

*Full Length Research Paper*

# Concept of Pratyabhijñā (Recognition) In Kashmir Śaivism and Kālidāsa: A Comparative Analysis

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In the absolutistic metaphysics of Kashmir Śaivism: Śiva (the absolute knowledge) is the absolute Reality. Śiva by nature is consciousness and the consciousness is dynamism of knowledge. The Universe is the immanence (vaibhava) of the Śiva and the Śiva is not limited to it, and is transcendence as well. The uniqueness of KS lies in the theory of dynamism of knowledge. The phenomenal self (Jīva) is the same Absolute soul, that is Śiva lacking recognition and the purpose of the individual Self is to recognize his Śiva nature, that in KS is called Pratyabhijñā. Pratyabhijñā is the central concept of KS and the similar philosophy is presented by Kālidāsa in his drama Abhijñānaśākuntalam where the term abhijñā signifies the same meaning of Pratyabhijñā.

The real nature of phenomenal self according to Pratyabhijñā philosophy is obstructed or veiled by the Sport (Līla) of the Śiva and therefore it plays as a limited sense. In order to remove the obstruction, the phenomenal self Jīva requires to realize his true nature that is; of Śiva and for that realization the phenomenal self Jīva has to follow the way to Pratyabhijñā.

The term Pratyabhijñā is formed out of the root jñā which means to know, knowledge and added with the prefix *prati* and *abhi* being recognized immediately that is, stands for immediate awareness of the knowledge naturally assigned to the phenomenal self or recognition of the Śivahood. It is recognition because knowledge is given eternal reality but its immediate nature is veiled and after uncovering of the veil the Śivahood is recognized.

Kālidāsa's drama Abhijñānaśākuntalam very beautifully portrays the immediate knowledge of the self as same Śiva (reality). While Jīvahood is the state where the true nature of Jīva is prevented by ignorance; abhijñā is the permission state or the immediacy that is recognition of the self as the same reality.

**Keywords:** Pratyabhijñā, Jñāna, Pūrṇāhantā, Śiva, Triad of malas, Upāyas, Vimarśa

## INTRODUCTION

There is no substantial difference between the phenomenal self (PS) Jīva and the Ultimate Self, that is, Śiva, the absolute Reality (Jīva Śivāyo na

vāstvo ko'pi bhēdaḥ syāt). Substantially, the PS is not different from the Absolute soul (AS), that is Śiva. Their difference is not metaphysical but

epistemological and metaphorical only. The individual self is the same spirit lacking recognition of his real nature; because of identifying with his psycho-physical mechanism, the absolute consciousness plays as the PS. Tāntric tradition provides with a philosophy of recognition of real nature to bring the PS home. The truth that his PS is none other than Cosmic Self and that can be realized by following tāntric discipline<sup>11</sup>.

An attempt is made in this paper to present the concept of Pratyabhijñā in view of the original text of Kashmir Śaivism (KS) and Abhijñānaśākuntalam of Kālidāsa. It has been tried to find out the similarities between the philosophical text of KS and the literary drama of Kālidāsa on the concept of Pratyabhijñā and to conclude how the two belongs to the same line of philosophy. The word 'Pratyabhijñā' is made out of the root jñā, which means to know, knowledge added with prefixes '*prati*' meaning reflection by immediacy or to recognize, and prefix '*abhi*' means identification or recognition. The term Pratyabhijñā is formed by root jñā added with suffix aṅ and the suffix t̄ap is added with it to make it feminine, and thus, the word Pratyabhijñā is formed meaning thereby the identical cognition of the sameness of the state of affairs that is already assigned or realization of one's own nature assigned naturally non-different from the AS. In the same way, the word 'abhijñā' is made out of prefix *abhi* and the root jñā. The suffix *abhi* and *prati* prefixes herein are used in the same sense of recognition or identical cognition of the substratum and therefore, the term 'abhijñā' conveys the same meaning the term pratyabhijñā stands for. In the tantric pursuit the question about who am 'I', the recognition of the individual self has been debated by all. The PS (the Jīva) is substantially the same Śiva but needs recognition. It is by recognition of one's true nature that he realizes his Śiva nature.

Pratyabhijñā is not memory cognition. It is awareness of awareness, counter identification of the consciousness and it is immediate knowledge and the terms recognition is taken in that sense only. It is an awakening, enlightenment, or rising to a higher level of awareness or consciousness. The translation of Jñāna into the English word knowledge is liable to create some confusion, as the word knowledge is generally used in the sense of the objective knowledge of an object. However, Jñāna

does not mean only objective knowledge in the form of this or that object. It may mean any kind of illumination. Jñāna of course, includes objective knowledge as well but it is not confined to that. Jñāna is a broader term: it stands for the simple awareness, for example, the awareness that "I am" and not that "I am this" or "I am that", the cognition of memory, cognition by senses and so on so forth can also be called Jñāna. The highest Jñāna, according to Tantra, is awareness that Śiva is all. This is called the perfect "I" consciousness. (pūrṇāhantā)<sup>5</sup>.

