *Atman* and *Brahman* is one of the parts of *dharma*. This concord between the self and the exterior phenomena; like earth and creations available in it, is an integral part of *dharma*. The realization of the unity between them enhances the ability to follow the *dharma* in perfect way. It is an underlying philosophical idea of the play *Abhijn nas kuntalam*. *Atman* means self and *Brahman* can be nature. Only when *atman* and *Brahman* is united an individual can connect his/her spirits with the exterior world. It is a Hindu philosophical belief. In other words, that external *Brahman* and inner *atman* are ultimately the same which unites humans with the external natural environment from which humans get knowledge and life source.

The Upanishads, collections of philosophical texts from the theoretical basis for the Hindu religion, stand for the significance of integration of humans and nature. Only by blending ourselves into nature we can enhance our spiritual life in such a material world. Therefore, instead of transcending nature, it is suggested that human can be integrated into nature, that human show respect for nature, and human and nature are interdependent. It is a concept to live with nature not living against nature. Ranking upon the light of such beliefs expressed in the Hindu texts, traditions, rituals,

and ceremonies, this research will explore the K lid sa's application of *dharma* in the play *Abhijn nas kuntalam*.

The birth date of poet cannot be determined with precision, but it widely said by the scholars and the historians that he most likely falls within the Gupta period. It is mentioned that K lidas was a contemporary and a court-poet of king Vikram ditya. It is difficult to get the consensus about the tenure of Vikram ditya, however a widely accepted one is the sixth century A.D. in the Indian History.

A legend says the poet was known for his beauty which brought him to the attention of a princess who married him. However, K lid sa had grown up without much education, and the princess was ashamed of his ignorance and coarseness. A devoted worshipper of the goddess *Kali*, K lid sa called upon his goddess for help and was rewarded with a sudden and extraordinary gift of the wit. He is then said to have become the most brilliant of the nine *gems* at the court of the fabulous king Vikramaditya of Ujjaini. In that sense all the claims about the date are just the speculations made depending upon the works of art he wrote which also includes the Indian geographical description as M. R. Kale elaborates:

Little is known about the K lid sa's life and what we get about his is only the conjecture made from his writing. According to the speculation of the scholars, that K lid sa may have lived either near the Himalayas or in the vicinity of Ujjain. The two speculations are based respectively on K lid sa's detailed description of the Himalayas in his *Kumarasambhava* and the display of love for Ujjaini in *Meghaduta*. (15)

K lid sa is often called as a nature's poet. His devotion to nature rose to the height of a spiritual reverence and attained the sublimity of a *dharmic* conviction. To

look at his work of art K lid sa stands for an aesthetic and spiritual oneness experienced by the realization of the essential unity of the beauty, truth and joy of human's inner being with the beauty, truth and joy of nature. In the same line, the English romantic poet, Wordsworth, once expressed the regret that he was not born a pagan, so that he may worship the beautiful aspects of nature in the true spirit of heathen devotion. It means to understand the nature in connection with own "self" is the perfect form of *dharma* for K lid sa and Wordsworth. They both regard nature in the place of God.

Great God, I'd rather be
A Pagan suckled in some creed outworn;
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn. (Wordsworth 928)

K lid sa, much more than even Wordsworth, is profoundly convinced of the divinity of nature. Instead of the conventional beginning of poems, adopted by Sanskrit writers, of an invocation to one's own *Iṣhta Devata* (god or goddess) he begins the *Kumarasambhava* by the solemn affirmation of the divinity of the Himalayas. His subject, style and the craft of expression sounds the poet was a devotee of *Shiva*. It is evident from his work as well as from legends about him as Barbara Stoler Miller claims, "The powerful images of nature that dominate his poetry and drama are ultimately determined by his conception of Shiva's creative mystery" (156). It also becomes clear in the doctrine of the Shiva's eight manifest forms (*aṣṭamurti*), which K lidas writes in the benediction of the *Abhijn nas kuntalam* which reveals that worshipping the elements and the powers of the nature such as air (vayu), water (varuna), sun (surya), moon (Chandra) and fire

(agni) is offering the reverential stage to those from which the creation of being is possible and this universe is operated.

The water that was first created
 The sacrifice-bearing fire, the priest
 The time-setting sun and moon,
 Auidable space that fills the Universe,
 What men call nature, the source of all seeds,
 The air that living creatures breathe-
 Through his eight embodies forms,
 May Lord come to bless you! (Act 1.1)

All eight elements which the poet invokes possess eight different qualities. Sky, water, fire, air, earth, sun, moon, and the sacrifice compose these visible phenomena. Wishing for the long-life of these elements is to wish for the long existence of every creation of the universe. In other word K lid sa's imploration for them is a biocentric appeal in itself. The poet links the power of nature with the avatar of *Shiva*. He puts *Shiva* as power of nature in most of his poetic creations. *Shiva* exists as in the form of unity among the creatures for him. He posits *Shiva* as the cosmic unity which posses all the powers of nature for the creation. In other word, for K lid sa *Shiva* is truth and truth is nature as said *satyam shivam sundara* truth is Shiva and Shiva is beautiful. It is said that he was a *Brahmana* by caste and was a devout worshipper of *Shiva*, though by no means of sectarian as Miller claims:

K lid sa's poetry and drama are influenced by Shiva's existence. Nature functions not as a setting or allegorical landscape but as a dynamic surface on which the unmanifest cosmic unity plays. This unity is Shiva; his creative nature is expressed through the eight

essential principles of empirical existence; the elements, (water, ether, earth, air, fire) the sun and the moon, and the ritual sacrifice, who is integrated into this cosmic system. In the sustained interplay of these basic constituents of nature, the creation and destruction of life occur. Shiva is present in each aspect of life and fulfills all the functions that the eight forms collectively perform. (7)

Shiva and the components of the life are similar in the understanding of the poet. He assumes all the natural forces needed for the creation, nourishment, and destruction are uniformly united in the existence of *Shiva*. The recycling process of life, death and the rebirth is the natural attributes of these constituents. Their integrated and cooperative relation makes possible for the life of every creature in earth.

Kalidasa's *Abhijnana Shaktuntalam*, an adaptation from an episode from *Adiparva* of *Mahabharata*, deals with the concept of *dharma* which focuses for the establishment of peace and harmony in the Universe. It projects an ideal bridge among the elements of nature. It is a love-drama, and it belongs to that class of *rupakas* which is known as the *nataka* in Sanskrit literature. It is a *nataka* in seven Acts, based on the well-known love-story of king Dushyanta and the maiden Śakuntalā, as given in the ancient epic *Mahabharata*, a mythical history. The entire story revolves around the effects of love, love between lover and beloved, human and animals. In broader sense, compassionate love between the creations of nature. The scene of the first four Acts is laid at Kanva's hermitage at the foot of the Himalayas, and later it shifts to the capital, Hastinapura for Acts five and six, and finally to Maricha's hermitage on the Hemakuta Mountain for Act seven.

This single play has so much of the poet's genius displayed in it that it is not necessary to go to his other works to establish the superiority of Kalidasa's muse. To

talk about the nomenclature *Abhijn nas kuntalm* it means the hereafter Śakuntal , in other word, later recognized Śakuntal . The word *abhijn na* in the title signifies ‘a token of recognition’ (here, a ring), which is instrumental in bringing about the final recognition of Śakuntal by the king Dushyanta.

Every love-drama in Sanskrit dramaturgy has certain remarkable features, and they are well exemplified in the *Abhijn nas kuntalm*. The temporary union, separation, and the reunion between the hero and the heroine can be taken as the most exemplified features of the play. The first three acts of the play facilitate the temporary union. The hunting expedition, which likes many other happy accidents, throws the hero and the heroine into each other’s path; the invitation of the hermits to Dushyanta for keeping guard in the hermitage for few days; and the ardent mutual love in its consummation, these are the three stages in the ascending order embodied in the three Acts. Then the descent begins. The departure between the hero and heroine leads play towards the climax. “It is a dictum of Sanskrit critic that there is no charm in love unless it is sweetened by separation” (Kale 50). Act four, five and six delineate this downward progress of separation. The curse of Durv sa , which is root cause of the whole misery occurs exactly in the prelude to the fourth Act. Its effect is seen in the fifth Act, when we find Dushyanta repudiating Śakuntal like a stranger. And we notice in the sixth Act all the consequences of the separation culminating in disappointments near the end of the Act which can be taken as the lowest point. Lastly the seventh Act reveals the sudden and unexpected rise. Dushyanta goes up not only to Indra against the demons, but also to regain the sacred Śakuntal in those high altitudes of Hemak ta Mountain which are ordinarily inaccessible to human beings.

In such skeleton of the story K lid sa fills ample muscles for its perfection

and presents an organically unique work of art which particularly deals with the issue of ecology by portraying the effect of love. The language of the drama exhibits all the graces of his style: it is highly elegant, poetic, being dignified where necessary; it abounds in striking and tasteful comparisons, it is sublime in the poetical portions without becoming obscure or involved, and presents a most charming easiness and simplicity in the dialogues without ever descending to vulgarity. In other words, to present the live animation of human and non humans in verbal artifact, the poet crafts the words very artistically. The meters are mostly of shorter kind, very musical and varied with the sonorous tune. *Sringara*, *vira* and *karuṇa* are the prominent *rās* (sentiment) through-out the play. Reflecting upon the elegance and graces of style, striking and breathtaking comparison, sublime poetical forms, simplicity of expression and the charming ease of language that make *Abhijnanas Kuntalam* truly canonical work of art as M.R. Kale posits, “This single play has so much of the poet’s genius displayed in it that we need not to go his other works to establish the superiority of Kalidasa’s muse” (52).

Expressing the uniqueness of *drama* and its essential charm realized by the generations of readers as well as audiences Kale quotes a memorable Sanskrit verse which comes very easily in the mouth of every Pandit while talking about this work of art.

