CHAPTER THREE

STATUS OF FEMALE FIGURES IN THE PLAYS OF BHĀSA AND KĀLIDĀSA

It may be accepted undeniably that behind the development and prosperity of a society both man and woman have equal partnership responsibility. In the process of construction of a society both man and woman have their own role. A society cannot develop in the real sense of the term unless the half of its constituent part i.e., the female population does not get an adequate position in the society. So, it may not be out of point here to say that the status of female figures in the society can be one of the judging factors for ascertaining the merits and drawbacks of a society.

The great poets, authors, novelists, dramatists etc. in their literary works, endeavour to reflect the contemporary society, in different ways. Among them, perhaps, the drama is the most effective medium through which the real picture of a society can be ascertained. Hence, the drama is often known as the mirror of the society. In Sanskrit literature, the drama comes under the arena of dṛṣṭyakāvya i.e the kāvya which can be presented in the stage and embellished by the audience. Therefore, in viewing a drama, everyone irrespective of high and low, literate and illiterate can enjoy and comprehend it easily. As the mass people are concerned in the drama, so naturally their life-tale finds a place in it. Besides great dramatists have always an attempt to picturize the contemporary society in their plays with an ideal behind it. So, in the works of great dramatists, not only the
picture of the contemporary society gets reflected, but the eternal truth is also hinted at.

So far as the Sanskrit dramatic literature and specially dramatists are concerned, the attention first goes to Bhāsa. Bhāsa has been designated as the forerunner amongst the Sanskrit dramatists. Bhāsa’s proficiency as a great dramatist has been appreciated by his successors like Bāṇabhaṭṭa, Rājaśekhara, Vākpātirāja, Jayadeva etc. Even Kālidāsa, the famous and eulogised dramatist, expressed his sincerest appreciation for Bhāsa, his great predecessor. Thirteen dramas of high repute have been ascribed to Bhāsa. These are viz., Dūtavākya, Dūtaghaṭotkaca, Karṇabhāra, Madhyama-vyāyaga, Ūrubhaṅga, Pañcarātra, Abhiṣeka, Bālacarita, Pratimānāṭaka, Avimāraka, Pratijñāyaugandharāyaṇa, Svapnavāsaavadatta and Cā rudatta. Regarding the date of Bhāsa, there prevails a great controversy among the scholars and divergent views have been propounded by different scholars in determining the date of Bhāsa. But whatever may be the exact period of Bhāsa, there is no doubt that Bhāsa, the great dramatist has been designated as the forerunner of Sanskrit dramatic literature and who flourished before Kālidāsa. In the abovementioned thirteen plays, ascribed to Bhāsa, the contemporary society has been well reflected and naturally the female figures as an integral part of society also occupied a place in these plays.

After Bhāsa the most famous and anointed dramatist in Sanskrit literature is Kālidāsa. He has been often acclaimed by the Eastern and Western scholars as the best of Indian dramatists. Three dramas
of great repute has been popularly ascribed to Kālidāsa. These are viz., Mālavikāgnimitram, Vikramorvaśīyam and Abhijñānaśakuntalam. Like Bhāsa in the plays of Kālidāsa also the picture of the contemporary society has been portrayed, and obviously the female figures also occupy a place in these plays.

In this chapter an humble attempt has been made to assess the status of female figures, depicted in the plays of Bhāsa and Kālidāsa. Before going through the topic probably it will not be out of point here to state that for ascertaining the status of female figures in a society, first of all, it is necessary to determine the structure of the society and also the attitude of the society towards female figures.

From the ancient period till the present day, the system of patriarchal society has been in vogue in India. It is true that in some parts of India there prevails the system of matriarchal society also. But it is just like a drop in the river. However, so far as the outlook of the society towards female figures is concern, it can be said that it is not static and has been changing through the ages. Through a careful study on the position of female figures in society as recorded in the various literary works in Sanskrit literature i.e., in the Vedas, the Epics, the Dharmaśāstras, the Purāṇas, the Vyākaraṇas and in the dramatic literature etc., it appears that the female figures by and large, have been treated with honour and dignity in India. It can also be said that the attitude of the Dharmaśāstrakaras towards the female figures seems to be somewhat rigid. A detailed discussion regarding
this have been presented in the introductory chapter of the present dissertation.

**STATUS OF FEMALE FIGURES IN THE PLAYS OF BHĀSA**

To focus on the status of female figures in society in the period of Bhāsa, the great dramatist, it requires an elaborate study on the thirteen plays of Bhāsa. Through an indepth study of the plays of Bhāsa, it seems that the married women are mainly concerned with the domestic affairs and their prime duty is to serve their family and husbands. But in comparison with the married women, the position of female figures before marriage seems to be much satisfactory.

The female figures with their different roles such as the daughter, the wife, the mother, the widow etc. have been portrayed in the plays of Bhāsa.

It appears that the birth of a daughter was not at all unwelcomed and was treated as an occasion of great joy. Becoming the father of a daughter was considered as a matter of laudation. This has been expressed through the statement of Bhūtika in the Avimāraka¹.

Maidens at the abode of their fathers, enjoy perfect freedom. They can pass their time by playing the game of ball with their friends. Princess Padmāvatī in the play Svapnavāsamadhavā, is found in playing with her companions the game of ball, which is generally known as the ‘kandukakriḍā’. The maidens also rear different types of birds such as


2. Cetū- kim bhaṇasi eṣā bhartṛdārikā mādhavilatāmaṇḍapasya pārśvataḥ kandumena kriḍatīti? -Svap, Act II.
peacocks, parrots etc. In the play Avimāraka it is seen that Kurāṅgī rears various kinds of birds as her playments. The female figures are interested and active enough in growing different types of shrubs in their garden. Padmāvatī, in the Svapnavāsavadatta is found wondering in the garden to see if the śephālikā clusters which she has planted earlier, have been flowered or not.

It appears that young maidens can freely participate in the social gatherings and festivals; although much information in this regard is not found from the plays of Bhāsa. There is a reference of a kind of dance named Hallīṣaka in the Bālacarita; in which young women belonging to the cowherd community use to take part. A similar type of dance is also found in the Pancartra. Another type of festival, in which maidens use to take part, is the kāmadevānuyāna or Kāmadevamahotsava, a festival connected with the god of love.

Regarding female education, as revealed from the plays of Bhāsa, it may be said that the female figures can avail educational facilities.

3. Kurāṅgī—atha ceme mayurā asmākāṁ rājakulamānaṁ atipīthaṁ ardabhāvaṁ kurvanti asmābhiḥ satatalālīta apyādeśaṅkālaṃ atayatmano’dhikajñabhāvaṁ darśayantī sukasārīkāpi vyākhyanam eva kathayitum āvadha - Avī, Act V.

4. Padmāvatī—te tāvacchephālikāgulmakaḥ pāśyāmi kusumitā vā na vēti - Svap, Act IV.

5. Dāmakāḥ—adya bhārtrāmodo’smin vṛṇdāvane gopakanyakābhiḥ saha hallīṣakaṁ nāma prakṛṣṭumāgačchati - Bāla , Act III.

6. Vṛddhagopālaḥ—tāvatiṃ velām gāyanto nṛttyanto bhavāmaḥ -Paṇca, Act II.

7. Ā kāmadevānuyānat prabhūti nayanamātrasaṅsthulanāḥ daridrasāṁrthavāhāputraṁ cārudattavatukaṁ kāmayata eṣā - Cāru, Act II.
at that time, though there is no mention of specific educational institution for them. Various vocational courses of fine-arts have been provided for female figures. It is known from the play Svapnavāsavādatta that Vāsavadattā is quite at home in playing on vina, which she has learnt from Udayana, her husband. This is the reason why she is often recalled by Udayana as Priyaśīyā (favourite student)\(^8\). Female teachers have been apparently employed to teach song and music to the maidens. It is evident from the fact that princess Vāsavadattā has approached Uttarā Vaitālikā, a lady teacher of music, to learn playing on the 'nārādiyavīṇa'\(^9\). This also points out that the custom of teaching of fine-arts, as a profession have been taken up by the female figures at that time. The name of Bṛhannalā in the Pañcarātra may also be cited in this connection.

Marriage, which has been recognised as one of the major duties of life seems to be mostly obligatory for female figures in the age of Bhasa. However, child-marriage is not in vogue. It is evident from the fact that maidens, before their marriage have been described as quite grown up and youthful\(^10\).

Regarding the system of marriage, we met with five types of marriage in the plays of Bhasa viz., Brāhma, Kṣātra, Gāndharva, Rākṣasa and Anuloma. The Brāhma appears to be the most approved

\(^8\) Svap, Act I.
\(^9\) Devi - uttārāyaś vaitālikayāḥ sakāśe viniśāṁ śikṣītaṁ nārādiyam gatāsit - Prat. Yau, Act II.
\(^10\) Avimārakah (smṛtvā) - aho tasyā rūpasampada, rūpānurūpaṁ yauvanam, yauvanasadṛṣṭaṁ saukumāryam - Avi, Act II.
form of marriage, in which the father or guardian of the bride gives her away to the bridegroom after adorning her with ornaments. The marriage between Padmāvatī and Udayana in the Svapnavāsavadatta apparently falls under this category, since the king Dārsaka himself gives the hand of Padmāvatī, his sister, to Udayana, the king of Vatsa.11

In the Kṣātra form of marriage, envoys and priests, on behalf of the father of the bridegroom are sent to the father of the bride, seeking her hand for the former’s son. The marriage between prince Jayavarman and Sumitrā in the Avimāraka falls under this category, as Kāśīrāja sends an emissary to king Kuntībhoja proposing the hand of the later’s daughter for his son Jayavarman.12

The third type of marriage, which is met with in the plays of Bhāsa is Gāndharva, which is popularly known as love-marriage with consent. In this form of marriage, the bride and the bridegroom themselves marry secretly. The marriage between Avimāraka and Kuraṅgī in the play Avimāraka falls under this category. One more instance of Gāndharva marriage is met with in the play Pratijñāyaugandharāyana, which takes place between Udayana and Vāsavadattā. This can also be termed as a Rākṣasa marriage, as Udayana Kidnaps Vāsavadattā from the abode of her parents.

Lastly the form of marriage which is found mentioned in the plays of Bhāsa is the Anuloma or hypergamy, in which the bride and

11. Dhātrī- anyaprpayajanenehāgatasyabhijanavijñānavayorūparām dṛṣṭvā svayameva mahārājena dattā- Svap, Act II.
12. Kauṭijyāyanah-idānāh tu kāśīrājena putrasya kāranād dūtaḥ preṣitaḥ – Avi, Act, I.

