

**‘ASHADH KA EK DIN’- A REVIEW****JAGRUTI J. PATEL**

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ABSTRACT

‘Ashadh Ka Ek Din’ translated as ‘One Day of Ashadh’ is a Hindi play by an eminent Hindi playwright Mohan Rakesh. The play is a beautiful example of the revolutionary impact the dramatist had on Indian drama and theatre after independence. The play has received the Sangeet Natak Academic Award for the best play in 1959. A feature film based on this play and directed by Mani Kaul was released in 1971 and won Filmfare Critic’s Award for best movie of the year.

INTRODUCTION

Mohan Rakesh born in Punjab was a great and well known Hindi dramatist. After acquiring the degree of MA in Hindi literature from Punjab University, he became a professor at Elfinstan college, Mumbai. Though an eminent story writer he is chiefly known for his dramas. He has three most popular dramas to his credit. They are: ‘Ashadh Ka Ek Din’ (1958), ‘Lahron Ke Rajhans’(1966) and ‘Adhe Adhure’(1969).

The story is about the legendary Sanskrit dramatist, Kalidas. It is an adaptation of one of the best poetic dramas of Kalidas’s ‘Meghdutam’. Having history as its concrete base the play discusses many modern issues like the conflict between traditions and modernity, the dilemma and doubts of a modern man, condition of woman, complications of the relations between a man a woman, clash between two generations etc.

The source of the play is Kalidas’s ‘Meghdutam’ where the love stricken Yakshini messages to her husband Yaksha through the dark watery clouds of monsoon. Applying his highest imagination Mohan Rakesh has projected Kalidas as the hero of the play. The first scene opens with Mallika, the heroine entering her hut completely drenched in rain. She has been with Kalidas enjoying heavy pours of rain and getting thoroughly wet in deep love of Kalidas. Every inch of her body and soul feels divine happiness. But Ambika, her mother doesn’t like her openly roaming around with Kalidas. She knows the ways of the world. Being a mother she wants her to get married with Kalidas. Ironically Kalidas doesn’t do

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anything to earn his livelihood. He is a poet and his poetry doesn't bring in money to live. As a result he is hesitant to marry Mallika. On the other hand Mallika, too much engrossed in love doesn't need marriage. For her pure love is everything. It is her life blood. She lives with her feelings and doesn't want anything else.

Vilom, the villain of the drama loves Mallika and wants to marry her. He keeps taunting Ambika about her daughter being the talk of the town because of her affair with Kalidas. Ambika hates Kalidas because she knows he will never marry Mallika. She thinks of him as the most selfish and irresponsible man. She says, "He is self-centered. He has no love for anyone in the world besides himself"(138). She is a worldly woman and is worried about her teenage, immature, 'blind in love' daughter. She tries hard to make Mallika understand that life is not only love that one cannot breathe love and eat love. But Mallika lost in love doesn't listen to her or care for the rumors around. Completely ignoring her mother's disliking and the dirty gossips of the villagers she continues her relationship with Kalidas. She says, "What do they say? What right do they have to say anything? Mallika's life is her own concern. If she wants to waste it what right has anyone to criticize her?"(131)

The story takes a U- turn when Kalidas is invited to confer upon the title of Poet Laureate by the king of Ujjayini. Utterly surprised Mallika happily accepts the news. But Kalidas doesn't want to leave his village, his mountains, his animals and birds and most importantly his beloved Mallika. Foreseeing his bright future Mallika forces him to go.

The second part of the play covers Kalidas's life in the court of Ujjain. He has become a poet of great fame now and created two new epics, 'Kumarshambhavam' and 'Meghdutam'. His fame escalates and reaches to the highest peak. He now turns from a simple villager into a polished politician. He basks in the life of comforts and luxuries, marries the princess of Ujjain and forgets all about his first love Mallika. The third part of the play narrates Kalidas coming back to his native place. Fed up with the artificial life of a statesman, he has lost all interest in poetry. His imaginative and creative power evaporates in the absence of his inspiration Mallika. His wife Priyanganjari tries to replicate his natural surroundings but she is no substitute for Mallika. Finally he decides to go back to her. Sheer shame doesn't allow him to come and meet Mallika. However, gathering all his courage he comes to Mallika's hut and after a long conversation of his long stay in Ujjayini he offers Mallika to start a new life together. At that moment he happens to listen to a child's cry in Mallika's hut. Later Vilom's entry makes it all clear to him that time never waits for anyone and that helpless and lonely Mallika has accepted the hard fact of life and has married Vilom. Utterly in grief he leaves the hut without a word. Thus the drama ends on a tragic note of the two lovers separating from each other forever.