Kabyesu natakam ramyam tatra ramyam Shakuntala

Tatrapī cha charthonkastatra slokachatustayam

Among *kavyas* the drama is the most charming. Among dramas the *Abhijnanas Kuntalam* is especially charming. Even there the fourth Act is the best. And lastly, four *slokas* therein are especially beautiful. (13)

This verse captures the theme and essential purpose of the *drama*. The four *slokas* of

the fourth act especially uphold ethics of environmental harmony which reveal the tone of biocentric unity among the creatures in nature.

To start with the German poet Goethe's words, that the *Abhijn nas kuntalm* blends together the young year's blossom and the fruits of its decline, that it combines heaven and earth in one. It provides an opportunity to the readers to experience the flower of youth and fruit of maturity in one place as an Indian poet, Rabindranath Tagore reads Goethe's analysis of the play:

Goethe that wise master in the line of European poets has written a critique of *Sakuntala* in a single stanza: he has not dissected the work. His stanza is brief, like the flame of the tiny earthen lamp; but like the flame of such a lamp, it lights up the whole to our view in an instant. He has put it in word by saying that if someone wishes to see the flower of youth and the fruit of maturity, to see in one place, he can do so in *Shakuntala*.

Many readers take this remark lightly, judging it to be a mere poetic effusion. They think it means simply that Goethe considers *Sakuntala* to be a highly delectable work. That is not so. Goethe's observation is not a hyperbolic expression of delight; it is the consider judgment of a connoisseur. There is something singular about it.

The poet has especially said that *Sakuntala* contains a strain of deep fulfillment: the fulfillment leading from flower to fruit, from earth to heaven, from nature to dharma. (Qtd in Das 237- 38)

The play contains the history of development; the rise of the flowers, the development of flowers into fruit, of earth into heaven, of matter into spirit. The unity from heavenly phenomena to earthly life, pleasure and sufferings portrayed in the play give

a true picture of humanity for the unity. Unity established not by any forceful assertion but through the rise of compassionate love among the creations of the nature. In other words, this drama leads the human consciousness from sadness to happiness and darkness to the light or from brutalization to civilization.

Although the ancient Hindu Scriptures did not use the term “ecology” but the available descriptions in the sacred texts, moral and ethical laws, traditions, rituals, celebrations, festivals, deal with a sort of representation for the cordial relationship within the elements of nature. Human is one of the creatures and the *samkhya darshana* claims that it is constituted from natural elements. The creation of human being is possible only because of nature. It does not mean that other than humans are constituted without nature. It rather means without nature there is no possibility of creation in the universe. Our body is result of the combination and correlation of natural substances as *Samkhya* world view claims. Saying as Hindu philosophy for the argument of *Samkhya darsana*, Berridle Keith puts:

Hindu principle of *Samkhya Philosophy* defines all things are out comes of Nature and finally merge in to the Nature. The five basic elements (*mahabhutas*) of the Universe are taken as the ingredients for the creation of everything. Earth, Fire, Air, Water, and Space are the basic constituents for the creation. (102-3)

Human being is the creation of nature. It is the child of nature. Wherever he may go he will always find himself in the lap of nature, from which man cannot escape. In the domain of literature too, it is quite difficult to find any country in which the poets have not drawn inspiration from nature. *Rigveda*, the primary book of the *Aryans*, openly declares that “it was on the slopes of the mountain and the confluences of the rivers that the mind of sages was animated with inspiration” (VII,

6. 28).

Hinduism asserts the quality in humans to see the entire world. In other word, *Samadarshana* (looking others as own-self) world view should be the way to live the life. It helps create the harmony in outer world. It focuses that at first there should be harmony in the interior world of an individual to get harmony in the entire world. This quality helps individual to be purified in the spiritual world. Such state of mind can truly understand the role and relations of the every substances of universe. The two *slokas* in sixth episode of the *Bh gvadgeet* particularly advocates for the similar world-view. It *Bh gvadgeet* stresses that a should dwell in harmony with all living and non-living things. In other words, all elements of nature should be looked with love, pity, mercy and peace. There should not be hatred for any one. And it is not possible unless assuming the self in other and other in the self. Therefore to Arjun in *Bh gvadgeet* Krishn says:

Sarva-bh ta-stham tm nam sarva-bh t ni

Īkṣate yoga- yukt tma sarvatra sama-darśanah

Yo m m pashyati sarbatra sarbam cha mayi pasyati

Tasyaham na pranasyami sa cha me na pranasyati (6. 29, 30)

He whose mind is restrained by Yoga beholds his own self dwelling within all beings and all beings dwelling within his own self, he sees the same self everywhere with an even eye. He who perceives me everywhere, and perceives all being in Me, I am never lost to him nor is he get lost to me.

The realizations of the connection between own spirit with the supreme spirit (the forces of nature) is the way to maintain equanimity in the mind. Spirit is there in every creature. Only those who can realize it practically can see the different manifestation of nature but the ultimate reality is the supreme power of nature. There

is no any possibility of existence without the existence of nature/God. Therefore, many Hindu texts teach the readers to respect nature properly.

Hinduism follows the pantheist world-view, where everything is taken in connection to the Brahman (supreme power). Nothing is strange from *brahma*. The unity of the *atman* and *brahma* is possible by regarding all things with the connection of divine power. By stressing the notion of assuming multiple gods in Hindu tradition and remembering the Vedanta's serious appeal for unity Sehgal explores:

The concept of pantheism appealed to them strongly, they saw Brahman everywhere and everything in Brahman and as Brahman. Nothing in the world is the alien to them. Union of hearts sprang from an awareness of the identity of human nature. Thus Vedanta has left the universal appeal for the unity of Man.(26)

Vedas, the sacred book of Hinduism, puts peace as the primary foundational elements in the universe. It makes clear that, for perfect peace there should be peace among all. The *Yajurveda* therefore, offers for harmonious co-existence of all spatiotemporal phenomena including entire living and non-living things:

Let there be peace in the heavens, the earth and atmosphere, in the water, the herbs, and the vegetation among the divine beings and in Brahman, the absolute reality. Let everything be at peace and in peace. Only then will we find peace. (36.17)

This hymn posits the possibility of perfect peace among the natural entities. From heaven to divine powers to the *brahma* to earthly entities; water, herbs, plants, animal are wished for peace. Without such establishment of peace, we cannot find the true within ourselves. It is an open offering for peace. Non violence and peace are interconnected things. *Ahimsa* (non-violence), a prominent focus of Hinduism stands

for the welfare of universe by underscoring the principle of peace. Krishna says Arjuna in *Bh gvadgeet* about *ahimsa* that human deeds should not be harmful or hurtful to the natural life of any beings. Only not-killing is not *ahimsa* but also not harming and not hurting the others peace and harmony for the sake of taste and enjoyment could be taken as the features of *ahimsa* and this notion of life ultimately leads towards the spread of love, kindness, order, freedom, compassion, and stability in life and society as well. In other words, such deeds of human drive towards the virtue based worlds as Krishna says to Arjuna in sixteenth episode of *Bh gvadgeet* :

Ahimsa satyam akrodhastyagah santir apaisunam

Daya bhutwsv alolutvam mardavam hrir acapalam (16.2)

Non-violence, truthfulness, freedom from anger, renunciation, tranquility, aversion to fault finding, compassion for all living beings, freedom from covetousness, gentleness, modesty and absence of fickleness.

On the light of *ahimsa* the harmony between nature and human is most focused part of the Hindu traditions, rituals and the *sastras*. An artist always presents the higher homage to nature and the natural elements whether they are living or non-living in the world. To maintain the harmony, there are several systems within Hindu system which show a perfect affinity between natural elements including all living beings and non-living things. It instructs that to collect the merits in life everything in this universe should be respected. It asserts non-violence as the primary manual to life. Non-violence strictly directs for not-killing and not harming others and not eating the flesh. Hindus believe that eating meat is not only detrimental to one's spiritual life, but also harmful to one's health and environment. It is assumed that by following it anyone can collect the merits, which helps not only in life but also after death.

Scriptures and all Hindu denominations speak clearly and forcefully on non-killing and vegetarianism. The roots of non-injury, non-killing and vegetarianism or the non-consumption of the meat are found in the *Vedas*, *dharma Sastras*, *Yoga Sutras*, and dozens of other sacred texts of Hinduism. By studying such practices in the Hindu tradition Schweitzer puts:

Ahimsa, ‘non-harming’, or ‘non-injury’ ranks among the foremost virtue of the Hindu ethical code, expressive of the sacredness of all life. In practice it means the relinquishing of all activities involving killing or the shedding of blood, and also abstinence from all animal flesh. In its most stringent form it implies living one’s life without doing any hurt, physical, mental, emotional or moral, to any sentient being. In Hindu practice it was primarily a means of acquiring merit (*punya*), a device for self promotion, a credit-earner in the treasuries of heaven. (80)

Basically Hindus assume that to go in the heaven after death they should store the merits in life. The easy way to collect the merit is to remain far from any kinds of harming and injuring other animals, plants and the like. By abandoning any type of activities which harm others Hindus practice non-violence. They hold vegetarianism as an ideal. There are three main reasons behind it; the principle of *ahimsa* (non-violence) applied to all living things (Tahtinen 107), the tendency to offer only “pure” (vegetarian) food to deity and then to receive back as *Prasad*, which usually means “a gracious gift, usually edible” (*Mah bh rata* 12.257) and the conviction that vegetarian food is advantageous to the mind and spiritual development. Therefore non-violence is the common concern of the Hindus.

