

## Minister's Duty In The Absence Of The King In The Light Of Kālidāsa's Writing

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### Abstract

Ministers are entrusted with a huge responsibility in the administration system. Though the king was the central figure of a state, but he was always helped by the ministers. These ministers helped the king in all matters of state administration. In fact, it is the duty of the minister to play the role of a king when he is absent. Ministers were considered as very much privileged and respectable. Kālidāsa also treated them in his works in respectable manner. In the works of Kālidāsa, there are many occasions when the poet gives the references of this context. Those are included here.

The aim of the proposed paper is to highlight minister's duty in the absence of the king with a special reference to Kālidāsa's works.

**Keywords:** Minister, Duty, Kālidāsa, Raghuvamśam, Vikramorvaśīyam

### Introduction:

Ministers were those who had to do all the duties of king in his absence. In this context Manu has cited that when the king feels unwell in public affairs then he can appoint a minister of high reputed family who looks after the affairs of his state<sup>1</sup>. So, in absence of the king ministers had the responsibility in smooth functioning of the state affairs.

In the Raghuvamśam, when the king Daśaratha became negligent towards kingly duties and engaged himself in hunting which was his passion, at that time, the functions of the state affairs were done by his ministers. So, ministers were those who performed all the duties of king in his absence<sup>2</sup>.

In the times of calamity, it was the duty of ministers to cooperate in the policy of state. By following the policy of Arthaśāstra, the ministers of king Agnivarṇa kept the death of king secret until they installed the pregnant queen of the late king on the

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<sup>1</sup>Manusmṛti, VII.141

<sup>2</sup>itivismṛtānyakaraṇīyamātmanaḥsacivāvalambitadhuraṁdharādhipam/  
parivrddharāgamanubandhasevayāmrgayājahāracaturevakāminī//  
Raghuvamśam, IX.69

throne<sup>3</sup>. It was kept secret to save their country from the fear of aggression by the enemy. In the *Vikramorvaśīyam*, it is seen that the king Purūravā has handed over the kingly duties to the minister and went to Gandhamādana with Urvaśī for passing the time<sup>4</sup>. So in the absence of a king, ministers had to see the state affairs until the king's arrival. In the *Raghuvamśam*, when the king Dilīpa went to the Vaśiṣṭha' sāsrama with his wife Sudakṣiṇā for attainment of children, the entire administration was run by his ministers<sup>5</sup>. So it is the duty of the minister to take all the responsibilities of king whenever he was absent from the state. Even sometimes the kings are found being ignorant towards their duty, but ministers are always seen responsible and trustworthy. As the last king of Raghu dynasty i.e. Agnivarṇa became the king, he entrusted all the responsibilities to the ministers and indulged himself in the enjoyment of kingdom<sup>6</sup>. As a result he became the last king of Raghu dynasty. He could not move his kingdom forward. Even he was insisted by his ministers to show himself to his subjects. Hence, he came to the aperture of the lattice and showed his leg to subjects<sup>7</sup>.

It is worth mentioning here that the duration of king's absence should not be so long. This is indicated by Urvaśī<sup>8</sup>. She told the king that they passed long time in the outside of state. So the ministers would be upset. Therefore she told that they should be back to the state soon.

In difficult situation of the state, the voice of the old minister was considered to have great weight<sup>9</sup>. The king Kuśa went to the heaven to kill the demon Durjaya and unfortunately the king himself was slain by the demon. At that time, the old counselors installed Kuśa's son Atithi on his father's throne by remembering their master's last command<sup>10</sup>. When a king died it was the duty of the minister to control the situation, so that there would not be any chaos and anarchy would occur to destruct the state. It

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<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, XIX.54-57

<sup>4</sup>urvaśīkilatamratisahāyaṁrājarsimamātyeṣuniveśitarājyadhuraṁgrhītvāgandhamādanavanam  
vihartuṁgatā/