I find the play most fascinating as it's a poetry in prose. It is actually a Sanskrit Kavya into the fabric of modern Hindi drama. It is like reliving and reimagining Kalidas's life and poetry



in the month of Ashadh. In spite of Kalidas being the hero of the play the spot light is set on Mallika throughout the story. The way the writer has crafted the minute details of the young girl's emotions is very beautiful. It depicts Mallika's struggle to balance between her world of love and feelings and the real one. She is an embodiment of self-effacing love. She lives the life of penury and disgrace. She bears with all pain and sufferings with utmost patience and self confidence. She lives in Kalidas. Each part of her existence revolves round Kalidas. For her, love and devotion for Kalidas is higher and more sublime than any other relations. She is not only a beloved and a source of inspiration she is a strong, steady and unshakable faith that never gets disentangled from its roots though gets withered outwardly. The strength of love enables her to bare the prattle of others.

Kalidas on the other hand is though a great poet and a statesman but a weak man. After leaving for Ujjain he forgets all about childhood beloved. He is the embodiment of emotions and inner conflict. He lives against his will and wish. He doesn't want to go to Ujjayini but goes, he doesn't want to marry Priyangumanjari but marries, he doesn't want to return to his roots but he does. It seems he suffers from sheer indecisiveness.

In spite of all the fame and luxuries he remains sad and unsatisfied. He constantly grieves for what he has left behind. Nothing allows him to forget one and only love of his life, Mallika. The rain, the clouds, the deer, the mountains and everything associated with raw beauty reminds him of his home and the woman who complements him so aptly. In this sense the play portrays the personal price both Kalidas and Mallika pay for their decision to reach for greatness. In spite of achieving all success and comforts Kalidas loses the battle of life while even after willingly sacrificing everything Mallika wins. Though she surrenders to the ways of the world she shines out like a star bright and steady in the sky.

"Ashadh Ka Ek Din" is a play where both the ancient and modern ideologies are merged beautifully. It depicts both history and modernity. The story of the play is ancient as 'Meghdutam' is its source. It follows all the traditions and style in which Meghdutam is written. The story, the background, and the atmosphere everything reminds us of the original epic. However, parallelly it also presents the inconsistency and unsteadiness of modern life and the inner conflict of modern man. Through the character of Kalidas, Rakesh is focusing on the mechanical life of us all today. How a modern man today, in spite of achieving everything seems to be unhappy and miserable. In his blind quest for materialistic things he is losing peace of mind. Though surrounded by a number of relatives and well wishers he seems to be lonely. He has become lump sum of various difficulties and inner disconcertments.

Another present issue that the drama touches is that of the clash between two generations. The arguments and hostility between Ambika and Mallika regarding their likes and dislikes, beliefs, ideas, and opinions represent the common problem we all are facing today. The play



also points at one more current problem of how economic and social positions hinder the union between two young people. Because of social limitations, caste differences and economic disparities many couples can not marry each other. Resultantly they become more impudent and materialistic that gives rise to sadness and self hatred. Rakesh's Mallika hates Vilom and still marries him and even becomes the mother of his child. For her the child is the outcome of her ill luck, frustration and foil. There are a number of women like Mallika today who have to jump into unwanted marriages and keep dragging the life of sheer infidelity and sorrow. Thus, the play though having roots deep into history and legends exhibits some of the most touching and much debatable issues.

Though the play is a translation from Hindi, the translator has done a praiseworthy job in translating both the concepts and culture successfully. The language is easy and lucid. Of course, in order to keep the atmosphere and tempo of the play intact the translator has kept the words like 'Acharya', 'Bhojpatra', 'Sastras' etc as they are. The dialogues are short, simple and significant making the play easy to be performed. Soliloquies put into the mouth of Mallika are lively, natural and meaningful that very clearly demonstrate Mallika's relations with Kalidas and Vilom. In this sense this play is not only a play in the book but also a play on the stage. It has certainly paved a new way to the whole concept of performing arts.

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