Hindu’s concern for the welfare of other animals can be found in Indian

history, where they treat non-humans as human by concerning upon the health condition of animal. Instead of killing and eating the flesh of animal, they involve themselves in the health recovery of animals. Not only in ideals, in practice too, had earlier peoples built hospitals for the care of the animals, birds and even insects. Such institutions have survived through the centuries and are today known as *pinjrapol*. By concerning upon the health condition of the animals they involved themselves for the health recovery of the animals like sheep, goats, dogs, cats, birds, and other creatures. Foster quotes from an English traveler, Ralph Fitch, recording his travels in Bengal in the sixteenth century:

They have hospitals for sheep, goats, dogs, cats, birds and for all other living creatures. When they be old or lame they keep them until they die. If a man catch or buy any living thing in other places and bring it to them, they will give him money for it or other victual, and keep it in the hospitals or let it go. (24)

This type of activities of the people for animal reveals their practical involvement for the happiness of all as said in one of the *Santi-mantra* widely recited in Hindu tradition, which very clearly advocates in Sanskrit for the peace among all beings and for suffer free life for all:

Om Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah Sarve Shantu Nir-Aamayaah

Sarve Bhadraanni Pashyantu Maa Kashcidduhkhabhaagbhavet

Om Shaantih Shaantih Shaantih

Om, May All become Happy, May All become free from Illness.

May All see what is Auspicious, Let no one Suffer.

Om Peace, Peace, Peace. (Dwebidi P.18)

In many parts of the Hindu mythology several types of conversion of human

to the animal as *avatara* are described. Such type of description reveals the bond between the human and animal. Hindu myths in many places many times say that there is great role of animals to keep sustainable virtue in the world. Whether in the form of *vahana* or *avatara*, Hindu gods are linked with animalistic attributes for the betterment of the world. Even few earlier tribes were connected with animals. By studying the mutual bond in such notion of assuming animal as *vahana* or different manifestation of the God Walker puts:

Many Gods of Hindu Pantheon are associated with an animal *vahana* or vehicle. When Vishnu appeared on earth to save the world from some invincible demon he often came in an animal metamorphosis, the fish, tortoise, boar or lion, since it was only in this form that he could overcome the formidable tyrants. Several ancient tribes were totemically related to animals. (46-47)

Hindu myths interestingly state such system of animal as *vahana* especially in the case of Gods and Goddesses. One of the Myths related to the *Ganesha* claims a rat can easily carry the big stomached God who eats a lot and who is many times bigger than the rat in shape and weight. *Vahana* or the vehicles for them were not in fact human but they are portrayed no less than human in serving the virtue from the side of God. They have no human consciousness but their consciousness is no lesser than that of humans. By exploring this connected relation of animals with the God and Goddess B. N. Puri elaborates:

...prominent in legend and the literature are the peacock, the mount of *Sarasvati* and of *Kartikeya*; the parrot, the mount of *Kama*; the owl, mount of *Lakshmi*, the vulture, mount of *Sani*; the eagle, mount of *Vishnu*. The rat *vahana* of *Ganesha*. The goose or swan (*hamsa*) is the

vahana of Bramha. (147)

Hindu's tradition of worshipping the inanimate objects of nature can be taken as a practice of respecting biological phenomena. Inanimate substances such as stone, grass, plant, trees were used to be worshiped. There are four which they consider especially sacred, the *Salgrama stone*, *Darbha Grass*, the plant *Tulasi* and *Aswatta* or sacred *fig-tree*. Brahmins assume these things as the alteration of the Godly entities and they offer *puja* to them. In the significance of all these objects Dubois investigates:

Brahmins consider it to be a metamorphosis of Vishnu, and for this reason they offer daily sacrifices to it. It is a sort of fossilized shell, ammonite or nautilus, oval, striated, and ornamented with tree-like markings on the outside. The more there are of these tree-like markings, the more highly they revered. It is written in *Athrvya-Veda* that any Brahmin's house in which there is no *Salagrama* is to be considered as impure as a cemetery and the food which is prepared in it as unclean as a dog's vomit. (733-34)

Plants are used for a wide range of religious purposes in Hindu tradition. The curative virtue of plants was known to the Hindus from earliest times and their medicinal properties were praised in numerous hymns. A plant called *Tulasi*, is taken as the important life-affirming substance, and even in the last moment of the life *Bramins* put the body near it. They always pay higher reverence to it. *Tulasi* used to be planted in most of the *Bramin's* shelter in a particular place, *matha*. Not only people plant it they rather celebrate the marriage of this plant every year in its especial occasion. By reporting the importance of this plant, Dubois puts:

Brahmins consider it to be the wife of Vishnu, and revere it accordingly. *Puja* must be offered daily to it. When a Brahmin is dying

one of these plants is fetched and placed on a pedestal. After *puja* has been offered to it a bit of its root is placed in the mouth of the dying man, and the leaves are placed on his face, eyes, ears, and chest; he is taken sprinkled from head to foot with most Brahamins cultivate the plant in their houses, and offer it daily prayers and sacrifices. (734-35)

Using tree as the natural shelter by sages in their spiritual journey can be taken another respectful activities of the Hindus. Under their peaceful and inspiring influences sages sought enlightenment through the meditation. There are seven different species of trees which the Brhamins consider sacred and accordingly worship; but, strange to say, they are not those which produce the best fruits. No one is allowed to cut it down, log off its branches, and even pull off its leaves as it is an awful sacrilege, and quite unpardonable. They are linked with the God. People believe that such trees help wash-out their sins, and to ensure the happiness in the coming days. About sanctification of the tree (*peepal*) with God and its function in the traditions, Dubois writes:

It is consecrated to Vishnu; or rather it is Vishnu himself under the form of a tree *peepal*. such, then, are the kind of good works which Hindus perform in order to obtain in the pardon of their sins in this world and to ensure their happiness in the next; and such is the state of degradation to which the Bramins, so haughty, presumptuous, and infatuated with their own ideas and opinions, have reduced a nation which is really worthy of better thing. (738-39)

They worship because they call it *vriksha devata* 'tree- deity'. It is very pervasive in Hindu tradition. They believe that by worshiping them certain unwholesome deeds committed earlier can be washed out and the wished plan can be fulfilled in future. Similarly, Hindu world view assumes that plants and trees also have the competence

to experience the feelings. They also can enjoy the pain of wounds and pleasure of peace. Morgan gets such expression of *Manu*, the first man created by the *Bramhan*, “trees and plants are conscious and feel pleasure and pain” (106).

Similarly a tree called *Rudraksha*, has a very special importance whose berries are regarded as sacred and whose seeds are used by *Saivites* for making rosaries. It is also linked with God *Shiva*. It keeps its value according to the faces it has, and the less number of faces which contains keeps the higher value. Hindus try their best to keep it in their house. By exploring and presenting the structural details of word, its connection with divine power, and its significance in the Hindus myths and traditions Walker puts:

The word *Rudraksha*, ‘Rudra’s eye’ refers either to the third of the deity Siva, which sheds these seeds as tears when he contemplates the final destruction of the world. The *Rudraksha* seed has number of faces or sides, each one with especial significance. Those having one face are seldom found and only king are said to possess them. The two-faced seed represents the male and female principle and its possession confers *tantrik* powers; three faces represent the trident, of the three worlds; four the Vedas; the five-faced berry is the commonest and is sacred to *Hanumana* of the ‘Ramayana’ or the *Pandava* brothers of the *Mahabharata*, [. . .]. (217)

Viewing association of God and Goddess in certain trees and flowers is common in Hindu tradition. They pray it by assuming the incarnation of God and Goddess. Fergusson gets such system in this way “The *Bilva* and *deodar* with Shiva; the *Tulasi* with *Vishnu*; the lotus with *Lakshmi*; mango blossoms with *Kama*; the marigold with *Ganesh*” (Fergusson 49). It makes clear that praying to the attributes of

flowers and trees is also a religious practice and a system to see *atman* in all things which is the most fundamental thing for keeping harmony as in the sixth episode of *Bh gvadgeet* to Arjun Krishna says:

Yo m m pashyati sarbatra sarbam cha mayi pasyati

Tasyaham na pranasyami sa cha me na pranasyati (6.30)

Who sees me everywhere and everything sees in me, to him I am never lost he is not lost to me.

Like trees, another natural things are mountains which command higher reverential position in Hindu tradition. No doubt to say that mountains are beautiful and the source for water. In addition to that, it is also assumed that they are abode of the gods, auspicious sites for meditation, the roaming and meditating areas for the God *Shiva*. People pray mountains while bringing crops home because they wish for their crops as irreducible to be as the mountains in all seasons of years.

In this way, Hinduism follows the system of respect by praying to the natural entities of their surroundings. Such practices can be taken as an especial contribution for the preservation of environmental harmony on the one hand and for the purpose of collecting merits in life on the other. It could be taken as a bold biocentric move of Hinduism in the field of spirituality for the betterment of the universe. These practices and ideals of Hinduism teach humans that all forms of life are different manifestation of *Brahman*. We must therefore not be indifferent in the suffering of any creations of nature. It helps develop the compassion for human between themselves as well as other life forms and life less forms. It encourages for the protection of environment whether by praying or respecting. It is clear that the ritual and ceremonial practices in Hinduism develop an ecological awareness and great respect for natural world. These specific teachings on environmental matters such as “Do not cut trees, because they

remove pollution”(Rig Veda, 6.48.17). “Do not disturb the sky and do not pollute the atmosphere” (Yajur Veda 5.43). Destruction of forests is taken as destruction of the state, and reforestation an act of rebuilding the state and advancing its welfare.

Protection of animals is considered a sacred duty (*Charaksamhita*). These concepts, principles, traditions and practices which are of deep relevance to the study of the future of humanity and of the long-term perspectives are so essential to bring into the thought-frames of the present generation.