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the bridegroom belong respectively to upper caste and lower caste. The marriage between Sajjalaka and Madanikā in the 'Cārudatta' comes under this category, as because Sajjalaka being a brāhmana weds Madanikā, a courtesan.

It may be noted in this context that though the Gāndharva and Rākṣasa forms of marriage are in vogue at the period of Bhāsa, religious rites have been considered necessary to give a complete shape of that marriage. So, it is found that though Avimāraka and Kuraṅgī have been united by the Gāndharva form of marriage, later on, their marriage is performed in front of fire\textsuperscript{13}. In the Svapnavāsavadatta there is a reference that after the kidnapping of Vāsavadattā by Udayana, Avantirāja, the father of Vāsavadattā performs her wedding ceremony by using the portraits of the bride and the bridegroom\textsuperscript{14}.

The plays of Bhāsa also acquaint us with the notion of the responsibilities of the parents towards their daughters. Marriage appears to be the most important duty of the parents for their daughters. While giving the marriage of their daughters, parents use to consider several factors. The requisite qualities in a bridegroom are manifold. First of all he should belong to an aristocratic family.

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item[13.] Naradaḥ - niṣṭhīto vivāho nanu gāndharvāḥ svasamaya eva idanīṁ
Kuntībhojaḥ - agnisākṣikamicchāmi
Naradaḥ - nityamagnih sākṣyeva tathāpi svajanaparitoṣanārthamavyantara
-samayamātramupādhyāyena kārayitva śīghramānīyatāmiḥa kumāraḥ saha bhāryayā
Avī, Act VI.

\item[14.] Dhatrī - ātmanaścapalatayā'ṅivṛttavivāhāṅgala eva gataḥ athisāvābyāṁ tava ca vāsavadattāyāśca pratikrtirī citraphalakāyāṃ ālikhyā vivāho nivṛttaḥ - Svap, Act VI.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
Thereafter he should be compassionate, delicate and strong. Further he should be handsome. It is not desired as a quality, but to save the bride's father from the criticism of the women of the bride's side. And lastly the bridegroom should be courageous and powerful enough so that he can protect his wife\textsuperscript{15}.

Mothers also are found to give their opinion in selecting the bridegroom for their daughters. Devī Āṅgāravati, the mother of princess Vāsavadattā gives her valuable opinion by the terms, ‘Give her to that fellow for which there would be no cause for repentence’ \textsuperscript{16}. Moreover it is seen that the views of the wives carry weight with their husbands. This is evident from the fact that the marriages of Kuraṅgī and Vāsavadattā are postponed in deference according to the wishes of their mothers\textsuperscript{17}.

It appears that at the period of Bhāsa, maidens have some voice in choosing their life partners. Padmāvatī in the Svapnavāsavadatta does not want her connubial relation with the son of king Pradyota Mahāsenā\textsuperscript{18}. In the play Avimāraka also a similar situation is met with. When Kuraṅgī hears the news that she has been given in the hand of prince Jayavarman, she makes the soliloquy

\begin{verbatim}
15. kulaṁ tāvacchāgyam prathamamabhikānkṣe hi manasaḥ/
tataḥ sānukrōṣaṁ mṛduḥapi guṇo hyeṣa valavān //
tato rūpe kānti na khalu guṇataḥ strījanabhayāt /
tato vīryodagram na hi na paripālyā yuvatayah //
16. Devī - yatra dattā na santapyāmahe, tatra dīyatam - Prat. Yau, Act II.
17. Devī - alamidānīṁ tvarītvā i vālā me dārikā; yadabhurucitāṁ bhavatyi -
Prat. Yau, Act II.
18. Cetī - bhartūdārikā tena rājñā saṁvandaṁ necchati - Svap, Act II.
\end{verbatim}

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that she herself is her master. By this, Kuraṅgī reveals her unwillingness for the proposal and means to say that the marriage would not be possible without her consent.

The different aspects of the married life of the female figures is also met with in the plays of Bhāsa. A true picture of ideal conjugal love have been depicted in the plays of Bhāsa. There the mutual love and sense of duty have been the foundation of the relation between husband and wife. It seems that the prime duty of a wife is to follow her husband in every situation, in prosperity as well as in adversity. Thus it is seen in the Pratimāṇāṭaka that Sītā wishes to go along with her husband when Rāma is on his way to exilement to the forest.

This sense of duty on the part of the wife is not one-sided; the husband also has the duty to protect his wife. Waiting upon the parents of the husband has also been included as the duty of the wife.

In the family life wife is regarded as ardhaṅginī, the half of her husband, in the truest sense of the term. She is considered by her husband as the mistress of the household. It is signified by the fact

19. Kuraṅgī - ahamātmanah prabhavāmi - Avi, Act III.
20. Rāmaḥ - maiyekākinā kila gantavyam
   Sītā - ato no khulvanugacchāmi
   Rāmaḥ - vane khalū vastavyam
   Sītā - tat khalu me prāśādaḥ - Pratimā, Act I.
22. (a) Rāmaḥ - śvaśrūśvaśuraśrūṣāpi ca te nivartayitavyā? Pratimā, Act I;
    (b) Rājā - sarvathā śvaśuraparicaranaśamarthe vayasi vartate vāṣavadattā - Prat. Yau, Act II.
23. śarIrārdhena me pūrvamāvaddhā hi yadā tvayā - Pratima, I,10.
that, Naridagopa in the play Bālacarita designates his wife Devakī by the terms ‘kuṭumbini’ and ‘gehalakṣśmi’\textsuperscript{24}. It appears that wife can express her view in the internal affairs of the family. Thus it is found in the Pratijñāyaugandharāyaṇa that both the king Pradyota Mahāsena and queen Aṅgāravati consult each other regarding the selection of a suitable bridegroom for their daughter Vāsavadattā, and ultimately the opinion of Aṅgāravati is approved by her husband and accordingly Vāsavadattā’s marriage is delayed\textsuperscript{25}.

With regard to the enjoyment of freedom of a maiden and a married woman it is seen that the later enjoyed the less. This is hinted at the words of Pradyota Mahāsena in the play Pratijñāyaugandharāyaṇa when he says about his daughter Vāsavadattā that she should play as she likes, because this will not be available at the abode of her father-in-law\textsuperscript{26}. Such type of reference is also met with in the Svapnavāsavadatta when the maid servant says Padmāvatī – “Play on, play on, my princess; let the charming time of maidenhood be enjoyed”\textsuperscript{27}.

Through a study of the plays of Bhasa it appears that the principal aim of a wife is to look after the happiness and well-being

\textsuperscript{24} Nandagopah - kimidānīṁ na gehalakṣmyāṁ na rantvā tato na ujjhitvā nanu gacchasi i ......adyō hyardharātre'smākaṁ ca dārtītapasvini jātamātraivāpagata prāṇā saṁvyttā - Bāla, Act I.

\textsuperscript{25} Devī- alamidānīṁ tvarītā vālē me dārikā ; Rājā- yadabhīrucitaṁ bhavatyaī- Prat. Yau, Act II.

\textsuperscript{26} Rājā - Kriḍātu kriḍātu naitad sulabham śvaśurakule – Prat. Yau, Act II.

\textsuperscript{27} Cetī- kriḍātu kriḍātu tāvad bharṭḍārikā : nirvartyatāṁ tāvadayāṁ kanyābhāvaramaṇīyaḥ kālaḥ – Svap, Act II.

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of her husband. Keeping this in view, she is always ready to make any sort of sacrifice for her husband. Thus, Brāhmaṇī, the wife of poor Cārudatta, hearing the theft of Vasantasena’s ornaments and the sad plight of her husband, at once gives away her precious pearl-necklace, the gift from her relatives, for the sake of her husband. Again in the Svapnavāsavadatta it strikes our mind when Vāsavadattā spends a period of exilement in disguise and faces boundless sufferings only with a view to bring about the marriage of her husband Udayana with Padmāvatī. Such a self-denial on the part of a female figure, for the welfare of her husband is indeed rare and unparallel. The behaviour of the husband towards his wife is also appreciable; he too sincerely loves his wife. Vatsarāja Udayana, in the Svapnavāsavadatta, cannot forget the memory of Vāsavadattā, his dead wife even after his marriage with Padmāvatī.

In another place Udayana expresses his unshaken love for Vāsavadattā while he states that, although Padmāvatī is liked by him for her beauty and conduct; still she is unable to win the heart of Udayana set on Vāsavadattā.

It is stated in a Vedic injunction that an unmarried man or a widower has no right to perform sacrifice. Moreover, a married man is not allowed to attain the right of sacrifice or ritual unless he is

28. Brāhmaṇī-mama jñātikulīd labhdhā śatasahasramūlyā muktāvalī tamapāryaputraḥ sautīratayā praticchati- Cāru, Act III.
29. Svap, VI, 11.
30. Svap, IV, 4.
31. ayajño vā eṣa yo’patnikaḥ- Tai. Br, 2.2 2.6; Ś. Br, 5.1.6.10.

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accompanied by his wife. There is a reference in the Rāmāyaṇa about Rāma’s making the golden image of Sītā in order to acquire the status of a yajamāna. It appears that the same tradition also prevails during the time of Bhāsa. The term ‘sahadharmacāriṇī’ which is met with in the Pratimānāṭaka suggests that the wife is the associate of her husband in his religious activities.

Polygamy, one of the features of conjugal life in ancient India seems to be in vogue in the age of Bhāsa. King Udayana in the Svapnavāsavadatta is described as having two wives viz., Vāsavadattā and Padmāvatī. In the play Ūrubhaṅga also it is found that Duryodhana has two wives viz., Mālavī and Pauravī. Another reference may be cited in this context. In the Svapnavāsavadatta Udayana enquires about the welfare of his mother-in-law from Vasundharā by the term ‘śoḍaśāntahpurajyeṣṭhā’. Nevertheless, references are also there which prove that polygamy has not become the custom of the day. It is seen that the characters like Sajjalaka in the Cārudatta and Brāhmaṇa Keśavadāsa in the Madhyama-vyāyoga are having single wife. Thus, it appears that at that period, polygamy is generally non-existent among the commoners. Again it seems that people are scrupulous about marrying second time if the first wife is alive. In the Svapnavāsavadatta Udayana does not even dream of marrying a second time in the presence of his first wife Vāsavadattā. It is in accordance with the planning of Yaugandharāyaṇa that Vāsavadattā is removed from the scene before such a marriage could even be contemplated.