Kālidāsa was well versed in Pratyabhijñā trend of philosophy; however, he flourished before Somānanda, Utpaladēva and Abhinavagupta the three great sages of KS. His drama entitled Abhijñānaśākuntalam is based on the philosophy of Pratyabhijñā. Kālidāsa has clearly pictured the concept of Pratyabhijñā in his drama in a very palatable way for the better understanding of people at large. Abhijñā, herein, is the recognition or identical cognition of the forgotten or prevented event associated with the ring given as a token of love by king Duṣyanta to Śakuntalā. Here, the cognition comes directly from experiences, but the memory has traces beforehand in the mind. The term 'abhijñā' stands for the permission of the prevented knowledge (forgetting the love to Śakuntalā). Abhijñā is possible only after removal of ignorance and in case of Kālidāsa's Abhijñānaśākuntalam; it is recognition of the forgotten love attached with the ring. Śakuntalā forgets the ring and suffered her family life and when the ring was recovered, her suffering was ameliorated. And from the king Duṣyanta's perspective he got the Pratyabhijñā of his forgotten love Śakuntalā by the recognition through the ring. The ring is a means through which the recognition is accrued. "Just when, at the sight of his own ring his majesty recollected that really Śakuntalā was married by him before in secret but was forgotten by ignorance because of which she suffered a lot of agony"<sup>10</sup>.

According to philosophy of Pratyabhijñā, Śiva is absolute consciousness and everything is Śiva. It is possible to re-cognize this fundamental reality by getting freedom from limitations. Vedantins' example of So'yam Devaduttaḥ, (it is the same Devadutta) and Pratyabhijñā of K S are different<sup>1</sup>. The

knowledge of earlier Devadutta stands as an object but in case of Duṣyanta it is abhijñā, direct flash by seeing the ring. Here, Śakuntalā is not the object; the ring is instrumental for recognition (Pratyabhijñā). Realization of his true state is possible only by spiritual practices (Tāntric Sādhanā). The paper, herein, focuses on how the individual self suffers from māyā (ignorance), forgets his own real nature and conceives himself as limited finite self, that is, different from Śiva the infinite and suffers from all sort of limitations. It is Pratyabhijñā of his true nature that makes him free from all limitations and help him realize Śiva, his true nature.

### Reasons why Kālidāsa named his novel Abhijñānaśākuntalam?

- i. The title and the plotting of the ideas of Abhijñānaśākuntalam prove that Kālidāsa was well versed about the Pratyabhijñā philosophy.
- ii. The knowledge of the true nature is prevented at Jīva level and is permitted as Śiva in Pratyabhijñā state. Similarly the king's knowledge of his secret marriage with Śakuntalā was prevented by the curse of the sage Durvāsā and permitted when he perceived the ring associated with the event.
- iii. The suffering of Śakuntalā was due to forgetting by the curse of sage Durvāsā and was recognized when the curse that causes suffering is removed.

### Pratyabhijñā in KS: An Analysis

The most significant point about the concept of Pratyabhijñā is that the true nature of consciousness is naturally assigned to the Jīva. It is not limited, created or finite rather infinite. The real nature of Śiva, at Jīva level, is veiled or prevented. This sounds very similar to the verse in the Īsopaniṣad-“hiraṇmayēna pātrēṇa satyasyāpihitam mukham”<sup>1</sup>, that is, the face of Reality (Truth) is covered with a golden pot. Thus, even when we look we fail to behold it because our vision is trapped with a golden

pot. The aspirant prays Pūṣana the deity of light to uncover the truth so that he can be face to face with truth. Pratyabhijñā is used in the sense of a process of investigation and recognition (āviṣkaraṇa) of the true nature<sup>6</sup>. In this way, Pratyabhijñā focuses on going back to our original nature or “turning our eyes inwards” (āvṛttacakṣuḥ)<sup>8</sup>. The self, which is complete and perfect by its very nature, is revealed in all its splendor when the triad of defects (malas) are removed. The concept of Pratyabhijñā as its metaphysical ground is established on the concept of the non- difference of the individual and the Absolute (Śivo'ham). The system of Tantra emphasizes again on the fact that the individual is none other than Śiva, the individual that is Jīva, is Śiva takes itself the form of Jīva (Śiva ēva gṛhītapasubhāvaḥ)<sup>7</sup>. A spark of fire, because it is essentially fire, can take the form of a conflagration and burn a large stock of wood, but a pebble, no matter how much it is fanned and fueled, cannot burn at all, simply because it does not have the same elements as fire. In the same way, the Jīva becomes one with Śiva consciousness because substantially the Jīva is nothing but Śiva. The Jīva is different from Śiva simply because it has taken on a particular limited form, just as the wave is a particular limited form of the water. Just as an individual plays different roles in a drama, sometimes he plays the role of a king, a jester, and other times a hero, a villain, a lady, so on and so forth, Śiva sports in different forms of PS. The moment, the Jīva gets the cognition of the Śiva consciousness, it becomes Śiva. Similar argument is found in the Upaniṣads, where the Mahāvākyas declare that the self is Brahman. The Pratyabhijñā philosophers go one step further in this regard by saying that although the Jīva is substantially one, it even in its limited form is Śiva, performs the same activities, on a smaller scale, just as Śiva.