The story about the battle between virtue and vice, represented by Rama and Ravana respectively, is the magnificent Sanskrit text which also deals with the path of *dharma*. It is the first epic *aadikavya* by Valmiki in Sanskrit language. The interaction between human and elements of nature is quite evident throughout the epic. The very first instance which formed the source of the epic poem is the episode of Valmiki cursing a hunter who shot down a heron when it was in union with the female counterpart. The following verse from the mouth of Valmiki became the *first* verse to be composed by a man:

Maa Nishaada pratishtaam tvam agamah saashvatee samaah,

Yat Krauncha-mithunaad ekam avaadheeh kaama-mohitam

“O hunter! You will not live for long since you shot down the male one out of a pair of heron as it was making love.” (1.2.14 *Ramayana*)

This suggests the significance attached to the safeguarding of life of creatures in forest. None was entitled to kill any, bird or animal in the vicinity of the *tapovana* (penance groves). Forests are the most striking features of the land surface. During the Ramayana age there were dense forests e.g., *Chitrakoota*, *Naimishaaranya*, *Dandakaranya*, *Panchavati* etc. Remarkable importance was attached to the preservation of environment during the Ramayana period. The utility of forests was

realized by all. Great importance was attached to afforestation. In *Aranya Kanda* of *Ramayana* Shree Rama talks with the trees and birds while searching of Sita when she was kidnapped by the Rawana. He asks with trees, creepers and the animals about whether they saw Sita or not. In *Sundarakanda* of *Ramayana* there is a description of the destruction of the prestigious *Ashoka* Garden of Rawana by Hanuman which enraged the demon King. In the *YuddhaKanda*, there is the description of Hanumana bringing the *Sanjeevani*, a life reawakening herb from which Lakshmana was revived.

A myth related to the Sita in *Ramayana* also leaves room for us to sense the role of nature in the creation of humans. It is said that Sita took birth out of earth and finally she request the earth to accept her even when she was alive and the earth does so. By narrating the amazing scene of earth and Sita in the story of *Ramayana*, Laxmi Lal elaborates:

The earth opened up and from it rose a jeweled throne borne by four hooded serpents, their bodies gleaming the treasures of the underworld, their domain. Seated on the throne was the Madhavi herself, queen of flowers showered the pair with color and fragrance and the skies resounded with the blessing of the gods and celestials. The throne began to descend under the astonished eyes of the multitudes who had gathered there. The riven earth closed over it and over the earthly life of the Sita, queen of Ayodhya. The world and its all creatures stood still for a moment in silent tribute to injured innocence. (166)

The *Ramayana* thus provides vast and interesting information about nature in varieties. Living in conformity with nature is the way of the civilized and this was welcomed by all. Going against nature was considered unethical and unwholesome in any condition. The holy sages presented in the *epic* living in forests and meditating on the banks of rivers could be taken as proper reverer to the nature.

In another masterpiece of Kalidasa, *Meghduta*, through his persona, Yaksha, discovers the cloud as the friendly messenger which roams around tropical sky at the commencement of the monsoon, and moves with slow and solemn progression from the equatorial ocean to the snows of the Himalaya. Yakshya addresses the cloud and entrusts to it the message he yearns to dispatch to the absent object of his attachment. He describes the direction through which the cloud is to travel. Yakshya not only uses cloud as an option of human agency but also instructs it to do the activities like taking rest, drinking water, observing beautiful scenarios and beautiful women etc. as if the Cloud is the messenger like the human. Yakshya, in the fullness of his emotion, chats to the cloud for conveying his doleful message of love to his beloved in the distant city of Alak. For, according to the poet, true emotion which holds a person in its grip and transforms his whole nature, knows no difference between animate objects imbued with feelings and inanimate nature. Every human feeling or emotion, when it reaches the glory of its fullness and the acme of its perfection, becomes universalized and forms part of the nature of the universal spirit which pervades the whole of creation. The truth of this is well expressed in the *Bhagavadgeet* when speaking of the universalized soul of Suka. The sage Vyasa called aloud for his son in grief and the sound reverberated through-out the forest and found its echo in the trees of the forest. The poet, there, views man as the noblest work of God and as part of the same beautiful fabric of nature, and feels convinced that man's heart beats always in unison with the heart of nature.

In conclusion, nature is derived not to exploit but to respect in Sanskrit literature. The lively representations of the natural entities are involved for the betterment of universe. In reality it is not possible to talk with trees for a man but the literary world of Sanskrit talks with many natural entities which could not produce any language verbally. In this way, nature is properly represented or treated by the Sanskrit artist in their work of art in other word protecting the nature is protecting the *dharma* in the life which protects and promotes the virtues in the world.

Abhijn nas kuntalm follows the *dharmic* concept of the unity between the creations of nature. Man's relation to nature in *K lid sa* is an aesthetic and spiritual oneness experienced by the realization of the essential unity of the beauty, truth and joy of man's inner being with the beauty, truth and joy of nature. In the play on the one hand, by regarding the creepers as her sisters and the animals as her children, Śakuntal demonstrates an ideal that humans and nature can live in harmony, an extended family, which the Hindu concept of *dharma* encourages humans to follow. According to Hindu tradition, "dharma requires that one consider the entire universe an extended family, with all living being in these universe members of the same household" (Dwivedi 25). This concept of comprehensive relation is well exemplified by *K lid sa* in his characters in the play.

The male protagonist Dushyanta is portrayed as a king who learns the Hindu ideal of *Ahimsha* in his life. Dushyanta in *Mah bh rata* is shown as a brutal King where he hunts and kills the animal. But in *Abhijn nas kuntalm* Kalidasa creates an ecological modification in the character of Dushyanta as an Indian critic Devdhar puts "Into the dry bones of this bare and unromantic tale, the poet has breathed the life of poetry and lifted it from a story of sordid passion into one of the most moving and ideals love" (IX). In *Mah bh rata*, a sort of conflict between kingly and earthly power is shown but *K lid sa* very skillfully convinces the king Dushyanta to breathe the spiritual ideals of environmental harmony right after the king's encounter to the hermitage. The poet turns the character of Dushyanta into a love-spirited giant as, Devdhar comments: "How wonderfully baser metal is transmuted into gold by passing through the crucible of poet's imagination" (XIV).

Similarly, another concept called *Brahman* in Hindu world-view is also expressed in the play. Śakuntal, the female protagonist of the play tries to reach in a state of unity of *atma* and *Brahman*. *Brahman* is assumed as the creator of universe. *Chandogya Upanishad* states, "This Universe comes forth from *Brahman*, exist in *Brahman*, and will

return to Brahman verily, all is Brahman” (Eswaran 127).

This research project will explore all the inter-connections among the creatures of nature expressed in the play. The connections like the mutual interdependency and expression of cooperation, love, respect and values between nature’s creations. It will with K lid sa’s intention and the skill, to preserve the environmental harmony by following the path of *dharma* in the play as said “*dharmo rakchhati rakchhita*” *dharma* protects those who protect *dharma* (*Manusmirti* 8.15). To disambiguate the use of word *dharma* with the general understanding of religion I will assume the concept of *aachara paramo dharma* (*Manusmriti* 1.108) good conduct is the supreme form of righteousness to analyze the K lid sa’s masterpiece *Abhijn nas kuntalm*.

So far as the contemporaneity of this research is concerned, it deals with the issue for preservation of environment by following the codes of *dharma* expressed in Hinduism which K lid sa uses to decorate his characters of the play. This tiny endeavor, the study about relationship between literature and the natural entities, falls under the school of ecocriticism. It looks on the interconnectedness between life and nature as William Rueckert, Lawrence Buell, Simon Estok and Joseph Meeker contribute in same school of thought. Though, the contemporary issues and ideas of ecocriticism will work as background for this research, it makes a point of departure by analyzing this concept primarily in Sanskrit literature through the lenses of Hindu philosophy which emphasizes on the idea of unity and integrity for harmony in universe.

This project is divided in three chapters: the first chapter dealt with the introduction of *dharma*, the author, and text, place of nature in Hinduism and in *Abhijn nas kuntalam*. The second chapter at first will deal with poet’s expertise in the nomenclature of heroine Śakuntal which itself is powered by the concept of harmony. K lid sa’s intention of biocentric appeal is clearly visible through his skill of using similes, and character’s deeds in the play will be analyzed in this section. In addition, this chapter will compare the activities of the characters in play with its source-text the epic *Mah bh rata*. Finally, the third chapter concludes entire discussion.

II. Affinity between Nature and Human in *Abhijn nas kuntalam*

In title, setting, and the characters of the play, the poet is inserting the fire of harmony which is powered by concept of unity, unity among the living and non-living things. In Sanskrit the term *sakuna* means the name of a bird. *Sakunta* is plural form of *sakuna*. *Śakuntal* is the derivative from *Śakuna* and its meaning is “one who is brought up by birds” (Pandey 1247). A human being but sponsored by the birds. This semantic significance of the nomenclature of heroine of the play, *Śakuntal*, matches with a legend in *Mah bh rata*. It states, she was daughter of sage Viswamitra and Menaka, the heavenly nymph. Menaka was sent by Indra, to dismantle the great sage Viswamitra’s strong penance. By performing glamorous dancing in front of the Viswamitra she finally becomes successful to bear a child by the sage. After knowing the role of Indra, Viswamitra gets angry and keeps the distance with that newly born child. Menaka also returns to the heaven by leaving this fresh infant child in the lap of forest. The child becomes orphan right after that moment. Sage Kanva gets that child in the forest where the child was surrounded by the birds. Kanva Rishi, an ascetic and the foster father of *Śakuntal* takes the child to his *ashrama*, which was known as “kanva Ashrama”. Therefore, we can say K lid sa’s craft of choosing and combining the words reveals an example of cooperation and co-existence between the creatures, birds, and human.