32. Rām, 2.27, 7.
33. Sītā- nanu sahadharmacāriṇī khalvaham- Pratimā, Act I.
34. śoḍaśāntahpurajyeṣṭhā puṇyā ṇagāraṇevaṭā/
mama pravāsadukhārtā mātā kuśalinī nanu //
Svap, VI, 9.
Further it is noteworthy that the reference of the evil consequences of polygamy such as jealousy, quarrel among co-wives etc. are not met with in the plays of Bhāsa. Vāsavadattā and Padmāvatī have a sisterly affection for each other.\textsuperscript{35}

The appearance of female figures before the public freely is perhaps not considered laudable at the time of Bhāsa. It is evident from the fact that queen Aṅgāravatī, in the Pratijñāyaugandharāyaṇa, and Padmāvatī, in the Svapnavāsavadatta, stand up to go away at the announcement of entrance of strangers.\textsuperscript{36} But if in the presence of honoured guests or relatives female figures leave away, then it may be treated as an insult for the former. The following incident may be cited in this context. In the Svapnavāsavadatta while announcement is made about the arrival of the messengers from Mahāsenā, and Padmāvatī wishes to go, Udayana reminds her that they might take it amiss that she quits in their presence.\textsuperscript{37}

It seems that men are not expected to enter the places of female figures. Perhaps this is the reason why the Brahmācārī, in the Svapnavāsavadatta, hesitates to enter the hermitage seeing Vāsavadattā there in disguise.\textsuperscript{38}

Female figures in their married life perhaps had to follow some certain code of conduct. In those days, perhaps, the female figures.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{35} Vāsavadattā (svagatam) - rājadāriketī śrutvā bhaginīkāsneho'pi met'ra sampadyate - Svap, Act-I.
\item \textsuperscript{36} Prat. Yau, Act II; Svap, Act VI.
\item \textsuperscript{37} Rājā- kālatradarśanāram āhān janaṁ kālatradarśanāt pariharatītī vahudoṣa- muptādayati tasmādāsyatām - Svap, Act VI.
\item \textsuperscript{38} Brahmācārī - aye strijanaḥ - Svap, Act I.
\end{itemize}
were strictly guarded to keep them above suspicion. This seems to be the reason behind Yaugandharāyaṇa's keeping Vāsyaḍāttā in the custody of Padmāvatī, whom he has planned to make Udayana's wife in the very near future. Yaugandharāyaṇa testifies to this fact by his statement to Padmāvatī at the starting of the play, and in another place as a soliloquy.

Some of the incidents which are found in the play Avimaraka perhaps suggest that the activities of the female figures are looked on unscrupulous and untrustworthy. As for instance, the possibility for the young prince Avimaraka to enter the apartments of the maiden princess Kuraṅgī, his being able to live there with her for more than one year, and such other incidents appear to reflect the growing suspicion and unfair feelings against the female figures, which may have taken root in the society during that period.

It appears that in those days a thought prevailed among the people that the company of the female figures can make even a good man bad. This may be testified through the words of the third Brāhmaṇa in the Pañcarātra.

The female figures as mothers always occupy an exalted status in Indian society. From the ancient past till the present day, mother

40. Yaugandharāyaṇa (ātmagatam) - tataḥ pratiṣṭhite svāmīṁ tatra bhavatīmupanayato me ihārabhavatī magadharājugatī viśvāsasthānam bhaviṣyaṁ - Svap, Act I.
41. Nalinikā - eṣa khalu saṁvatsaro'vikrānto bhartiḍārikāya avicchinnasukhasambhogenā ratim kṛtvā - Avi, Act IV.
42. nivisto duṣkule sādhuḥ strīdoṣeṇeva dahyate // Pañca, I,14.
has always been treated with high esteem. To quote Manu, the great
law-giver, "One Āchāryya is ten times more venerable than a teacher, a
father a hundred times more than the Āchāryya, but the mother a
thousand times more than the father\(^\text{43}\). The same tradition can be
met with in the plays of Bhāsa too, where mothers have been treated
with great reverence. Bhīma in the Madhyama-vyāyoga, states that
for a man, his mother is certainly the God of the Gods even i.e.,
mother’s status is higher than the Gods also\(^\text{44}\). One is liable to act
anything at the command of his mother. So it is seen in the Madhyama-
vyāyoga that Ghaṭotkaca does not hesitate to kill a brāhmaṇa even
only to obey his mother’s order\(^\text{45}\). Mothers seem to occupy a dignified
status in the society. The sons are generally addressed by the names
of their mothers. The use of such words like Kaikeyīmātā, Gāndhārīmātā in the Pratimānāṭaka, Karṇabhārā etc. are evident in
this regard.

So far as the status of the widows is concerned, sufficient
information is not available in the plays of Bhāsa. But some stray
references, here and there, give us an idea that the widows do not
achieve the desirable position in the society. Widows seem to be
considered as inauspicious and so they are excluded from the
auspicious occasions. There is a reference in the Svapnavāsavadatta
that when the king Udayana is going to be married with Padmāvatī,

\[^{43}\text{upādhyāyān daśācāryyyā ācāryyaṇāṁ śatam pitā /}
\text{sahāsrantu pitrṇmātā gauravenātiricyate //}
\text{Manu, I, 145.}

\[^{44}\text{Bhīma-mātā kila manusyaṇāṁ devatānāṁ ca daivatam - MV, I, 37.}

\[^{45}\text{Ghaṭotkaca- akāryametacca mayādya kāryarṇ māturniyogādapanīya śaṅkām -}
\text{MV, I, 9.}

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he is found to be escorted only by the female figures having their husbands\(^{46}\). Thus, it appears that the widows has no entrance in auspicious occasions. Further reference also is there, which perhaps shows that the widows have to wear separate distinguishing costumes. In the Dūtaghaṭotkaca, when Jayadratha is found to be the cause of Abhimanyu’s death, Duḥśalā, being afraid of her husband’s life, says that she also would go to console Uttarā. Duḥśalā, stating the reason of her decision, says, ‘I shall go and tell her that I am also going to wear the widow’s garments like you very soon’\(^{47}\).

The custom of Sātī or the immolation of widows on the funeral pyre of her husband, was probably not in vogue during the age of Bhāsa. A single reference of Sātī is met with in the Īrubhaṅga, where Pauravī, one of Duryodhana’s wives, is firmly determined to ascend the funeral pyre of her husband\(^{48}\). Side by side, it is also seen that Kauśalyā, Kāikeyī and Sumitṛā, the wives of king Daśaratha are surviving after the death of their husbands. Thus, it appears that the custom of Sātī was not in vogue at large in those days.

It seems that the purdah system or the veiling cloth covering the whole face including the head, was in vogue in the society. The veil was considered as a mark of dignity for the female figures of royal families. It hurts Duryodhana very much at the time when his wives had to come to the open battlefield with their heads uncovered\(^{49}\).

46. Ceti esa jāmatā avidhāvabhiravyantaraṇacatuḥśālaṁ praveśyate - Svap, Act IV.

47. Duḥśalā - evaṁ ca bhāniṣyami - adya kālikaṁ ca te veṣa-grahana-mahama - pyupadhaṁrayiṣyāṃti - DG, Act I.


49. purvarī na jāṁmi gadābhīghātarujāmāṇīṁ tu samarthāyāmi / yanme prakāśiṣṭamūrdhajāni raṇaṁ praviṣṭāṃvyavrodhanāṁ // Īru, I, 38.
In the Pratimānāṭaka Rāma requests Sītā to remove her veil just before departing to the forests and says that there is no fault in exposing the faces of the female figures to the public under special circumstances\(^50\). Similar idea is also found in the Rāmāyaṇa\(^51\). But it may be noted in this connection that the evils of the custom of purdah such as the seclusion of the female figures, their permanent confinement to the inner apartments etc. are not found in existence at that time. Maidens, however, do not use any sort of cover over their face. Princess Vāsavadattā goes to the Yakṣīṇī temple to worship by a palanquin, the screen of which has been removed\(^52\).

Another notable aspect regarding the position of the female figures in society is that, the buying and selling of the female figures as slaves and getting them freed by paying money ransom is used to be the system at the time of Bhāsa. Madanikā’s position in the

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50. Rāmaḥ- maithili ! apanīyatāmavagunṭhaṇam; bho bhoh paurāḥ i śūnvantu śūnvantu bhavantaḥ –
svairam hi paśyantu kalartrametad vāśpākulākṣairvadananirbhavantaḥ /
nirdoṣadṛṣyā hi bhavanti nāryo yajñe vivāhe vyasane vane ca //
Pratimā, I, 29.

51. vyasanesu ca kṛccheṣu na yuddheṣu svayaṁvare /
na kratau na vivāhe ca darśanaṁ duṣyati strīyāḥ //
Rām, VI. 117. 27.

52. Vidūṣakāḥ- vāsavadattā nāma rājadārikā dhātriṃvitiyā kanyakādarśanaṁ nir-
doṣamiti kṛtṛvā panītakaṇṭukāyāṁ śibikāyāṃavaghattitaprāṇiṃ-prasrutasalila-
viṣamam rājamārgam pariḥtya yattad bhandhanadvārasasyāgrato bhagavatyā 
yakṣīṇyāḥ sthānam, tasmin devakāryam karturū kartiṣṭ- Prat. Yau, Act III.
Cārudatta and the attempt of theft by Sajjālaka to get her freed by paying her mistress Vasantasena testifies this fact. The prevalence of the custom of Niyoga i.e., levirate can be gathered from Dūtavākya of Bhāsa. Duryodhana makes the query about the right to kingdom, which is lying in Pāṇḍu’s share, would be of the sons, who were born of Pāṇḍu, his uncle, after he had become disabled to get the children. At this Kṛṣṇa retorts by asking Duryodhana how Dhṛtarāṣṭra could have a right to the kingdom of Vicitravīrya, since he was born of Vyāsa after the death of the former. All these perhaps testify the prevalence of Niyoga system in those days.

There is a reference in the Pañcarātra which perhaps hints at the deteriorating condition of the female figures in the society. In reply to the query of the charioteer as to what should he describe about the captor of Abhimanyu, beauty or valour, Bhīṣma says that women are known by their beauty, and men are known by their valour. This statement of Bhīṣma probably show that, in those days beauty perhaps played a prominent role in recognising the woman.

