

Character analysis of Dushyanta:

Abhijnanasakuntalam, a play written by Kalidasa, is one of the masterpieces of world literature. It is a thrilling love story of the exquisitely beautiful Shakuntala and the mighty king Dushyanta. Dushyanta is the hero of the play. He possesses almost all the qualities of a brave and noble-minded hero. Dushyanta was the founder of the Puru Dynasty. He was the ruler of a great empire. He was a powerful king and his subjects were happy and prosperous under his rule. King Dushyanta loved hunting. Once, while hunting in a forest, Dushyanta happens to meet Shakuntala, a beautiful young lady living in a hermitage. He falls in love with Shakuntala, and is enthralled to find that she is attracted to him in the same manner. In the third act their true feelings of love can't be hidden any longer—though both the king and Shakuntala suffer for their passion before they can embrace each other:

Shakuntala: I don't know

You heart,
But day and night
for wanting you,
love violently
tortures
my limbs,
cruel man.

King: Love torments you, slender girl,

But he completely consumes me—

Daylight spares the lotus pond

While it destroys the moon.

Shakuntala and Dushyanta do not wait for the actual rites of marriage and engaged themselves in a secret marriage as per the rule of Gandharva. Then Dushyanta left for his capital to attend his royal duties. Unfortunately he forgot Shakuntala under the spell of a curse given by Durbasa. When Shakuntala went to her husband Dushyanta, he cannot recognize her. Heart – broken Shakuntala is forced to leave the royal place. But the truth is discovered when the spell is broken. The king suffered from an intense feeling of guilt and injustice. Shakuntala forgave

Dushyanta and they were reunited happily. Their son named Bharata became one of the greatest kings of India.

Dushyanta is a man of striking personality. He is seen as youthful, handsome, majestic and of sweet address. Another point that is notable in his personality is the extreme nobility of his mind. It was quite natural on his part to be struck with the fascinating youth and superb charms of Shakuntala. The dramatist himself, through the mouth of Dushyanta, depicts the beauty of Shakuntala. There is no wonder in Dushyanta falling in love with such an uncommon beauty. He was indeed, a lover of beauty. Being a sovereign, he was in a position to have it and enjoy it irrespective of its price. But at the same time, he maintains the dharma of his great Puru pedigree. Otherwise it was impossible for an ordinary man to check his first burst of love. It is only after ascertaining the parentage of Shakuntala, and further that she was not married, that he allows his mind to harbor the feeling of love. Another important feature of Dushyanta is his utmost respect for the sages. The king, has unbounded reverence for the sages. There are many incidents in the play which testify to his high martial power. He was so brave that even Indra, the lord of the gods, sought his help. His love for Shakuntala, through carnal to a certain extent is deep-rooted and permanent. His mental affliction, after the unconscious dismissal and rejection of Shakuntala, is so touching as to give a full idea of what his real feelings were. In this Sixth Act of the play, just to console his soul, he begins to paint the picture of Shakuntala. After the completion of the picture, his remark is really an impartial judgement of the beauty of Shakuntala. He is at home in almost all the fine arts. He can appreciate music and be sensitive to its impression. He is a unique Sovereign, and the various traits of his character are shown in bold relief by the dramatist.

Dushyanta's filial love finds a forceful expression when he sees a young boy playing with a lion. The king greets the boy amazed by his boldness and strength. When the king heard the name of the mother of the boy, he was so much attracted by the boy that he desired the boy to be his own:

King: But names can be the same. Even a name is a mirage... a false hope

To herald despair.

Later, Dushyanta gets astonished and thrilled when he discovers that the boy is his own son. Thus, Dushyanta's character is exalted by the imagination of the dramatist.