Like characters, setting also deals with the concept of unity. The poet has chosen nature in all acts except fifth act for setting. Nature is not taken as the matter of enjoyment and pleasure rather treated as the source of life and knowledge. For instance, many important events in the life of *Śakuntal* from her birth to marriage to separation to reunion the forest possess the role of warm shelter. An infant deserted by parents and left in jungle whose child life, marriage, separation with husband, birth

of son, finally the reunion with her husband occurred in the forest. In that sense, forest is her house. An *ashrama* in the midst of the forest, which keeps majority of the scenes of the play, is the place where *dharma*, the law of nature, rules the life. The perfect implementation of the *dharma*, which is the only beauty, is reflected in the world of *ashrama*. This beauty is powered by the cooperation and the cooperation among the creatures. The primary focus of *dharma* is to instruct to follow the law of nature, which is the original form of *dharma*. Therefore Tagore states:

A forest hermitage is the place where nature and contemplation, beauty and restraint are united. It is not bound by the artificial dictates of society, but the stern law of dharma rules there. (Qtd. in Das 239)

Instead of invoking directly to the God as traditional Sanskrit writers do, K lid sa addresses to the natural elements; water, fire, sacrifice, sun, moon, ether, earth and air in the benediction of the play. Indirectly, K lid sa invokes to the God because it is assumed in Hinduism that these elements are different forms of God. Why he does so, because he assumes the source for the creation of any things are natural substances and nature is God for the poet as described in *Vishnu Purana*, the natural substances which K lid sa includes are the ingredients for creation. He takes them as the divine power or the creative energy and says the god is incarnated as the eight visible forms to protect the creation. He offers for the protection of the universe and at the same time he clearly puts the fact that the protection of universe is only possible when these all life-forces of the nature are protected. He knows the creations cannot exist without creators. The elaboration about the involvement of God in natural entities can be found in *Bh gvadheet* as Krishna as God puts to Arjuna:

I am the taste in the waters, the light in the moon and the sun, the syllable Om that makes the Vedas meaningful, sound in space and

virility in men; the fresh smell of the earth. I am the brilliance of the fire, life in all beings. I am the asceticism of the ascetics. (7. 8, 9)

The poet addresses natural substances in a unified form as God. This praying reveals a type of higher homage for natural entities, the eight visible forms. The Poet invokes:

May I a (The Lord), endowed with the eight visible forms, protect you!-(the eight forms viz.) (1) that which is the first creation of the Creator (i.e. Water), (2) that which conveys (to the gods) the oblation offered according to customary rites (i.e. Fire) (3) that which is the sacrifice, (4 and 5) those two that regulate the time (i.e. the Sun and the Moon), (6) that which has sound for its quality and which pervades the universe (i.e. the Ether), (7) that which they may call the source of all seeds (i. e. the Earth), and (8) that by which creatures possess breath (i.e. Air). (Act I. 1)

The reason behind appealing for the protection of these substances indicates that the poet is in the favor of long-life of the universe. The five elements; space, air, fire, water, and the earth which K lid sa expresses, are the foundational webs for life of beings, which are interconnected. While doing so K lid sa is following the path of *dharma*. It is said that protecting the ecosystem is part of *dharma*. When the ecosystem is protected by the human then the ecosystem protect the human. That is why it is similar to *dharmo rakchhati rakchhitah* (*Manusmirti* 8.15). The word *dharma* has been translated into English often as duty, virtue, cosmic order, and religion. Whatever the translation is, in simple sense, following the “law of the nature” includes all forms of *dharma*. Every entity in the phenomena has certain type of nature, for instance, the nature of fire is heat, and it burns the things. And if anyone

dares to go against the fire's nature it is *adharmic* deeds. So expressing reverence for the creation according to its nature is the main teaching of that *dharma*.

The poet shapes his play *Abhijnanas Kuntalam* on the episode of the epic *Mahabharata*. K lid sa keeps the same plot line and ends his play with a happy ending as the original episode does. However, his adaptation of the play made three major departures, creating a new interpretation for both philosophical and dramatic purposes.

First of all, K lid sa introduces the curse of the sage Durvasas, clouding the king's memory, and saving him from moral responsibility in his rejection of Śakuntal. Secondly, K lid sa also makes Śakuntal undertake her journey to the palace before her son is born. King Dushyanta's character is thus made to appear in a better light, and a greater probability is given to the whole story. Under such a circumstance, King Dushyanta does not have to take the blame for his forgetfulness and leave Śakuntal responsible for her fever of love and daydreaming. The third change is a necessary consequence of the first; for without the curse, there could have been no separation, no ensuing remorse, and no reunion. In the episode of the epic *Mahabharata*, when King Dushyanta fails to recognize Śakuntal, a voice from the heaven tells King Dushyanta to accept Śakuntal as his righteous wife because the voice justifies what she said to him. Upon hearing the voice of god and the justification, King Dushyanta says that he believes what the god has told him and immediately admits that he is Śakuntal's husband and Bharata's father. Therefore, under such circumstance, King Dushyanta and Śakuntal are not separated, King Dushyanta does not show regret for not remembering his wife, and they unite right after the king makes the decision to accept her. In addition to these differences of the

plot, another change is the King Dushyanta's different attitudes toward animal lives, which is one of the focuses of this research project. King Dushyanta is described as brave but brutal in the epic while he is portrayed as ecologically sensitive and more compassionate in the play respectively.

King Dushyanta is described as a valiant king in the epic who is guided by the anthropocentric beliefs. He enters into the forest, takes his army, and enjoys slaying the animals, such as tigers, deer, and elephants. This might be his way to prove his kingship; he treats the innocent animals in a cruel way. Both, the activities and the attitudes of the King in the epic prove that he was guided by the tendency to hegemonize all the creatures. All his deeds were anthropocentrically oriented. Anthropocentrism is usually understood to be the view that only human beings of human conscious states (such as happiness and pleasure) are intrinsically good. The non-human world has only just instrumental value as a means of producing human good, pleasure and the entertainment. It belongs to the great deal of exploitation to non-human phenomenon. As a king, rather than loving and protecting to all the living and non-living things, he himself involves into killing the animals. To show the kingly bravery he kills the animals. He plays the killing game. He is compared with the nature of the tiger because he has tigerly habits. Arrow, swords, spear, javelin, bludgeon, and halberd were the dangerous weapons used in his hunting expedition. Therefore, describing his hunting trips in the forest, *Mah bh rata* records:

Dushyanta, tiger among men, with retainers, escort, and mounts wrought havoc, killing game of many kinds. Many families of tigers he laid low as they came within range of his arrows; he shot them with his shafts. Those that were in the distance the bull among men shot down with his arrows; others that came up close he cut down with his sword;

and antelopes he brought down with his spear, the powerful spearmen, who also know all the points of the circular club swing and whose courage was boundless. He talked about killing wild game and fowl with javelin, sword, mace, bludgeon, and halberd. (1.7.63)

Hunting and killing animals seem to be his pleasure. He and his army go into the forest and kill many families of tigers, antelopes through many different instruments. In the pain of others the king gets pleasure. In the blood shedding moment of the animals King realizes his grandeur. Injured animals seek help, search the waters, try to escape but the king is motivated to hunting never feels pain in the pain of animal rather their team go to cut these animals into pieces and have them. In the presence of a human these all animals of the forest lose their companion, foods, and leader. A peaceful world of forest is violated by the king. *Mah bh rata* puts forward:

And when the wondrously valiant king and his warlike warriors raided the great forest, the big game fled it. The herds of deer, their flocks dispersed, and their leaders killed, cried out for help everywhere. The river they sought out was dry; and thin with despair of water, their hearts exhausted with exertion, they dropped down, unconscious. Overcome by hunger and thirst, they fell prostrate on the ground, exhausted. There were some that were eaten raw by starving tiger men; other woodsmen built a fire, lit it, cut their meat in proper pieces, and ate it. (1.7.63)

How these people hunt the deer? The deer are in panic, cut in pieces and eaten by these men. Again, the whole paragraph shows that the deer feel extremely horrified when their life comes to the edge of death. In addition, the cruelty that the king and his army have done to these animals is written in detailed.

There were mighty elephants that were wounded by swords and ran mad; turning up their trunks, they panicked and stampeded frantically. Dropping dung and urine and streaming with blood, the wild tuskers trampled many men. (*Mah bh rata* 1.7.63)

Such terrible scenes, in which the king along with his army knifed the elephants and the elephants come in to reaction prove the interest of the elephant to take the revenge. These elephants were harmed and became crazy, thus trampling many men. For the disturbance of that environment, King's activities are totally responsible. Such cruel scene *Mah bh rata* captures:

The forest, darkened by a monsoon of night and a downpour of arrows, its big game weeded by the king, now seemed over run by buffalo. (1.7.63)

These paragraphs very realistically describe the animals' frantic behavior, due to valiant and brave the king's deeds. It proves that the king does not show mercy and compassion for the animals. One of the functions of the epic is to show the greatness of the kings, and the epic *Mah bh rata* is no exception. According to Kautilya's *Arthasasthra*, a king should protect his territory from eight kind of adversities namely fire, flood, pestilence, famine, rats, snakes, tigers and demons. To protect territory means to keep the harmony in that area. It is not by killing the animals rather by showing the compassion to them. Instead of following such ethics in life, under the brutal and vivid description about hunting and killing animals, King Dushyanta proves his status and bravery as a great king of the whole India.

However, the king's violence toward the animals may not be acceptable by the Brahmana of the time. As said in *brahmanic* life style, the *vanaprasthana* (or voluntary retirement in old age) is not the sole motive that drives kings to the forest in

the epics. Therefore kings often fall into trouble through the excitement and hubris of hunting. *Vanaprsthana* is a stage of life in Hindu tradition where a human renounces all the worldly pleasures and go to adjust with the natural phenomena in the forest. In forest s/he lives in friendly environment with all. Therefore, in that sense King Dushyanta in *Mah bh rata* is completely powered by the beliefs that human's pleasure, bravery, and mastery over other beings is more important than anything else. K lid sa, therefore, easily twists the ill-willed manner of the king into good-willed giant in the play. To raise the consciousness of ecological concord, poet shows the way to *chakravarti Raja*, the king, into the phenomena of compassion where all natural entities exist affectionately. Therefore, K lid sa interest to refigure the habit of king can be taken as an unique *dharmic* discourse from poetic creation.