53. Sajjālakaḥ—yāvadidānāṁ vasantasenaṁḥ paricārikāṁ madanikāyā niṣkrayārthāṁ mayedaṁ kṛtām—Cāru, Act IV.


56. Svātāḥ—kimahīdhāṣyāmi rūpaṁ vai parākramaṁ vāḥ Bhīṣma—rūpeṇa striyaḥ kathāntaḥ parākrameṇa tu puruṣāḥ—Pañca, Act III.
From a study of the status of the female figures in society, as reflected in the plays of Bhāsa the impression, which may come to the mind of the readers is that the female figures enjoyed freedom and honour more or less in those days. But it is also seen that the great dramatist has depicted the wives who are mainly concerned with the household activities and following their husbands as their prime duty. On the basis of this, it may be said that the female figures after their marriage enjoyed less freedom in comparison with their male companion in the society.

It is also noteworthy that in those days female figures, in their different roles, such as daughter, wife, mother etc. had been treated with due respect. Specially the position of female figure as a daughter seems to be really appreciating. She was reared with utmost care and affection, which reveals that the people of that period were well concerned with the welfare of their daughters; and this aspect, which is very much relevant even today and will remain forever, has been delineated by Bhāsa with human touch and in an appreciating manner.

**STATUS OF FEMALE FIGURES IN THE PLAYS OF KĀLIDĀSA**

From a study of the three plays of Kālidāsa the idea, which may instantly arise in the mind of the readers is the attitude of the dramatist towards the female figures. It appears that Kālidāsa approaches his female characters with a feeling of honour and importance. Female figures in their different roles and under different conditions has been portrayed by Kālidāsa in his three dramas viz., the Abhijñānaśakuntalam, the Mālavikāgnimitram and Vikramorvaśīyam.
as the daughter, the wife, the mother, the widow, the love-lorn woman, the discontented beloved, the deserted woman and as one who takes the path of austerity.

However, to highlight the status of the female figures as depicted by Kālidāsa, it requires a thorough study on his three plays.

The position of the female figure portrayed by the dramatist seems to be appealing. Daughters are nurtured by their guardians with great care and affection. The name of Śakuntalā, the hermit-girl in the Abhijñānaśākuntalam may be cited in this context as example. Śakuntalā has been brought up by the sage Kaṇva, who though becoming her foster-father gives her genuine and real affection. He considers her as everything of his life. This is hinted at the statement of Anasūyā and Priyarñavādā, the two friends of Śakuntalā, when they were busy in showing hospitality to the king Duṣyanta\textsuperscript{57}. A similar type of reference is also met with in another place of this play, where one of the disciples of the sage Kaṇva states that Śakuntalā is indeed the very breath of life of the revered patriarch Kaṇva\textsuperscript{58}. This picture of an affectionate father is again revealed at the time of Śakuntalā’s departure from the hermitage towards the abode of her husband. Sage Kaṇva has been seriously afflicted by the first pangs of separation from his daughter, and became helpless in controlling his senses and says that if the affliction through affection is so great

\textsuperscript{57} Sākhya-u-imaṁ jīvitasarvasvenāpi atithiviseṣāṁ kṛtārtham kariṣyati-Abhi.Ś, Act – I.

\textsuperscript{58} Śiṣyaḥ-sā hi tatrabhavataḥ kulapaterucchvasitam- Abhi. Ś, Act III.
even to him, an ascetic, then how are the house-holders stung by the pangs of first separation from their daughters 59.

But it is to be mentioned here that the female child born of an illegal relation, was not perhaps treated with affection. Thus it is found in the Abhijñānaśakuntalam that, Sakuntalā, the illegal daughter of the sage Viśvāmitra and the heavenly nymph Menakā has been forsaken by her parents and then it is the sage Kanva who fosters her as a real father 60.

The girls as depicted by Kālidāsa in his dramas appears as enjoying perfect freedom, at the abode of their fathers. They can pass their leisure time by playing the game of ball with their friends. In the Mālavikāgnimitram, there is a reference that Kumārī Vasulakṣmī has become frightened by the appearance of a yellowish brown monkey, when she was running behind a ball (kanduka) 61. This testifies the above statement. The maidens used to grow different types of trees

59. yāsyatyadya śakuntaleti ṣṛdayam saṁśpraśamutkaṇṭhaḥ
   kaṇṭhaḥ stambhitavāspavyttri kaluṣaścintājaqāṁ darśanam /
   vaiklavāṁi mama tāvadiddīśamaho snehādaranyaukasaḥ
   piḍyante grhināḥ katharī nu tanayāvīśleṣadukhairnavaiḥ //
   Abhi. Ś, IV, 6.

60. Anasūyā - asti ko'pi kauśika iti gotranāmadheyo mahāprabhāvo rājarśiḥ :
    ... ... ... ...
   Anasūyā - tvam āvayoḥ priyasakhyāḥ prabhavam avagaccha :
   ujjhitāḥ sārīrāsamvardhanā'dibhīḥ tātakāśyapāḥ asyāḥḥ pitā — Abhi.Ś, Act I.

61. Joyasena - deva kumārīvasulakṣmī kandukamanudhāvantī piṅgalavānareṇā
   valavatāsitānkanjaśaṇī devyāḥ pravātakisalayamiva vepamāna na kimapi
   prakṛtiṃ pratipadyate -Māla, Act IV.

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and creepers, and also rear birds and animals like peacocks, deers etc. In the Abhijñānaśākuntalam, the treatment of Śakuntalā towards nature, may be referred to in this context. Śakuntalā loves, as her kith and kin, the trees and creepers so much that she can not drink even a drop of water without watering them; even though fond of ornamenting herself she never plucks a tender leaf, and her greatest festivity comes at the moment when the trees first put forth their blossoms. At the time of Śakuntalā's departure from the hermitage towards her husband's abode, the trees and animals also become moved with sorrow. So, the deers appear as dribbled down the mouthful of kusa-grass, the peacocks give up their dancing, and the creepers as it were, shedding tears with the falling of dry leaves. Śakuntalā shows her anxiety for the pregnant doe and requests her father to inform her of her safe delivery. At the time of her going out of the hermitage, the motherless deer whom she brought up with motherly affection, does not forsake her and with tearful eyes she caresses it and persuades it to stay there.

62. पातृं ना प्रथामां व्यवशयति जलां युष्मास्वपि तेषु याः

नादत्ते प्रियामन्दानि पिय भवातं स्नेहं ता पालावम् /

ādyē vaḥ kusumaprasūṭisamaye yasyā bhatavyutsavaḥ

seyāṁ वांति Śakuntalā patighāṁ sarvaírūjñāyatāṁ //

Abhi. Ś, IV, 9.

63. udgalita darbha kavalā mṛgah, parityaka nartanā mayūrāḥ /
apaśāta pāṇḍupatā, muñcántyaśruṇīva latāḥ //

Abhi. Ś, IV, 12.

64. Śakuntalā-ताता, एषा उत्ताजा पर्यांसं कारिन् गर्भाभारांमर्थारः
mṛgavadhūḥ yādā anaghapraśavā bhavati, tādā me kampī priya

nivedaitārāṁ visarjāyisyasi – Abhi. Ś, Act-IV.

65. yasya tvaya vṛṇāvīropagamiṅgudīnāṁ
tailarṇa nyāṣicātā mukhe kuśā śūci viddhe /

śyāmāka muṣṭiparivardhitakā jahāti so'yaṁ

na putrakṛtakaḥ padaviṁ mṛgaste, //

Abhi. Ś, IV, 14.

Śakuntalā - Vatsa, kīṁ sahaśāsā pariṣṭāγiṁīṁ māmanuvadhānīśi i: acira

prasūṭo paratayā janañāśvinā vivardhitā eva i: idānīmapi mayā virahitaṁ

tvāṁ tātaścintayisyati i: tannivartasva – Abhi. Ś, Act IV.
Regarding the system of female education as revealed from the plays of Kālidāsa, it may be said that, female figures could avail educational facilities at that time. But no reference as such, of the availability of educational institution is there in the three plays of Kālidāsa. However, stray references here and there suggest that there are provisions of various courses of fine-arts such as, singing, dancing, painting etc. Mālavikā, the heroine of the play Mālavikāgnimitram has shown her proficiency in music and dance. Teachers have been appointed to give instructions in dancing and singing to the maidens. The name of two Nātyācāryas Haradatta and Gaṇadāsa, who have been appointed as the music teachers of Mālavikā indicates that special arrangements were made for making princesses adept in different branches of fine-arts. This system of educating the female figures in fine-arts was also in vogue among the common people. It may be testified from the incident that the two girls, who have been offered as a gift to king Agnimitra, from the Vidarbha country were quite at home in the art of music. Parivrājikā Paṇḍitkauśikī has been given a covetable position in the court of Agnimitra, by making her the judge in the dance performance of Mālavikā, which obviously proves the former's efficiency in fine-arts.

66. Parivrājikā - yathādṛṣṭaṁ sarvamanavadyam ikutaḥ-
   aṅgairantarñihitaivaśca sūcitaḥ samyagarthah
   padanyāśo layamanugatastanmayatvarṁ raseṇu/
   śākhāyonirmdurabhinayastadviṣaśpānvaturetau
   bhāvo bhāvarṁ nudati viśayāḍaṅgavandhaṁ sa eva //
   Māla, II, 8.

67. Māla, Act I.

68. Ubhe - bhartaḥ sangīte'bhyantare svaḥ - Māla, Act V.

69. Rājā - bhagabhāti atrabhavatorharadatta gaṇadāsasyoḥ
   parasparaṁ viṁśatāraṁghharṣo jātaḥ ātadatra bhagavatयā
   prāśnikapadamadhyāsitavyam - Māla, Act I.
Panḍitkauśikī is also skilled in decoration. It is her efficiency in this art, that she has been selected by Dhārini for the wedding-decoration of Mālavikā\(^{70}\). Bakulāvalikā is also quite at home in the same art, which she learnt from the king Agnimitra\(^{71}\). In the Abhijñānaśākuntalam, Anasūyā, while stating the love-lorn condition of Śakuntalā, says that Śakuntalā’s pitiable condition is similar to that, which is heard of love-sick persons in historical stories\(^{72}\). This statement perhaps testifies to the fact, that female figures were provided to learn different branches of study like history, Purāṇa, literature etc. apart from fine-arts.