*The Vikramorvaśīyam: A Drama*, ed. Shankar P. Pandit, IV.p.103

<sup>5</sup>*Raghuvamśam*, I.34

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, XIX.4

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, 7

<sup>8</sup>*The Vikramorvaśīyam: A Drama*, ed. Shankar P. Pandit, IV.p.128

<sup>9</sup>taṁbhūtyarthamprasavasamayākāṅkṣaṇīnāṁprajānām

antargūḍhamkṣitirivanabhobījamuṣṭimdadhānā/

maulaiḥsārdhamsthavirasacivairhemasiṁhāsanasthā

rājñīrājyaṁvidhivadaśiṣadbharturavyāhatājñā//

*Raghuvamśam*, XIX.57

<sup>10</sup>tadātmasambhavanrājyemantrivṛddhāsamādadhuh/

smarantaḥpaścimāmājñāmbhartuḥsaṁgrāmayāyinaḥ//

*Ibid.*, XVII.8

is portrayed in the Raghuvamśam, when the king Agnivarṇa died, the ministers handled the situation so skillfully<sup>11</sup>.

The king counselled with his ministers before executing any plan on his enemy. It is seen in the Mālavikāgnimitram, when the king got the news of ingratitude of his adversary Bārhatāka, he ordered Vīrasena to act the extermination of his enemy<sup>12</sup>. The king discussed about this with his ministers and made a suitable plan<sup>13</sup>. It shows the importance of ministers with whom the king discussed all the matters for a perfect solution.

In the absence of the king, ministers made all public judgments on behalf of king. In the 6<sup>th</sup> act of the Abhijñānaśakuntalam<sup>14</sup> the king told that he was not well owing to late rising and so he could not occupy the seat of judgment for that specific day. So he sent a message to ĀryaPiśuna to attend that seat and made whatever decisions that sent to the king after being committed to writing. From the above instance it can be stated that ĀryaPiśuna must be the chief minister of his council of ministers. Therefore, the king Duśyanta sent the message directly to him. Then minister sent the matters to the king discussed by him.

Though minister took a decision of that public affair, even then the king again investigated the case minutely and if he found any mistake there, then he could change the decision. This happened in this case. One chief merchant Dhanamitra trading by the sea, had perished in the wreck of his ship. Though the merchant had many wives, he was childless. Therefore, minister took the decision that his property would go to the king. This decision was sent to the king. Then the king advised the minister to enquire if any of his wives be with child. Then it was known that one of his wives just performed puṁsavana ceremony. Then, the king announced that as the child in the womb deserved paternal property<sup>15</sup>, so the property of the merchant would not go to the king, rather the child in the womb would get that property. Hence the king changed the decision made by minister. So sometime though minister took the decision, that decision was not accepted without investigated by the king.

In the 6<sup>th</sup> act of Abhijñānaśakuntalam, another instance is found. The matter was that when Devarāja Indra called the king to kill demons, then the first thing done by the king Duśyanta was that he told Piśuna to take care of the state until he reached. The word of the Duśyanta to his minister Piśuna was that the talent of Piśuna alone should protect the subjects, while the string of his mine was employed in another duty<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, XIX.52, 54

<sup>12</sup>*The Mālavikāgnimitra*, ed. Shankar P. Pandit, I.p.9

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> *The Abhijñānaśakuntalam of Kālidāsa*, ed. M.R Kale, VI.p.214

<sup>15</sup> nanugarbhaḥpitryamrikthamarhati

*Ibid.*, p.240

<sup>16</sup> tvanmatihkevalātāvataripālayatuprajāḥ *Ibid.*

This expression of the king Duṣyanta itself shows that he had great faith over his ministers. Ministers were always ready to help their master at any cost.

### **Conclusion**

These are various duties of ministers reflected in the works of Kālidāsa. The poet portrayed the duties of ministers in such a way which gives a hint that their duties were performed with faith and loyalty towards their king. As king regularly counselled with his ministers, it was the duty of ministers to keep their discussion in secret until its implementation. If ministers had not been loyal, then the whole state would have been fallen in danger. Apart from this, they had to dedicate their duty which is aptly reflected in the works of Kālidāsa.

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