The reason for adapting the epic story in the play is to focus attention on the details of Śakuntal 's semi-divine origin and her role within the universe. The epic story begins with the scene of a tumultuous hunt in which King Dushyanta kills numerous forest animals. However, the play begins with the benediction to natural substances and the prologue, followed by a scene in which the king enters with his charioteer, armed with a bow and arrow. The poet does not change the characteristics of the King till the king is introduced. In the play too, he gives continuation to the same status of King Dushyanta of the *epic* in the beginning. He starts from a description of a moment of a deer which is frightened with the presence of that king. The deer knows the destination of King and pretends himself as affected by Kings arrow, although till that moment he is not short with an arrow. When a deer senses the kings arrival in his vicinity, he even drops the half chewed grass from the mouth, tries to hide the back part of the body and looks to the sky. The reason behind continuing the king's atrocious status of *epic* in the beginning is to indicate the poet's

intention to show an individual, who is cruel at first, also can be generous later when s/he comes into the contact of *dharma*. The same thing happens in the life of Dushayanta. The scene of an elegant animal altered by the violence of the hunt, in play poet snaps:

Flinging the glance ever and anon at the pursuing chariot in a way graceful on account of the bending of his neck, having with the major portion of his hinder part entered the fore part of his body through the fear of the descent of an arrow, and strewing his path with half-chewed *darbha* grass dropping from his mouth gaping through exhaustion, behold how he, on account of his lofty boundings, traverses more through the sky, and less on the ground. (Act I. 7)

The antelope is Śakuntal 's "son," adopted by her when it was orphaned as a fawn. This scene shows the king as captivated by the graceful creature as he is bent on killing it. His passion threatens the calm and cool atmosphere of the forest and the animal's life. This is the prelude to King Dushyanta's discovery of Śakuntal as the clown speaks to the king in a humorous way that "you've turned that ascetic's grove into a pleasure garden" (Miller 34). Thus, the king has turned his pleasure from the deer to the girl Śakuntal .

In the development of the play in which King Dushyanta chases the deer in the forest at the very beginning but is stopped when discouraged by the hermits afterwards, indicates that King Dushyanta becomes more ecologically sensitive after the plea of hermits. A sentence spoken behind from the scene breaks the hunting mission of king. It is the first moment for the king to be stopped in his destination of hunting an animal. Why Dushyanta was obligated in the forest to shoot the deer? What would happen if anyone had spoken the same sentence for king in the palace?

Would the king take it positively? Probably not, it became possible to turn the king's mentality only because of the environmental setting of that moment. In a forest everything is in peace, animals are roaming freely and fearlessly and a voice for non-violence is heard. Such skillful arrangement of the poet makes possible to turn king's hunting plan into protective and loving treatment to the deer. The intensity of the hunt is interrupted by the charioteer, who heard a voice behind the scenes by a pupil of the hermit, Vaikhanasa:

Vai: (*Raising aloft his hand*). O king, to the hermitage belongs this deer; he should not' he should not, be killed. (Act I)

When at the start of the play, we hear this moving call to the king who has raised his bow, *Rajan ashramomrigoyam na hantabyo na hantabya* (O king do not kill the *ashrama* deer). These words in the play open the poet's intention in the life of King, which can be taken as the powerful pedagogy of *dharma*, a biocentric move for such a brutal king to protect the peaceful world of the hermitage as Rabindranath Tagore puts, "It strikes a principle chord of the play. The canopy of pity held out by the forbiddance protects the *ashrama* girl Śakuntal as well as the forest deer" (Qtd. in Das 241).

In the course of his hunt, the king has strayed into the hermitage. However, the moment he realizes he has entered the hermitage, he stops the hunt and refrains from killing any animals in the area. The two hermit pupils claim that the deer belongs to the hermitage. And any animals around there are not allowed to harm and hurt. The hermit pupils remind the king about his duty and about the use of the weapon which he has. They state the weapon of the king is for protection of all but here the king is acting reversely. In such serious appeal, pupils put the life and death in two hands. On the one hand, there is beautiful life of fawns and in the other, king's arrow is longing

to stab and take the life of that fawns. They praises for skill of king's shooting but they make aware to him that his skill should be used for the end of evil and the establishment of innocent. In that sense, pupils represent the true form of *dharma* and become successful to protect the life of fawn. Two hermit pupils request:

Not indeed, not indeed, should this arrow be caused to descend on this tender body of the deer, like fire on a heap of flowers. Where, indeed, on the one hand, is the extremely frail life of fawns and where, on the other, are your sharp-falling shafts that have the hardness of adamant? Withdraw, therefore, your well-aimed arrow; your weapon is the protection of the distressed and not for striking at the innocent. (Act I 10-11)

After this acknowledgement, king identifies the antelopes as a creature of sage Kanv 's hermitage and stop chasing and killing them. One of the prime duties of the king is to maintain the peaceful atmosphere in the forests where sages resided.

Although boundaries were probably not strictly drawn between *asrama* (hermitage) and non-*asrama* areas, it is possible to argue that in a climate of mutual respect and trust, such boundaries were not necessary and the true duty of the King is to maintain the peace and harmony not only in the city but also in the jungle and everywhere.

K lid sa not only makes him a more ecologically sensitive king, but also abandoned the cruel scenes where the animals were killed and eaten. The king falls in love with the world of jungle. There he gets a beautiful maiden who treats all creatures in the forest as her family members. Later it becomes clear from the king's direction to his soldier to follow the path of non-violence in the forest. From that King's entire hunting team becomes ecologically sensitive. The king focuses on the

domination of the peace and tranquility in the residence of the ascetics in their conversation.

King: –Well, then, recall the beaters that have gone ahead; and my soldiers should be so warned that they molest not the penance grove. For, see, In ascetics, in whom tranquility predominates, there lies concealed an energy with inherent power of burning; this they manifest like the sun-jewels, which are cool to the touch, when overpowered (*i.e.*, acted upon) by the energies.

GEN.- As my lord commands.

VIDU. – Let your talk of encouragement go to the dogs now ! (Act II. 7)

Rukman praises King Dushyanta for his concern about nature and calls him an ecologically sensitive person (Rukman 135). Because of his association and experience with Śakuntalā, the king gains a new perspective about appropriate behavior toward non-human life. After meeting Śakuntalā, King Dushyanta not only falls in love with her, but feels more responsibility to the hermitage. At the beginning of the play, he is attracted by a deer and plans to kill it. Afterwards, knowing that Śakuntalā belongs to the sacred hermitage and she treats the creatures as her family, King Dushyanta must show respect for the plant and animal lives like her so as to win her love. In that sense, only the appeal of the hermits for non-violence around hermitage at the starting of the play is not single key to move the king's attitude in the protection of environment, rather his affection with Śakuntalā and Śakuntalā's affection to the non-human life are also equally noticeable. In that sense K. Lid sa's entire focus on the king is to teach the *dharma* where everything lives the life

fearlessly and peace, harmony, kindness, cooperation, coexistence, collaboration and tranquility dominate the world.

Bharata is the son of Dushyanta and Śakuntal . In epic his attitude and the activities towards the animal is rather cruel. His interest to conquer over the all animals, whether domestic or the wild can be taken as an anthropocentric orientation in himself. As his father he also adopts a line of pleasure seeking person. He is addressed as the “all-tamer” in the epic even in the age of six. There is a Sanskrit word *sarvadamana* in the epic. The word *sarva* means all and the *damana* means make control. The reward for the potentiality for the boy indicates that his deeds are not praise worthy rather they are against the environmental ethics which *dhrama* does not instruct to follow. The main role of such ethics must be no less than to maintain the survival of nature and its creations which require living with nature rather than against it. Bharata’s attitude toward animal does not change but the perspectives from which he is portrayed as a powerful child who has great control over the creatures. His activities and habits restrict the freedom of the other animals. He also adopts the habit of hegemoning and exploiting to the creatures of nature from the very early days of the life as *Mah bh rata* records:

When he was six years old, the child in Kanva’s hermitage would fetter lions and tigers, boars, buffaloes, and elephants to the trees around the hermitage and run about playing and riding and taming them. Hence the hermits who dwelled in Kanv ’s hermitage gave him a nick name: He shall be *Sarvadamana* (all-tamer), for he tames everything! So the boy became as Sarvadamana, and he was endowed with prowess, might, and strength. (*Aadiparva Mah bh rata* 1.7.68)

K lid sa in the play very conscientiously adds an environmental code of ethics over the boy's life. The serious request of hermit women to the boy for not doing so with the animal shows a concept of extended family in the universe. The woman does not try to change the child's behavior by showing the fear of the nature of that animal. Lion is generally assumed as a dangerous animal, but she does not tell the boy it is dangerous and can attack him. The women repeat the same name *sarvadamana* given in the epic for that child. It shows the dignity of the origin of the boy, from royal family but here in front of *dharma* no one allowed to show his/her bravery against the natural elements. It means the child is still rude to other creatures and it is her duty to orient him biocentrically. Therefore, she says there is no any difference between human being's children and the lion's children in the universe. It is a *samadarsana* world-view within the phenomena of *dharma* which instructs to its follower to be equanimous. In that sense, the poet drags both father and the son from the noble origin, in the garden of respect and compassionate love where *dharma* operates the world. For showing the attitudes of king, his son and the hermit woman's views regarding the lion K lid sa composes:

King: (*Listening*). This is no place for rude (insolent) act; who is this, then that is being thus forbidden ? (*Looking in the direction of the voice; with astonishment*). Ah, who can this child be, with the strength not of child, closely attended by two female ascetics.