Marriage, which is one of the recognised major duties of life, appears to be obligatory for the female figures in the age of Kālidāsa. It appears that the unmarried girl has been treated as a great encumbrance. In the Abhijnanasākuntalam, the repeated statements of Kanva in the matter of Śakuntalā’s marriage, points towards a society which considers marriage an obligatory for the girls. When Śakuntalā was taking leave of Vanajyotsnā, her foster-sister, Kanva expresses his satisfaction saying that he has been free from all anxieties concerning both of them; because Śakuntalā has obtained a suitable husband as desired by him, and the creeper also has

\(^{70}\) Vidūṣakaḥ - adya kila devyā panḍitakauśikī bhaṇjitā bhagavati yattvam prasādhana garvaṁ vahasi taddarśaya mālavikāyāḥ śarīre vaidarbham vivāhanapathyamiti - Māla, Act V.

\(^{71}\) Mālavikā - ...... kena prasādhana kalāyāṁ abhinītāśi Bakulāvalikā - atra khalu bhartuḥ śiṣyāsmī - Māla, Act III.

\(^{72}\) Anasūyā - ...... kintu yaḍrśi itihāsanivandheṣu kāmayamānāṁ samavasthā śrūyate tādṛṣṭāṁ te prekṣe - Abhīś, Act III.
united with the mango tree\textsuperscript{73}. Again the words of Kaṇva at the end of the fourth act, highlight the idea of the society that, by sending the daughter to her husband's abode, the father gets relief, as because the maiden is really a property of others and having sent her to her husband, the father feels relieved like a man who has returned to the owner the trust left with him\textsuperscript{74}. This is perhaps an echo of the saying of Manu, according to which the father who does not give away the girl in marriage at the proper age, the husband who does not enjoy her at the proper time, and the son who does not protect the widowed mother are all to be despised \textsuperscript{75}.

It seems that the maidens at the time of Kālidāsa can take up the vow of lifelong celibacy, though it is not a very common custom. In the Abhijnanasakuntalam, the query of Duṣyanta to Priyārvadā, to know the intention of father Kaṇva about Śakuntalā as to whether she is to lead a life of celibacy or she is to be given in marriage testifies the above statement\textsuperscript{76}.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{73} \textit{sāṅkalpitarṁ prathamameva mayā tavārthe bhartāramātmaśaṁ sukṣtaigaratā tvam/ cūtena saṁśrītataṁ navamallikeyam asyāmahāṁ tvayi ca samprati viścitacāntah} // Abhi. S, IV, 13.
\item \textsuperscript{74} \textit{Kaṇva - Śakuntalāṁ patikularṁ visṛṇya lavdhamidānṁīṁ svāsthyam i kutaḥ- artho hi kaṇyā parakāya eva tāmadya saṁśreṣṭha parigrahituḥ/ jāto mamāyaṁ viśādaḥ prakāmaṁ pratyarpitanyāṁsa ivāntarātmā //} Abhi. S, IV, 22.
\item \textsuperscript{75} \textit{kāleḍāta vācyo vācyoścānupayanpatiḥ / mṛte bhartari putrastu vācyo māturarakṣita //} Manu, IX, 4.
\item \textsuperscript{76} Abhi. S, I, 24.
\end{itemize}

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Absence of child-marriage seems to be one of the most important aspects with reference to the marriage-system which can be met with in the plays of Kālidāsa. The maidens at their marriageable age are portrayed as quite grown up and youthful. This perhaps goes to prove that child-marriage was not the custom of the day; and girls are given into marriage at a mature age, when they are aware of the significance of marriage in their lives. It may also be noted in this context that, maidens at their marriageable age, are not perhaps permitted to move about freely. This is evident from the fact that, while Śakuntalā on her way to Hastināpura, desires to accompany her two friends; Kaṇva remarks that it would not be proper for them to do so, because they are also to be given away in marriage.

Regarding the system of marriage which is known from the plays of Kālidāsa; the Gāndharva, Brāhma and Prājāpatya types of marriages appear to be much familiar at the period of Kālidāsa. The third, fourth and fifth acts of the Abhijñānaśakuntalam, reflect customs related to marriage of the society in those days. Gāndharva is known as love-marriage with consent. The marriage between king Duṣyanta and Śakuntalā in the Abhijñānaśakuntalam falls under this category, as both of them marry secretly with their own consent. But it may be noted in this connection, that though the Gāndharva form of marriage was in vogue at the time of Kālidāsa; it was not quite approved by

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77. adharaḥ kisalayaragāḥ komalaviṣapāṇukāriṇau vāhu /
    kasumamiva lobhanīyaṁ yauvanamaṅgeṣu sannaddham //
    Abhi. Ś, I, 19.

78. Kāgyapah - vatsel śa api pradeye tanna yuktamanayostatra
gantumā tvaẏā saha gautamī yāsyati - Abhi. Ś, Act IV.
the society in general. The repeated remarks against Śakuntalā’s
decision of Gāndharva marriage with Duṣyanta in the fifth Act;⁷⁹
and also the results shown throughout the play may also point out
that the dramatist also does not appear to be very much in favour of
it. Another notable feature which may be known from the dramas of
Kālidasā is that the girls themselves had a feeling of guilt and fear
in their minds; regarding the reactions of their fathers about the
marriage of their daughters by the Gāndharva system. It is evident
from Śakuntalā’s statement that she will not make herself an offender
towards her respected elders, and requests king Duṣyanta to keep
decorum when the later wanted to make intimate relation with her⁸⁰.
Śakuntalā finally accepts such a relation only after being assured by
Duṣyanta that, many daughters of the royal-seers is reported as
wedded by the Gāndharva rite of marriage and were afterward
welcomed by their parents⁸¹. The comment of Gautamī, the old foster-
mother, at a time when king Duṣyanta refuses to accept Śakuntalā as
his married wife may be cited as example in this context.Gautamī
becomes very remorseful when she says, “Neither of you had deemed
it necessary to take a formal permission from your elders nor did you
consult your relatives before entering into this union. In such a

⁷⁹. Sarngarava - itthamatmakṛtapratihataṁ cāpalam dahati /
ataḥ parīkṣya kartavyaṁ viśeṣāt saṅgataṁ rahaṁ /
aññātahṛdayesvevaṁ vairībhavati sauhṛdam //
Abhi. Ś, V, 24.

⁸⁰. Sakuntalā - na mananīyeṣu ātmānam aparādhayiṣyāmi;
paurava, rakṣa vinayam : madanasantaptāpi nahi ātmanaḥ prabhavāmi-
Abhi. Ś, Act III.

⁸¹. gāndharveṇa vīvāhena vahvyo rājārṣikānyakāḥ/
śrūyante parinātāṁ pitraḥścābhinanditāḥ //
Abhi. Ś, III, 21.
matter which took place through reciprocal love, what is the need of a third person to say to either? All the above remarks are perhaps sufficient to show that though the Gāndharva form of marriage existed as legally binding, the society did not take it favourably.

There is a significant aspect which may be noticed in the Gāndharva system of marriage is that, the society perhaps did not accept it as a complete form of marriage. This may be the reason behind sage Kāṇva’s sending his daughter Śakuntalā to her husband’s abode, following all the auspicious marriage rituals and decorating her in the bridal garments and ornaments; though Śakuntalā and Duṣyanta were married earlier in accordance with the Gāndharva rites of marriage. Such attitude of the society is also echoed in the words of Śāṅgarava, who accompanied Śakuntalā at the court of Duṣyanta. Introducing Śakuntalā before the king, Śāṅgarava gives the message thus, “Since, by mutual understanding, you have accepted my daughter as your wife, now I allow it to be so, because you are esteemed by us as the foremost among deserving men; and Śakuntalā as the embodiment of all pious deeds. Uniting a groom and bride of equal merits, the Creator has after a long time done something beyond any criticism. So now, accept her who is about to be

82. Gautamī – ārya! kimapi vaktukāṁśmi i na me vacanāvasaro’sti : kathamiti!
   nāpeksito gurujano’naya na khalu prṣṭaśca vandhujanaḥ /
   ekākāmeva carite bhaṇāmi kimekamekasya //
   Abhi. Ś, V, 16.

83. Abhi. Ś, Act IV.
the mother of your child for joint discharge of piety. These words appears to reflect the systems of both the Gandharva and Prājāpatya types of marriages as depicted in the Manusmṛti. While the former is described as the rite by which the bride and the groom unite with each other by mutual consent in secret to fulfil their lust, the later is defined as the bestowing of the daughter by her parents on the suitable husband with the words 'for joint discharge of piety. It also, perhaps, indirectly highlights the outlook of the society that, marriage in accordance with the Gandharva system is not fully recognised; unless it is followed by other recognised forms of marriage such as Brāhma, Prājāpatya etc. Here it is to be noted that the Brāhma type of marriage, which is perhaps the fully recognised marriage at the time of Kālidāsa, is depicted in the Kumārasambhavam.

However, while giving the marriage of their daughters, parents used to be anxious about getting a suitable bridegroom. The guardians

84. Śarṅgarava – yanmithaḥ samayādīmāṁ madīyāṁ duhitaram bhavaḥ upāyaṁstata
tanmayā pṛtīmatā yuvayoraujñātām kutaḥ-
tvamarhatām prāgrasarāṁ śmṛto'si naḥ
śakuntalā mūrtimati ca satkṛyā/
samānayaṁstulyagunaṁ vadhuvaraṁ

85. icchayonyasyasaṁyogah kanyāyāśca varasya ca /
gandharvah sa tu vijñeyo maithunyah kāmasaṁbhavaḥ //

86. sahobhou caratāṁ dhamamiti vācānubhāṣyaṁ ca /
kanyāpradānamavyarcya prājāpatyo vidhiḥ śmṛtah //
of the maidens were intended to get them married to the bridegroom who are regarding as competent to their daughters 87.

It appears that in the age of Kālidāsa, the voice of the maidens weigh very little in the selection of their life-partners. This is evident from the conversation between king Duṣyanta and Śakuntalā. In the third Act of the Abhijñānaśakuntalam, when Duṣyanta expresses his feeling of love to Śakuntalā, the hermit-girl, the later wants to go from that site. But Duṣyanta wishes to turn her back forcibly. At this Śakuntalā requests the king to keep to decorum and reacts that though tormented by love she cannot act as a master of her ownself 88.

The speech of Duṣyanta in another occasion, may also be a proof on the situation of the unmarried girls. While telling about the incapability of dissuading his mind from Śakuntalā, Duṣyanta says that though he knows the sages penance-power and also knows that Śakuntalā has a master, still he cannot turn away his heart from her 89.

Regarding the condition of female figures after their marriage, ample references can be met with in the three plays of Kālidāsa; where

87. Priyaṁvadā – gurōḍ punarasyāḥ anurūpavarapradaṁe saṁkalpaḥ – Abhi. Ś, Act I.
   Anasūyā – guṇavate kanyakā pratipādāniyā ītyayaṁ tāvat prathamaḥ saṁkalpaḥ i tauṁ yadi daivameva sampādayati, nanu aprayāsena kṛtārtho gurujaṁaḥ – Ibid, Act IV.

