PREFACE

From the dawn of civilization both men and women with their united effort laid the foundationstone of the society. Human civilization is the result of the mutual effort and contribution of both man and woman. It may be accepted undeniably that behind the development and prosperity of a society both man and woman have equal partnership and equal responsibility. 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 and scope to contribute in the different fields of social development. Looking from this point of view, it may not be out of point to say that the status of female figures can be one of the judging factors in determining the quality of a society. The great treasures of ancient Indian literature such as the Vedic literature, the Epic literature, the Dharmaśāstras, the Dramatic literature etc. furnish valuable information regarding the position of female figures in the society.

Literature, especially the dramatic literature is the mirror of life. Dramatic literature, undoubtedly depict the contemporary society. Drama comes in the category of drṣṭyakāvyya. Everyone, irrespective of high and low, rich and poor, literate and illiterate, can find a scope in relishing drama. Therefore, the dramatic literature, provides scope to all to assess the society also. Dramatists always have an attempt to depict the
contemporary society, in its' various aspects, with a
definite ideal behind it. Therefore, the dramatic
literature may be accepted as the most effective
medium, through which the real picture of the status
and activities of female figures in the society can also
be ascertained. So far as the Sanskrit dramatic literature
and specifically dramatists are concerned, Bhāsa, first
of all draws reader's attention. Bhāsa has often been
designated as the pioneer amongst the Sanskrit
dramatists. Thirteen dramas of high repute have been
ascribed to Bhāsa viz., Dūtavākya, Dūtaghatotkaca,
Karṇabhāra, Madhyama-vyāyoga, Īrubhaṅga,
Pañcarātra, Abhiṣeka, Bālacakrīta, Pratimāṅṭaka,
Avināraṇa, Pratijñāyaugandhāryaṇa, Svapnavāsavādatta and Cārūdatta. After Bhāsa, in the
realm of Sanskrit dramatic literature, comes Kālidāsa,
the most celebrated dramatist in Sanskrit literature,
who has been often acclaimed by both the Eastern and
Western scholars as the best of Indian dramatists.
Kālidāsa might have been composed many dramas, but
the most well-known dramas, written by Kālidāsa are
Abhijñānaśakuntalam, Mālavikāgnimitram and Vikramorvaśīyam.

Though it has been accepted by all that the
women have equal partnership, equal responsibility
and equal contribution in developing a society, yet it is
also to be accepted that even in this twenty first
century, women, the half-part of the society, who have
proved themselves as equally efficient in different field
of activities in the society, have failed to achieve the expected status in the society. Not only that the female figures are tortured till today and not, at all, safe within the home, in many cases and outside also.

Under the circumstances, a thorough study of the status of female figures in ancient Indian society is essential; and this point of view prompted me to make an indepth study of the position of female figures in the plays of Bhāsa and Kālidāsa, the two pioneer dramatists, representing the two different ages.

An humble attempt has been made in preparing this dissertation to assess the status and activities of the female figures as depicted in the plays of Bhāsa and Kālidāsa, in different fields of society. My labour will be meaningful, only, if the present work comes to some extent, to be of interest and utility for the researchers on the subject of women.

In fine, I must add that I am fully conscious of the probable short comings in my work. I, however, humbly submit here:

dṛṣṭam kimapi lokeśmin na nirdoṣaṁ na nirguṇam /
āvṛṇudhvaṁato doṣāṁ vivṛṇudhvaṁ guṇāṁ budhaḥ //

SANDHANI NATH
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III