

LAW AND SOCIETY

Cultural Identity of women in Indian Society, as portrayed in Sanskrit Poetry – A Perspective

Sanskrit language was the medium of expression, to the Indian literary genius, for thousands of years. The enormous amount of literature and its contents bear testimony to this. It carries the Socio - cultural history of the land along with its values, beliefs, thoughts and experiences. Therefore the study of Sanskrit literature would help us to understand and analyse the contemporary society.

In this paper I would like to make an attempt to trace the Cultural identity of women through the study of a few Mahakavyas in Sanskrit, from which I would choose Women characters like Draupadi in Kiratarjuniyam, Seeta in Raghuvamsham, Damayanti in Naishadiyacaritam, Parvathi in Kumara sambhavam and Tataka in Shivalilarnavam. Each one of the characters are placed in different situations depending on the plot and it is interesting to know that they carve a niche for themselves by the way they face their individual challenges. Their portrayal brings about the strengths of these characters in particular and the women of the society in general.

Draupadi in **Kiratarjuniyam** motivates her husband Yudhishtira, through timely advice, to get back his kingdom and take revenge on the insult that all of them had experienced.

Seeta in **Raghuvamsham** is a victim of doubt of citizens on her chastity, because of which she was abandoned by her husband. She faces the situation boldly and is able to prove her worthiness.

Damayanti in **Naishadiyacaritam** chooses Nala as her husband through swayamvara, faces lot of problems because of her extraordinary physical beauty but faces all the challenges by her virtues and sets an identity.

Parvathi in **Kumarasambhavam** wishes to marry Lord Shiva, being unable to secure him even by her splendid Physical beauty, practices severe austerities to possess intrinsic beauty, by which she gains a worthy husband and immense love.

Tataka in **Shivalilarnava** is the only daughter of Malayadvaja, who is the legal heir to the kingdom and therefore performs all the tasks, which a son in her place would have done. It is an example for non discriminatory treatment to a girl child in ancient India.

The paper attempts to look at Sanskrit literature from the above perspective, so as to trace the Cultural identity of women in Indian society.