88. Śakuntalā – paurava, rakṣa vinayam, madanasantaptaṁ nahi ātmanaḥ prabhavāmi – Abhi. Ś, Act III.

89. jāne tapaso vīyam, sā vālā paravatiti me viditaṁ /
   alamasmi tato hṛdayaṁ tathāpi nedaṁ nivartayitum //
   Abhi. Ś, III, 2.
the dramatist depicts a true picture of ideal conjugal love. Mutual love, faith, understanding and sense of duty are the basis of the relation between the husband and the wife. It may be observed that, the relation between the couple is of the nature of supplementing and complementing each other. So, it is seen in the Mālavikāgnimitram that, when the dance-performance of Mālavikā is over and the frolics of Gautama about the king Agnimitra were crossing the limits, queen Dhāriniī calmly tells Gaṇadāsa that his disciple has finished her performance, suggesting thereby that he should take away Mālavikā, thus ending all the jokes which is quite below the position of the king. The husband also shows his unshaken love and faith for his wife. Thus at the end of the Mālavikāgnimitram the king addressing the queen Dhāriniī says that, may she be always pleased with him which is the only thing he desires.

Going through the plays of Kālidāsa, it seems that the prime duty of a wife is to follow her husband in every situation, and behave well with the husband even if insulted by him. Besides these, a variety of duties are expected to be followed by the wives at the abode of their husbands. The duties and responsibilities of the female figures after their marriage is very beautifully expressed in the words of the sage Kaṇva in the Abhijñānaśākuntalam. At the time of Śakuntalā’s departure towards her husband’s house, father Kaṇva taking into account the family welfare gives her some eternal advices to be followed by the wives thus – “Should you always serve your

90. Dhāriniī – ārya gaṇadāsa! nanu darśitopadeśā te śiśyā – Māla, Act II.
91. Rājā – tvan me prasādasumukhī bhava devi nityametāvadeva hṛdaye pratipādaniyam – Māla, Act V.
superiors i.e., the in-laws; behave as a loving friend with your co-wives. Even if insulted or illtreated, never, out of anger, show a refractory spirit against your husband. Be greatly courteous towards your attendants, and not puffed up with pride and haughtiness in enjoyments. This is the way in which the young women attain the status of Gṛhiṇī, while the women who act adversely are considered as the destructive elements of the race.

Wife is considered by her husband as the mistress of his household. She is used to stay at her husband’s house at the position of a Gṛhiṇī. It is evident from the fact that, when Sakuntalā at the moment of leaving the hermitage, weeps for how she could endure the separation of her affectionate father; sage Kaṇva solaces her saying that having placed in the exalted position of the house-wife of a high-raced husband; being busy in different household activities on account of excessive wealth; and giving birth to a hallowed son she will certainly forget the pangs of separation from him.

In Kālidāsa’s plays the term ‘Devi’ is also used by the husband to designate the wife. In the Mālavikāgnimitram and the Vikramorvasīyam,

92. śuśrūṣasva gurūn, kuru priyasakhīṛttim sapatrījane,
    bharturviprakṛtāpi roṣaṇatayā māśma pratīpaṁ gamaḥ /
    bhūyīṣthaṁ bhava dākṣiṇā pariṣjane, bhogosvanutṣekinīṁ
    yāntyevaṁ ṣṛhiṁpadaṁ yuvatayo, vāmāḥ kulasyadhayaḥ //
    Abhi. Ś, IV, 18.

93. abhijanavato bhartuḥ ślāghye sthitā gṛhiṇīpade
    vibhavaḥ guruḥiḥ kṛtyai stasya pratikṣaṇamākulaṁ /
    tanayamacirāt prācīvaṁka praśūya ca pāvanaṁ
    mama virahajāṁ na tvarṁ vatsel śucaṁ gaṇayiṣyasi //
    Abhi. Ś, IV, 19.
both the queen Dhārīṇī and Ausīnārī have been addressed by the term 'Devī'; by their husbands king Agnimitra and king Purūravas. Mahādevī is another special designation, which has been given to the wife by the husband. This may be testified by the fact that, at the advent of Śakuntalā's departure towards the abode of her husband in the Abhijñānaśākuntalam, one of the female-ascetic gives her blessings to Śakuntalā with the words, "My child, may you obtain the title of 'great queen' indicative of the high honour of your husband."

If appears that in the plays of Kālidāsa the principal aim of a wife is to look after the happiness and welfare of her husband. Therefore keeping this in mind, she is always ready to make any sort of sacrifice for her husband. So, it is seen in the Vikramorvaśīyam that, queen Ausīnārī wants to please king Purūravas, her husband declaring that, she would be tied up in the bond of love with the lady who desires to be united with her husband; and the lady who is being desired by her husband. Again in reply to the query of Vidūṣaka, whether king Purūravas is so much loving to her, queen Ausīnārī says, "Fool! I want to make my husband happy even sacrificing my own happiness. By this you understand whether he is my dear or not."

94. Rājā – devīghṛhyatāmanoranyatā – Māla, Act V.
Rājā – kimnaṁmadheyametadevyā vratam – Vikram, Act III.

95. Tāpaśhāmanatāmā – jāte, bharurvaḥumānasucakam mahādevīśabdam labhasva – Abhi. Ś, Act IV.

96. Devī – esāhaṁ devatāmithunāṁ rohiniṁrgatanchanaṁ sākṣīkṛtya śṛiṣputramanuprasādayāmī adyaprabhṛti yāṁ striyamāryaputraḥ prārthayate yā cāryaputrasya samāgamapraṇayinī tayā saha maya prītiyandhena vartitavyamī – Vikram, Act III.

97. Vidusakaḥ – bhavati kim tādṛśaḥ priyastratrabhayānāḥ
Devī – mūḍha ahaṁ khalvatmanāṁ sukhaṁśanenaśyaṁputraṁ nivṛttasaṁraṁ kartumicchāmi – etāvataṁ cintaya tāvat priyo na veti- Vikram, Act III.
In the Mālavikāgnimitram also, a similar kind of sacrifice on the part of the wife is met with, where queen Dhārīṇī gives in the hand of king Agnimitra, her husband the hand of Mālavikā only to accomplish his desire\(^98\). This is very beautifully conveyed by Parivrājikā Paṇḍītkašikī when she says, “Out of great love for their husbands the chaste ladies serve the husbands even by the rivals (co-wives); the ocean-approaching rivers help the other hundreds of rivers also to reach the ocean”\(^99\).

Such types of self-denial on the part of the wife is not one-sided; the husband also sincerely loves his wife. In the Abhijñānaśākuntalam, king Duṣyanta repudiates his wife Śakuntalā under the influence of the curse of Durvāśā. But after getting the token ring, he remembers everything about his marriage with Śakuntalā. The king sometime blames the ring, for getting down in the water of Śacītīrtha, and on the other moment blames his own self for disowning his beloved\(^100\). Again Duṣyanta quoting the name of Śakuntalā says, “O dear Śakuntalā, because of abandoning you causelessly, my heart has been consuming by repentance; so please give your sight again”\(^101\). And further the behaviour of Duṣyanta

\(^{98}\) Devī (mālavikāṁ haste grhītvā) - idamāryaputraḥ priyanivedanānurūpaṁ pārītoṣikaṁ pratīcchatu – Māla, Act V.

\(^{99}\) pratipakṣeṇāpi patiṁ sevante bhartrṣvatsalāḥ sādhvyaḥ / anyasaritāṁ śatāṁ hi samudragāḥ prāpayantyavdhīm ///
Māla, V, 19.

\(^{100}\) kathanḥ nu vandhraṃkalāṅgulim karaṁ vihāyasi nimagna mambhasi /
athavā -
acetanaṁ nāma guṇam na lakṣayen maiyeva kasmādavadhīrīta priyā//
Abhi. Ś, VI, 13.

\(^{101}\) Rājā – akāraṇaparityakte! anuśayataptahṛdayastāvat anukampyatāṁ ayaṁ janaḥ punardarśānena - Abhi. Ś, Act VI.
indeed touches the heart of the reader, when after meeting Śakuntalā in the hermitage of Mātali, Duṣyanta falls at her feet for rejecting her earlier. In the Vikramorvaśīyam also, it is found that king Purūravas expresses his regard for his wife Ausīnārī by stating that, although his mind is fixed on Urvaśī: still he has great regard for Ausīnārī.

There is a reference in the Rāmāyaṇa that, Rāma made the golden image of Sītā in her absence for acquiring the status of a yajamāṇa. This is in conformity with the Vedic injunction that, a married man is not allowed to perform sacrifice or ritual without the company of his wife. This tradition of considering the wife as the associate of her husband in his religious activities, seems to be in vogue during the time of Kālidāsa. The reference of the word ‘Dharmapatnī’ which is found in the Abhijñānaśākuntalam, and ‘Sahadharmacārīṇī’ in the Vikramorvaśīyam for denoting the wife, suggests that the wife is the partner of the husband in his religious activities.

It appears that the system of polygamy was largely in vogue at the age of Kālidāsa. All the three heroes portrayed by Kālidāsa are

102. Rājā -
    sutānu! hṛdayāt pratyādeśavayālīkamapaitu
te kimapi manasaḥ sarūmohom ā vai dā valavānabhūt/
    pravalatamasāmevaṁprāyāḥ śubheṣu hi vṛttayaḥ
srajamapi śirasyaṇḍhah kṣiptāṁ dhunotyahi śaṅkayā //
     (iti pādayoh patati) Abhi. Ś, VII, 24.
103. Rājā – urvaśīgatamanaso’pi me sa eva devyāṁ vahumānaḥḥ..... Vikram, Act II.
104. (a) Mātali – diṣṭyā dharmapatnīsāmāgamena putramukhadarśanena ca'yuṣmān
    vardhate - Abhi. Ś, Act VII.
(b) Nāradaḥ - iyam corvaśīyavadāyustava sahadharmacārīṇībhavatviti- Vikram, Act V.
shown as polygamous. King Agnimitra in the Mālavikāgnimitram is described as having three wives viz. Dhārini, Irāvatī and Mālavikā. In the Vikramorvaśīyam, it is found that King Purūravas has two wives viz., Auśīnāri and Urvaśī. In the Abhijñānaśakuntalam King Duṣyanta has two other wives besides Śakuntalā, they are viz., Harṣapadikā and Vasumatī. Duṣyanta himself confesses this fact. At the moment of giving assurance to the anxious friends of Śakuntalā, Duṣyanta states that the two main glory of his dynasty will be the earth and Śakuntalā, in spite of the fact that he has a number of wives. The song of Harṣapadikā and the remark of Duṣyanta, presents before us the disgraceful picture of the society. While listening the song of Harṣapadikā, Duṣyanta remarks with laugh, “Oh! Once did I make love to her. So, I have been highly censured from her apropos of queen Vasumatī. Friend Mādhavya, go and tell Harṣapadikā from me that I am well reproved”.

