

Echoes of Tragedy and the Sacred Feminine: A Comparative Study of Women in Kalidasa's *Abhigyanashakuntalam* and Sophocles' *Antigone*

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Abstract

This paper aims to present a comparative study of the portrayal of women in the play *Abhigyanashakuntalam* written by Kalidasa and Sophocles' *Antigone*, two seminal texts from classical Indian and Greek traditions. Though rooted in vastly different cultural and temporal contexts, both the texts center the female protagonists operating under patriarchal domination, ethical duty, inner turmoil, divine law and moral conflicts, challenging the expectations imposed upon them not through aggression, but through emotional resilience and divine justice. The paper oversees culturally specific images of ideal womanhood in both the plays. While Shakuntala is represented as morally upright, emotionally resilient, virtuous, and an archetypal ideal of spirituality and devotion, her resistance emerges as a quieter form of her self assertion, within the framework of dharma, navigating her loss and recognition in a male-dominated world. Antigone, in contrast, articulates her resistance through steadfast commitment to divine justice, thus revealing her resolute devotion to moral integrity in the face of patriarchal oppression. Through a comparative feminist lens, this study analyses the sharply diverging forms of resistance and notions of female virtue are upheld and subverted in classical Indian and Greek drama. Examining the women's journeys, personalities, struggles, emotional resilience, and inner turmoil will provide a means of identifying some deeply entrenched patriarchy in our society that cannot be neatly quantified. To this end, the paper uses an analytic and comparative framework to accomplish the research objectives. Furthermore, it follows the method of textual interpretation, and theological aspects based on textual and discourse analysis.

Keywords

Emotional resilience, patriarchal domination, divine law, moral integrity.