Who, for the purpose of playing. Is forcibly dragging away from its mother a lion's cub that has but half sucked the teat, and has its mane disordered in the act of tugging and pulling?

Child: Open thy mouth, O lion! I will count thy teeth!

First Woman: Naughty child, why do you tease the beasts which to us are not different from our own offspring? how now, thy impetuosity waxes ! Righty, indeed, art thou named 'Sarva-damana' by the sages. (Act VII 14).

From the comparison between the epic and the play, Bharata's attitude toward animal lives does not change in the play and he still possesses dominion over the creatures. However, it makes room for the possibility to generate different perspectives on him when he bullies the animals. Only when the hermit woman asks Bharata not to bully the lion and the cub, he stops doing that. Bharata is expected to show mercy for the creatures through other people's admonishment. Therefore, how other people feel about what he does is significant because it shows that tormenting animals is not thought of as a good deed in the play while torturing animals is praised as a heroic and valiant behavior in the epic.

Both King Dushyanta and Bharata show their compassion for animal lives when admonished not to do so by the other people who live in the forest and who share a closer relationship with the natural world. These people show respect for nature and attempt to build a harmonious residence. Therefore, tormenting or killing animals in the forest is not allowed in the play. Both King Dushyanta and Bharata possess dominion over the creatures when hunting the deer or torture the cub, they must abandon such cruel behaviors and instead demonstrate their clemency to the animals. In that sense, the poet very skillfully fills the breath of *dharma* in the hearts of father Dushyanta and son Bharata through the contact of same girl Śakuntal . Therefore, coming in to the vicinity of Śakuntal is taken as the way to learn the path of *dharma* which stands for the harmony and unity in the universe.

A human being reared by the non-human from the very first moment of life, Śakuntal performs all the activities and the discourses in her life which are perfectly relative to the concept of unity among the creatures in the universe. The series of circumstances she faces throughout her life show herself as an ecologically sensitive and responsible human being. Her every thought, belief, and the activities prove herself as a *dharmic* person.

Her birth took place in the forest, she was brought up in the forest by the birds; her marriage happens in the forest; she was once rejected by the palace, she sheltered in the forest; she gives birth to the child in the forest; and the reunion with her husband happens in the forest. In that sense the existence of forest is lap of the mother in her life. The reason behind positing forest in such series of events is to show the role of forest as a warm shelter even in the most complex situation in the life of Śakuntal . Why the poet does not select any other types of places like palace in any one of above mentioned conditions? It is so because the poet wants to set forest as the learning and living venue for both the hero and heroine in the play. When she sets out from the forest to the palace she becomes rejected. Palace could not accept her. Generally palace is assumed as the most comfortable place to live for human but without any anger and prejudices Śakuntal proceeds again towards forest when she was heavy with child and rejected by her husband. Here for Śakuntal forest is not different than the palace because her every activity in the forest proves that she truly understands the forest and forest understand her. Forest here means all the world of jungle. It means the poet here is inserting the biocentric ideology by projecting the suffering of Śakuntal in palace in the one hand, and by showing trouble-free acceptance and welcome of forest as the warm shelter by her. A pregnant woman,

who is not allowed to give birth to child in maternal house, proceeds towards the jungle because of the rejection of the husband in the palace. She goes into the jungle due to rejection no doubt, but, here is also the poet's intention to show the jungle as the natural shelter to assist the creatures in any condition. The system to restrict in the maternal house during the delivery of the child makes the weather of the play more tearful to the audiences, but Śakuntal's perfect competence to cope up with the environment of the jungle, which is different from the previous where she was kept, even in the most sad and complex situation proves that for nature there is no any difference between humans and non-humans. Her genuine attachment with the natural substances of the forest introduces sometime her as plant. As Tagore claims there is a big similarity between her organs and the organs of the plants. It is the comparison of King Dushyanta in the play and it is compared not only because of her exquisite beauty rather her daily routine to serve the surroundings, which resembles herself as the plants. Her tenderness seems similar to the tenderness of plants. It means plants and Śakuntal are interconnected. Therefore, she says the plants are her sisters. There is a union among the natural elements as Tagore puts:

She is linked in spirit to her surroundings. Her sweet nature expands and flowers the forest shades and the blossom on the *madhavi* creeper; it is deeply drawn to the unfeigned affection of birds and beasts. The daughter of the hermitage, dressed in tree bark, watering the furrows with her companions; she is carrying out her daily task of love towards the trees, her brother, and the creeper, her sisters. It is not just the ark she wears; her gestures and movements make her appear one among the plants. That is why Dushyanta compares her

Lips as red as tender leaves

Like young branches her two arm

From infused with blooming youth

Like a flower that tempts the heart. (Qtd. in Das 242)

She is one of the creatures of the hermitage. She upholds some significant ecological ethics in every step of her life. She tries her best to be kind and helpful as much as she can with every substances of the hermitage; Poet once compares a separation between Śakuntal and Dushyanata with the fading flowers *kumuda* (lilies) once the moon is set. The reason to see same effects of separation for Śakuntal and the plant *kumuda* is another poetic strategy which more tightens the knot of bridge between the human and plants.

Another striking scene is where all creatures become full of tears at the moment when Śakuntal was supposed to leave the hermitage. Entire world of the hermitage face the pain of detachment. No any trees, animals, and other substances of the hermitage could remain tearless when they heard about the separation of Śakuntal from the forest retreat to the palace in the fourth Act of play. Kanv (foster father of Śakuntal) calls out to all the creatures of hermitage:

Kasyapa: Ye neighboring trees of the penance grove!

She who never attempts (proceeds) to drink water first, when you have not drunk it (*i.e.* before you are watered), she who, though fond of ornaments, never plucks (*lit.* takes) your leaves through affection for you, she to whom it is a festivity when you first put forth your blossoms, that same Śakuntal now departs to her husband's house; let her (or this) be permitted by you all. (Act IV.9)

A girl, who is thirsty but never drinks the water without watering the trees, a girl who is fond of ornaments never, plucks the flowers and leaves. Such deeds of Śakuntal share the happiness not only between human beings but also with ahumans. What could be the more exemplary task than these about the duties of *dharma* of an individual? In fourth Act, there is the best expression of tender fare-wells exchanged by Śakuntal and the trees, animals, and fairies of the hermitage. It reveals the ecological ethics. Not only Śakuntal becomes struck by the separation but also all the animals, plants, trees, creepers and her parents and friends in the forest share their feelings of melancholy when they know about the Śakuntal's leaving. Animals feel as if they are losing their mother. The following conversation of the play may easily touch any readers. The moment of separation Kanv narrates:

The female deer have dropped down their cud of grass; the peacocks have given up their dancing; and creepers, with their yellow leaves falling off, seem, as if to be shedding tears.

Śakuntal - (*Remembering*). Father, I will bid adieu to my creeper-sister *vanajotsan*

Kanv - I am aware of your sisterly affection for it. Here it is to our right.

Śakuntal (*Approaching and embracing the creeper*) O *vanajotsana*, although you are united with the mango-tree, do you embrace me, in return, with your arm-like twigs that point in this direction. From today, I part (lit. shall be at distance) from you. (Act IV 12)

The dancing of the peacocks gets stopped because of her separation, the half chewed grass in the mouth of deer drops, the leaves of the tree fall. This scene reveals the

strong bridge between a human and the trees, animals and the birds. In addition, it further substantiates the concept like to be loved from someone at first should learn to love someone. Śakuntal 's outgoing from the forest retreat produces the deep sense of melancholy on animals, plants, creepers, and humans. It is because of the effect of compassion between both sides; Śakuntal and her surroundings. It can be compare to the Dushyanta's moment of entering the forest where the life of deer was in danger because of him. The deer was worried by the presence of king because till that moment king was not enlightened by the compassion to the animals. Here to the deer is not happy, it is sad but the sadness is not similar as that of the moment of first encounter with the king. This sadness is powered by the loss of love but that sadness was caused by the fear of death. She begs adieu to the plants, plants express their sense of sadness by shedding leaves, and deer drops the half chewed grass from the mouth. This beautiful animation of nature establishes a perfect harmonious atmosphere in the forest.

Similarly, the anguish caused by the separation of loved ones is compared to the fading of *Kumuda* flowers (lilies) once the moon has set. The deities of the forest take part in the decoration of Śakuntal by providing the ornaments she needs before she leaves for the palace. It indicates the unity among the natural substances where from deities to animals, plants, flowers and the human are taking part harmoniously. This presence of natural substances in the farewell of the Śakuntal reflects an example of unity among all.