The whole incident perhaps reflects the general character of the king that, he loved Harṣapadikā once and then neglected her without hesitation for a new beloved. It appears that the society that expects women to be devoted to her husband, does not go to blame Duṣyanta if he loves one today and leaves her tomorrow.

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105. parigrahavahute'pi dve pratiṣṭhe kulasyā me/
    samudrarasanā corvīsakhi ca yuvayoriyam//
    Abhi. Ś, III, 18.

106. ākāśe ādyate -
    abhinavamadhulolupa stvaṁ tathā paricumvya cūtamañjarīm/
    kamalavasatimātraniyṛtto madhukara vismṛto'syenāṁ katham/
    Abhi. Ś, V, 1.

107. Rājā (smitāṁ kṛtvā) - sakṛṇṭkaprasāito'yaṁ janaṁ tadasyaś devīṁ
    vasumatīṁ antareṇa mahadupāλambhanaṁ gato'smi i sakhe mādhavya !
    madvacaṇāducyatāṁ harṣapadikā i nipuṇamupālavo'ḥśmīti – Abhi. Ś, Act V.
References of the evil consequences of polygamy such as jealousy, envy, quarrel among co-wives etc. are also found in the plays of Kālidāsa. In the Mālavikāgnimitram it is found that Dhāriṇī, the chief queen of king Agnimitra expresses her unwillingness in arranging the dance programme to be performed by Mālavikā in presence of the king as because Dhāriṇī knows well about the soft corner of the king for Mālavikā108. In another scene of the play when Agnimitra meets Mālavikā in the pleasure-garden, and in course of their conversation wishes to embrace her, Irāvatī, the second wife, suddenly appears in front of them and scolds him in a very humiliating words. Then the king wants to pacify Irāvatī in a different way but she does not pay heed to that and leaves the place109.

Some kind of restrictions with regard to married female figures seems to be there at that period. In the Abhijnānaśākuntalam when Śakuntalā accompanied by Gautamī and two other hermits comes in front of the king Duṣyanta in his royal palace, Duṣyanta does not want to look at the veiled Śakuntalā saying that it is not proper to minutely gaze at another man’s wife110. References are also there in this play which show that, a man who come in contact with another’s wife was regarded as an offender. This may be testified from the fact that, when Duṣyanta cannot remember his marriage with Śakuntalā, he asks Śāṅgarava about the relative importance of sins in his being

108. Devī(svagatam) - kathamidānīṁ ? (gaṇadāsaṁ vilokya, janāntikam) - alamāryaputrasyotsāhakāraṇaṁ manorathaṁ pūrayītvā (prakāśam) - viramā nirarthakādāraṁbhāt – Māla, Act I.
109. Mālavikāgnimitram, Act III.
110. Rājā - bhavatu : anirvarṣanīyaṁ parakalatram – Abhi. Ś, Act V.
a repudiator of his wife or a adulterer by contact with another's wife\textsuperscript{111}.

It appears that the female figures after their marriage, have no separate identity as an individual by themselves. In this regard references may be cited from the Abhijñānaśākuntalam which may testify the above fact. At the time of departure from her paternal home towards the abode of her husband, Śakuntalā has been blessed by the female ascetics. The blessings bestowed on Śakuntalā at this moment are very significant. The first female ascetic blesses her to obtain the title of ‘Mahādevī’ indicative of the love and respect of her husband\textsuperscript{112}. The second hermitess blesses her to become the mother of heroic sons\textsuperscript{113}. And the third female ascetic blesses her to be always respected by her husband\textsuperscript{114}. Further, it seems to be customary for a married women to live always with her husband whether loved by him or otherwise. So, Śāṅgarava while reminding the king Duṣyanta about the worldly affairs, says that a married woman, however chaste she may be suspected by the people as unchaste; if she resides at the house of her kinsmen. Hence a married woman is always wished by her relatives to be near her husband, whether she is loved by him or not\textsuperscript{115}. The husband has all round authority over his wife. When

\begin{enumerate}
\item[mūḍha syāmahameśā vā vadennmithyeta satṁśaye\textsuperscript{111}]
dāratyāgī bhavāmyāho parastraśparśapāṁśulaḥ//
\end{enumerate}

\begin{enumerate}
\item[Tāpasāmītarmā - jate, bharturvahumānasucakāṁ mahādeviśabdam labhasva - Abhi. Ś, Act IV.\textsuperscript{112}]
\end{enumerate}

\begin{enumerate}
\item[Dvitiyā - vatse,vīrprasavinī bhava - Abhi. Ś, Act IV.\textsuperscript{113}]
\end{enumerate}

\begin{enumerate}
\item[Trtiyā -vatse,bharturbhumātā bhava - Abhi. Ś, Act IV.\textsuperscript{114}]
\end{enumerate}

\begin{enumerate}
\item[siṁmapi jñātikulaikasamśrayāṁ jano'nyathā bharturmatṁ viśāṃkate/ atāḥ samāpe pariṇeturiṣyate priyāpriyā vā pramadā svabandhubhiḥ// Abhi. Ś, V, 17.\textsuperscript{115}]
\end{enumerate}
Duśyānta had no remembrance of his marriage with Śakuntalā, and so does not want to accept her, then Śāradvata calmly pronounces the verdict, "This is your wife. Desert her or accept her, as you like; for the husband has absolute mastery over his wife"\textsuperscript{116}. Perhaps this statement has a similarity with the injunction found in the Manusmṛti that the husband, however bad or cruel or contemptible may be, he should be worshipped by the wife as the god\textsuperscript{117}. The above words of Śāradvata seems to reflect the base mentality of the society towards the female figures. This is once again emphasised by Śrṅgarava. When Śakuntalā cruelly disowned by her husband, starts after her relatives, Śrṅgarava in wrath tells her that if she is sure of her pure character, it is proper to live even as a slave in the house of her husband\textsuperscript{118}. This probably echoes the rule of Manu that, neither by selling nor by rejecting does the wife get separated from the husband.\textsuperscript{119}

References are there in the plays of Kālidāsa which perhaps show that, the activities of the female figures were looked as scrupulous in those days. In the fifth Act of the Abhijnānaśākuntalam especially, the attitude of the society towards the female figures is

\begin{enumerate}
\item[116.] tadeśa bhavatah patniḥ, tyaja vaināṁ ēṛṣṭah vā/ upayantarhi dāreṣu prabhutā sarvatomukhī\ //
\quad Abhi. Ś, V, 26.
\item[117.] viśīlaḥ kāmaṛṣṭto vā guṇaṁ vīryaḥ parivarjitaḥ/ upacaryaḥ sriyā sādhvyā satatāṁ devavatpatiḥ//
\quad Manu, V, 154.
\item[118.] yadi yathā vadati kṣitipastathā/ tvasmi, kirṇi piturutkulaṁ tvayā/ atha tu vṛśī śucivrataṁ atmanah/ patikule tava dāṣyaṁapi kṣamam//
\quad Abhi. Ś, V, 27.
\item[119.] na niśkrañyanisargāḥ bhāṛurabhāryāḥ vimucyate - Manu, IX, 46.
\end{enumerate}

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found in its naked form. King Duṣyanta repeatedly asks how can the sages blame him, depending only on the words of a woman. When Śākuntalā is in perplexity owing to the loss of the signet-ring, which she realised at the court, Gautamī with her natural simplicity says that the ring may possibly slipped off to the water of Śacitīrtha in Śakrāvatāra. The king then sneeringly remarks: “This is what is called the ready-wittedness of the women”. Quoting the well-known instance of the female cuckoos who cause their own young ones to be reared up by other birds, before flying in the sky, Duṣyanta says that the female figures by nature are clever and deceptive. Similar type of reference can be met with in the play Mālavikāgnimitram, where it is stated that the female figures are very clever by nature. All these ideas appear to reflect the attitude of Manu towards the female figures that, they are the personification of bad qualities; selfish and clever to obtain the thing they desire.

A significant aspect which is found in Kālidāsa is that the plots of his three plays centred round one king and the other. It appears that at that period the king was considered as the mainstay of the

120. Rājā- ayī boḥ kīmatrabhavatīpratyayādeva’smān saṁyutadośākṣaraīh kṣiṇutha – Abhi. Ś, Act V.

121. Rājā (śasmitam) - idam tat pratyutpannamati straiṇamiti yaducyate – Abhi. Ś, Act V.

122. strīnāmaśikṣitapāṭutvamāmānuṣīnām saṁdṛṣṭyate kimuta yāḥ prativodhavatyah/
prāgantaṁkṣagamanāṁ svamapatyajātam
anyairdvijaṁ parabhṛtāṁ kila poṣayanti//
. Abhi. Ś, V, 22.

123. Rājā - vayasya , nisarganipuṇā striyāḥ - Māla, Act III.

124. śāyasanamalarśkāraṁ kāmaṁ krodhanārjavam/
drohabhāvaṁ kucaryāṁ ca stribhyo manurakalpayat//
Manu, IX, 17.
kingdom, and the subjects followed the ideals setup by their king. There is a passage in the Uttarakāṇḍa of the Rāmāyaṇa, in which the people discussing about the rule of Rāma say that how can he accept back a lady who resided long in the house of another man. They also will have to do the same thing and bear with their wives also, because what the king does has to be followed by the subject\textsuperscript{125}. It appears that the same idea held good when Kālidāsa composed his plays, and he is probably justified in describing the high-born life which sets examples to the people in general.

The freedom of the female figures seems to exist only in name in those days. In the ordinary sense of the term the female figures do enjoy life. They eat, sleep and are merry as long as they are loved by their husbands. But the nature of the man is so fickle that the favour may lapse at any time. The real companionship and emotional satisfaction implied by the word ‘Sahadharmacārīṇī’ appears to exist only in words. The husband does what he likes and the Sahadharmacāraṇa amounted to the unquestioning obedience and quiet acceptance of his will by the wife. Their position being so insecure that the female figures jealously guarded the affections of their husband and are overwhelmed with anger and sorrow at the mere uttering of a possible rival. Although the man in expected to treat all his wives equally, and he should essentially have the quality of antaḥpuradāksīpya, but in reality it is absurd to expect that, a man attracted by one’s beauty can do justice to his other wives, however dear they might have been to him earlier. This point has

\begin{flushright}
125. asmākamapi dāreṣu sahaṇīyarṁ bhaviṣyati/
yathā hi kurute rājā prajāstamanau vartate//
\textit{Rām, VII, 43, 19.}
\end{flushright}
been emphasised by Kālidāsa again and again in his plays. In the Vikramorvaśīyam king Purūravas says to his jester that hundreds of gallant words of the lover do not satisfy the beloved if they lack in being sincere, like the gem with artificial colouring does not deceive one who has the knowledge of real gems. King Agnimitra in the Mālavikāgnimitram also expresses the same idea to Gautama while saying about propitiating Irāvatī. In such a situation, it is natural that the relatives of the newly married maiden become apprehensive as to her fate in the husband’s abode. Thus in the Abhijñānaśakuntalam, this kind of anxiety is revealed in the words of Anasūyā to Duṣyanta while she says, “Friend, it is heard that the kings have many wives. Please so manage that our dear friend is not to be bewept by her relatives.”

Regarding the position of the mother in society which is reflected in the plays of Kālidāsa, it appears that they were treated with high esteem. Childlessness was considered as the result of sin, and the man without a son was said to go deep down to hell. In such a situation it is natural that the female figure who saved her husband by giving birth to a son was honoured above all. And Kālidāsa also repeatedly emphasises the reverence of the female figure as the mother

126. priyavacanaśato’pi yoṣitāṁ dayita janānūnayo rasaḥdrте/ praviśatī hṛdayaṁ na tadvidān maniriva kṛṣṭmarāgayojitaḥ///
Vikram, II, 22.

127. Rājā - vayasya , nisarganipuṣṭ̄hi striyaḥ kathāṁ māmanyasaṁkrānta- hṛdayamupalālayantamapi te sakhī na lakṣaṇ iyati? atāḥ paśyāmi - uciṭaḥ praṇayā varaṁ vihantuṁ vahavaḥ khaṇḍanaḥetavo hi drṣṭaḥ/ upacāravidhirmanasvinīṁ na tu purvābhyaḥniko’pi bhāvaśūnyāḥ///
Māla, III, 3.

128. Anasūyā - vayasya , vahuvallaḥañāḥ śrīyante ; yathā śvayoḥ priyasakhi vandhujanaśoanīyāḥ na bhavati tathā nirvāhaya – Abhi. Ś, Act III.
of a son. In the Vikramorvaśīyam king Purūravas is stricken with grief owing to his childlessness, after he returned with Urvasī from the forest, which is revealed from the speech of Vidūṣaka. Afterwards when the king meets his son Āyu, he welcomes Urvasī by the term ‘Putravati’ i.e., the woman who has a son. In the Abhijnānaśakuntalam king Duśyanta’s repentance in rejecting Śakuntalā has been augmented by remembering that she is about to become a mother. Again, in the Mālavikāgnimitram, the position of queen Dhārini has been elevated as the happy mother of a heroic son.

There is another reference which hints at the dignified status that the mothers used to occupy. The son appears to introduce himself as a son of the mother. In the Vikramorvaśīyam, prince Āyu while doing obeisance to Nārada addresses himself as the son of Urvasī.

Very little information is found in the plays of Kālidāsa regarding the position of the widows. The single direct example which is met with is that of Parivrājikā Paṇḍitkauśikī in the Mālavikāgnimitram.

129. Vidūṣakaḥ - distyā cirasya kālaśyorvasīśahāyo nandanavanapramukheṣu devatāraṇyeṣu vihṛtya pratiniyātah priyavasyaḥ praviśyaḥ nagaramidānāmī sasatkāropacāraḥ prakṛteṣu rājyaṁ karotiḥ asantānatvām varjayitvā na kimāpyasya hīnam - Vikram, Act V.

130. Rājā - svāgataḥ putravatayai ita āsyatām - Vikram, Act V.

131. samropite'pyatmani dharmapatnī tyakta mayā namakulapratiṣṭhā/ kalpiṣyamāṇa mahate phalāya vasundhara kāla ivoptavā//

132. bhartrāsi yīrapatnīnāṁ śīlghyānāṁ sthāpitā dhuri/
vrāsūnāti sabdo’yam tanayāttvāmupasthitāy//
Māla, V, 16.

133. Kumaraḥ - bhagavannaurvaśeya āyuḥ praṇamati - Vikram, Act V.

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The idea appears to be that, having lost her companion, the best path for the female figures is to retreat from the world and lead a life devoid of the mundane interest. Parivrājikā took to ascetic garbs when she has been left forlorn by the accidental death of her brother\textsuperscript{134}. But widowhood is not perhaps the reason that prompted her to take up that life, for she has been staying a long time with her brother as a widow. It is the sudden death of her brother that make her alone in the world, and finally she accepts the ascetic life.

The custom of ‘Satī’ or the immolation of widows on the funeral pyre of her husband, was perhaps obsolete at the time of Kālidāsa. No mention of this custom is found in the works of Kālidāsa, either in the plays or in the poems.

It appears that the purdah system or the veiling cloth used as a sign of respectability was in vogue in the society of Kālidāsa. In the Mālavikāgnimitram it is seen that queen Dhārīṇī covers the face of Mālavikā with a veil, before she was given in marriage with Agnimitra\textsuperscript{135}. Sakuntalā in the Abhijñānasakuntalam, is also seen as wearing a veil while she is in the presence of king Dusyanta, after her marriage with him\textsuperscript{136}. But that does not seem to be the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{134} Parivrājikā - tato bhrātuḥ śaṅkramagnisātkṛtvā
punarnāvībhūtavaidhavyadūkhayā mayā tvadīyaṁ
dēsamavatīryeṁ kāṣāye grhite - Māla, Act. V.
\item \textsuperscript{135} Devī (mālavikāmavunṭhanavatīṁ kṛtvā)- āryaputra idānīṁmīṁāṁ pratīcchatu
-Māla, Act V.
\item \textsuperscript{136} Rājā (sakuntalāṁ dṛśtvā) athāʿtrabhavati-
keyamavunṭhanavatīṁ nātiparisphtasārīralābanyā/
madhye tapodhanāṁnāṁ kisalayamīva pāṇḍupatrāṇāṁ/
Abhi. Ś, V, 13.
\end{itemize}
general tradition. The other evils of the custom of veil such as the seclusion of women, their permanent confinement within the inner apartments etc. were not perhaps prevailed.

Reference of the kidnapping of female figure is found in the plays of Kālidāsa, which probably shows it’s existence in the contemporary society. In the Vikramorvaśīyam, the kidnapping of Urvaśī and her friends by the demon Keśī may testify the above fact.\(^{137}\)

It appears that in those days the female figures had been employed in various fields of activities. They can get the chance to appoint as maid-servants, keepers of gardens, keepers of weapons, door-keeper and attendants in the palaces of the kings and in aristocratic families. Among them, there is one character, who is peculiar viz., the Yavanī - the keeper of the weapons; serving in the palace of king Purūravas\(^{138}\) and also of Duṣyanta\(^{139}\). According to some critics this word means a Greek woman. But there are other reasons which go to prove that the Yavanī may be a tribal woman. It is natural that wild people are well acquainted in the use of weapons,

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137. Rambhā - śṛṇotu mahārājaḥ i yā tapoviśeṣaparīśāṅkītasya suκumāragaṃ praharaṇaṃ mahendrasya pratyādeśo rūpagarvitaśīḥ śriyāḥ alaṅkāraḥ svargasya sā naḥ priyasakhyurvāśīkुverabhavanāt pratiniḥvartamānā śaśambhipravāśīnaḥ keśinā dīnavena citralekhādvitīyā ardhapatha eva vandigrāhaṁ grhitā - Vikram, Act I.

138. Yavanī- bhartoḥ etaddhastāvāpasahitaṁ śarāsanaṁ - Vikram, Act V.

139. Vidūṣakaḥ - esa vāṃśanahastābhiḥ yavanībhiḥ vanapuspamālādhāriṁbhiḥ parivṛtta ita eva āgacchati priyavayasyaḥ - Abhi. Ś, Act.II.
especially because of their hunting habits and warlike nature. These people are also well-known for their trustworthiness and loyalty. Examples of female figures, expert in the handling of weapons are found among the Bhils of Rajasthan, the Kurichyars of Malabar, and the mountaineers of the Tamilnad. The use of the term Kirātī used as a synonym of Yavanī also goes to support the above mentioned facts. However, it is obvious that the female figures were considered as reliable and responsible in their duties, so they were given the custody of weapons. Besides Yavanī, the names of Parabhṛtikā and Madhukarikā may be cited here, who had been appointed as guards in the pleasure-garden of king Duṣyanta. The name of Madhukarikā in the Mālavikāgnimitram may also be referred to. The character like Vetravatī in the Abhijñānaśākuntalam acts as a doorkeeper with full responsibility. Similarly the maids and attendants like Nipuṇikā in the Vikramorvaśīyam, Bakūlavālikā, Nipuṇikā, Kaumudikā, Madhukarikā and Jyotsnikā etc. in the Mālavikāgnimitram are also seem to be quite befitting in their respective duties.

Thus a review on the status of the female figures in society, as reflected in the plays of Kālidāsa, display that the female figures enjoyed freedom more or less in those days. They had been considered with honour and esteem, in the family and in the society. It can also be said that, at that period female figures in different roles, were treated with due respect. Specially, the position of female figure as a daughter seems to be really appreciating. She was nurtured with

140. Prathamā - ārya, kati divasāni āvayormitrāvasunā rāṣṭryeṇa bhartuḥ pādamūlaṁ preśitayaḥ ; atra ca nau pramadavanasya pālanakarma samarpitam - Abhi. Ś, Act VI.
utmost care and affection, which reveals that the people of the society at that period were well concerned with the welfare of their daughters. But it is also seen that the great dramatist has depicted the wives who are mainly following their husbands as their prime duty. On the basis of which, it appears that the married women enjoyed less freedom in comparison to men in the society. However, the position of mothers in the society seems to be quite satisfactory. The female figures could get the opportunity to educate themselves in various branches of education. They had also the provision to engage themselves in various types of employment. So, taking into consideration all these facts, it may be said that the female figures in the age of Kālidāsa enjoyed more or less an exalted status in the family as well as in the society.