By a certain tree was put forth (*i.e.* offered) a fine silk garment, white like the moon, and suited to this auspicious occasion; by another is exuded the lac-dye for application to this feet (&); the ornaments were presented from other trees by the hands of the deities put forth as far as

the wrist (*lit.* the joint) and vying with the brusting of tender sprouts from there. (Act IV 5)

When all the residents of Kanv 's hermitage prepare to bid farewell to Śakuntal , Kanv himself addresses the plants, asking them to permit Śakuntal to leave, and he interprets the cuckoo's call as an answer to his request. Such is her intimate kinship with all things, conscious and unconscious; such the tie of affection and beneficence. Then, Kanv interprets the voice of the cuckoo as a reply:

(Gesticulating that he heard the note of a cuckoo)

Here is the Śakuntal permitted to depart by the trees, her companions during residence in the forest, since the sweet note of the cuckoo has been employed as a reply by them. (Act IV 10)

(In the sky)

May her path, charming at the intervals like the lakes (appearing) verdant with lotus-creepers, and with the heart of the sun's rays mitigated by tress affording thick shade, have its dust soft with the mixture of (or have the soft dust of) the pollen of lotuses, be (pleasant) with a gentle favorable breeze, and blissful (safe)! (Act VI 11)

A bird from the sky is expressing the feelings of sadness in farewell of Śakuntal . Natural substance like trees, sunrays, sheds, dust, and breeze are presented lively. The lakes fill with lotuses, the route is linked with thick shade trees, and the path Śakuntal is to take on her way to the palace is strewn with the pollen of lotuses. Such lively presentation of the surroundings establishes the flora and fauna in the *asrama* (hermitage) sharing in the sadness at parting from their dear Śakuntal . The deer spit out the grass they are eating, the peacocks give up dancing, and the creepers

weep by shedding tears in the form of leaves. Śakuntal fondly bids farewell to the doe heavy with child and asks Kanv to let her know when it delivers safely. Her foster child, the little deer, pulls at her garment, refusing to let her go:

Kasy pa : my child

This fawn here, regarded by you as your son, whom you affectionately reared with handfuls of rice, and to whose mouth when wounded with the sharp points of the *kusa* grass, you applied the healing oil of the *indugi* does not leave (following) your path. (Act VI.14)

In such condition, Śakuntal reminds Kanv about the pregnancy of deer and wishes for safe and successful birth. She takes leave with of all the plants, animals and birds, and leaves the forest retreat shedding tears. About this most breathtaking scene, Tagore explains:

Śakuntal said to Kanv , *father, when this deer's wife grazing beside the hut, heavy with child, has safely given the birth, send somebody to me to give me the good news. Then Śakuntal felt a tug from behind her and said, who is it that pulls me by my clothes?"*

Kanv said: *My daughter,*

He whose jaws, when chafed by the kusha grass,

With oil of indugi you would smear,

He whom you fed with fistfuls of green paddy-

This is your son, that body deer.'

Śakuntal said to it, *my darling, why are you still following the companion who is leaving you? When your mother died as soon as you were born, it was I who brought you up. Now I am going. Father will look after you. Go back* (Qtd. in Das 243)

As she was reared by the birds, right after the birth, Śakuntal also furnishes the role of mother to a foster infant deer, right after its birth. When mother deer die the child is kept by Śakuntal . In that sense, she plays the role of mother even to the animals. She follows the line of thinking:

astadāspurānesu byāsasya bāchana dvyam

Paropakaraya punyaya papaya parapidanam.

Doing benevolence is collecting merit and doing harm is collecting demerits, is the concise theme of eighteenth *puranas* by Byasa. (Dwivedi 32)

Śakuntal 's integration in natural world not only shows the constant harmonious contact with the animals and plants in the hermitage, but she also cares about them and they also care for her. In other words, her inner metaphysical concepts have been linked to the natural world and natural substances are linked with her "self" The following is a conversation between Śakuntal and her friends Anusuya and Priyamvada in the Act First, indicating that Śakuntal 's concern about the trees and care-up of them without any wages.

Anusuya: Friend Śakuntal , I think the trees in this hermitage are dearer to father Kasyapa even than you; for which reason you, though tender like the blossom of jasmine, are appointed (by him) to fill the basins of these (trees with water).

Śakuntal : it is not only (by) father's direction (that I do this), I have sisterly affection too for these. (*Gesticulates watering the trees.*)

Priyamvada: Śakuntal , we have watered the trees that blossom in the summer-time. Now let's sprinkle those whose flowering-time is past. That will be a better deed, because we shall not be working for a reward.

Śakuntal : What a pretty idea! (She does so.) (Act I)

From their dialogue it becomes clear that, not only does Śakuntal and the trees share intimacy with each other but her friend Priyamvad also shows her concern about the other trees, for both of them think that they are responsible and obliged to tend on these trees. In addition, nature is not just a background to the characters and serving the purpose of humans in the play. Instead, nature is intertwined into the plot and helps the progress of the play and nature blends into the action of the different acts. *Sringara rasa* the sentiment of love, which is the dominant mood of the play, is interwoven into all aspects of nature.

Priyamvad , speculates Śakuntal 's intention with the scene of beautiful creeper that now has her mate in the strong *Kesara* tree One example is shown in the Act I. Her forthcoming youthful day's attachment with Dushyanta is judged with the rolling of a creeper with the mango tree. In simple sense it seems as only the use of poetic device but besides this it seems akin to her entire actions to the trees and creeper. This kind of interplay between humans and plants is an important theme which indicates the familiarity of heroine with the feelings, love, and happiness of trees. Trees could not speak as human but the bond between tree and Śakuntal make possible for the reader to experience the expression of tree also. It is the skill of poet where even the things which cannot speak are presented as speaking with Śakuntal . In one reply to her friends, Śakuntal says forgetting the creeper is to forget herself. It means she assumes in her mind that as if she is a creeper and creeper is she herself.

Anusuya: Friend Śakuntal , here is the *jasmine* creeper, the self-selecting bride of the mango tree to which you have given the name *vanajyostna*. You have forgotten it.

Śakuntal : then I shall even forget my own self. (*approaching the creeper and gazing*) friend, at a very charming time indeed, has taken place the union of this couple, the creeper and the tree. The *vanajyotsana* with its early blossom is in its youth; and the mango-tree, on account of its beautiful leaves, appears capable of enjoyment (*standing looking at them*)

Priyamvada: Anusuya, do you know why Śakuntal is looking so very attentively at *vanajyotsana*?

Anusuya: No. I cannot conceive it; pray tell me

Primbada: As *vanajyotsana* has been united to a tree worthy of it, so may I, too, get a suitable husband !(this is what she is thinking about)

Śakuntal : Certainly this must be the desire of your own heart (empties the jar of water). (Act I)

In this way, a girl born by the breaking the vow and brought up in a spiritual retreats; treats nature as the mother and the creations of nature as her sisters and brothers. By supplementing this rare quality in a mythical character Śakuntal , the poet is decorating his garden of *dharma* and tightens more the knots of interdependency between the creatures and the substances of nature. Her every touch to the natural phenomena, her every word to the surroundings is powered by the breath of compassion. This compassion is not limited within herself it is spreading across the environment she lives in. Therefore, Śakuntal in the play plays with in the frame of *dharma* which stands for the betterment of universe.

III. Conclusion

K lid sa, through his sharp pencil, draws the beautiful space to his characters in the garden of *dharma*. He dramatizes the obedience for *dharma*, the realization of interconnectedness between the internal *atman* and external *Brahma*, in the play. In Sanskrit, *dh rati eti dharma* (Pandey 597). *Dh rati* means carry-up or bear. What anything deserves as natural is the *dharma*. For instance, fire is hot, its character is hot and its *dharma* is to burn the things. In the case of human; kindness, help, love, peace and harmony are the things gifted by the nature and to sustain all these things in the life is the *dharma* for human being. When any human crosses this limitation s/he becomes the *adharmic*. It is the way to understand the *dharma*. Therefore, to understand righteousness is to understand the *dharma*.

From the character of the Śakuntal an ideal bond between humans and nature is established. Her entire discourses in the play indicate a type of consciousness for the environmental ethics. Her integration in the natural world in the play shows constant harmonious contact with the animals and plants in the hermitage. An ideal bond between human and nature is verified by her character. She shows the consciousness of environmental ethics as Hindu scriptures elaborate for the harmony with nature by performing proper reverence upon it. The primary instructions of such text are that the human goal is not only to take advantages of nature or triumph over nature but to attach importance to it and be nourished by it. Therefore they lead people to build up harmonious bridge with nature by assuming it as an extensive family which regard all the phenomenon of the nature as relatives and every individual is part of it. They try to establish the harmonious interconnection for plant, animal lives and even the whole universe where they are living in. This concept of extended family helps developing the unity. Therefore Hindus grow worshipful

attitude towards the natural entities which idealize the respectful and appropriate relationship with the natural world for both practical and spiritual purposes.

Śakuntal demonstrates the concept of unity of her internal *atman* and *Brahma* the external world. It is an idea which links the soul of humans to the spirit of universe that pervades all living and non living element of the universe. It requires that one regards nature is the major components in the creations of everything and we should revere it in proper. Śakuntal treats in the same ideal to the natural components in play.

Dushyanta, the hero of the drama, changed himself when he comes into the contact with Śakuntal . He learns the environmental ethics. Unlike the brutal status of epic *Mahabharata*, he becomes more respectful and compassionate ruler, caring for the creatures of Jungle. From his change in the behavior it becomes clear that environmental ethics, as described in the Hindu scriptures and the seer, was put in to apply not only by common man, but equally to rulers and king.

Similarly, to compare the Dushyanta's and Bharata's characters in the *epic* with the *play* respectively, they still hold control over the creatures. What makes it unique is their treat with the creatures are not praised in play but these are valorized and praised in the epic. In the epic, they are praised because killing and dominating animals was used to be taken as the quality of king and his heritage but in the play such deeds are taken as *adharmic*. Therefore, K lid sa tries his best to load the breath of compassion in their heart to the creatures.

By analyzing the holy values and goals embedded in the concept of *dharma* in K lid sa's masterpiece *Abhijn nas kuntalam*, it can be said that this work of art is quite important and relevant with also the modern concept about ecological awareness and preservation. This verbal artifact can provide a literary model for today's people

to reconsider their place in the lap of nature. Especially, to look at the modern technological domination and exploitation over nature for the sake of pleasure and enjoyment, it sees this culture is gradually leading the world to the fears for life. Threatens like global warming, climate change, landslide, long drought etc which are the major concerns of modern ecology somehow could be taken as the result of bad treat of humans to nature. It may the most devastative result among the hitherto happened consequences. Therefore, immediately it is necessary to rethink about our present pattern to look and treat the nature. All existences are interdependent. We pass the carbon dioxide which plants needs and plants pass the oxygen which we needs. We are not dependent or independent rather we are in an interdependent existence. It is an indisputably accepted reality. Only after the proper understanding of this interdependency and being respectful with the duties and responsibilities of human as the heroine of the play performs we can keep beautiful existence of this universe always beautiful.

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