Śiva denotes the creativity of knowledge (Śakti), goodness, love, truth, egolessness, and so on, and the Jīva has to have, and have as well all these characteristics. This goodness is spiritual goodness, which is also a state of natural well being. Being good involves an attitude of goodness which the Jīva can cultivate in itself. Of all the systems of spiritual philosophy, KS is the discipline that lays emphasis on the practice of Śivādvaita-bhāvanā (the sense of non-difference) – universal love and goodness

beauty and unity with all. For example, one who is selfish and exploits others, being ignorant of the truth that the ‘others’ are not really other to him or her. It is ignorance (ajñā) that one feels different and it is Pratyabhijñā that one’s unity with others as non-different is realized. Such a realized soul who comprehends his cosmic nature, loves all, is wise or jñāni in the Indian Tradition.

The purity of heart is possible through practicing the prescribed conduct of a moral and spiritual discipline, which serves as means for liberation. By practicing the means to realization, one gets qualification for realization. KS as well as Abhijñānaśākuntalam introduces the grace concept. Without the grace of Śiva, final realization or Pratyabhijñā that is recognition is not possible, only on the basis of qualification, therefore grace is also needed. The means, of earning grace is achievable through the practice of Āṇavopāya<sup>ii</sup>, Śāktopāya<sup>iii</sup> and Śāmbhavopāya<sup>iv</sup>. These upāyas are recommended to get rid of the malas and defects so that one may become fit for receiving grace. One starts with the analysis of pañca-kṛtya sādhanā<sup>v</sup> of vikalpa-kṣaya<sup>vi</sup>, and the practice of the consciousness that the universe is only reflection of cit, but later on these means have to be given up, thereby leading to pure I –consciousness<sup>13</sup>. In addition to these means, there is Anupāya that can hardly be called an upāya. This is known anugraha or grace. This grace may come through one word of the guru and light may dawn upon the aspirant and thus, he may acquire an experience of the real self in a trice or divine grace showered on him directly and he may instantly realize his self.

### **Pratyabhijñā in Kālidāsa’s Abhijñānaśākuntalam**

The Pratyabhijñā system endeavors in the direct realization of, the individual Self (Jīva) as is this Cosmic Self (Śiva). Śiva, who, in His ultimate aspect is the highest Consciousness, or the knowledge (Cit or Parāsamvit). In fact, Śiva is the changeless principle of all changing experiences. It is infinite in itself. It is always there constantly; inside and outside. It has, as a matter of fact the immediacy of feeling where neither the ‘I’, nor the ‘This’ is distinguished (Parāsamvit). In the words of

Pratyabhijñā Śāstra, it is, knowledge and the knowledge is creative power; the dynamism of knowledge-prakāśavimarśamaya<sup>3</sup>. The Supreme Self is called ParamaŚiva which is not only light (prakāśa) but dynamic (vimarśa) also. Literally, it means light or illumination. Just as light makes everything visible, even so that being there, everything else is. D N Tiwari defines prakāśa in terms of vimarśa that denotes dynamism of knowledge, or dynamism of Śiva. Hence, prakāśa and vimarśa are not two in one but are non- different. It is the very character of Śiva<sup>14</sup>. In Kathopaniṣad - “Tamēva bhāntam anubhāti sarvam, tasya bhāsā sarvamidam vibhāti”<sup>9</sup>. ‘It is the light and it is by this illumination that everything shines forth: by its light alone does all this appear’. Here, the two traditions Vedic and Āgamic meet and the culmination of two, completes the Indian Culture.

Being a devout Śaivaite, Kālidāsa has tried to depict the Pratyabhijñā system in a very dramatic and lively way in his drama Abhijñānaśākuntalam. The curse of the sage Durvāsā stands in Śakuntalā as cause of the forgetting of the ring and consequently her suffering. Her curse or ignorance is removed when Duṣyanta got the ring and consequent upon which Śakuntalā suffering is removed. She regained her real position Abhijñā. The climax of Abhijñānaśākuntalam is based on the fact that Duṣyanta would only recognize Śakuntalā with some device; here the ring.<sup>vii</sup> The ring which is a mark of truth of life of beauty and love, used as a dramatic device is the cause that reminds Duṣyanta of his secret marriage to Śakuntalā. The purpose of the dramatist is to highlight and also to answer the question that every Jīva is likely to ask a way to get freedom from the mundane limitations, bondage and sufferings, which has been haunting everyone. The Jīva is always striving to overcome its limitations of restricted knowledge and have an intensive desire for the quest to be free from all the clutches of this world.

Unlike Advaita-Vedānta and Sāmkhya philosophy, Ultimate Reality according to Śaiva philosophy is not simply knowledge ‘prakāśa’, it is dynamism or creative vimarśa as well. Kṣemarāja very pointedly puts it in his parāpravesika (p2) as ‘ akṛtrima-aham’, natural or pure I –consciousness in which the world does not stand over against the I in

opposition but is the expression of that 'I' itself, being there in a natural way. If Ultimate Reality were merely light or luminous prakāśa and not vimarśa, it would be powerless and inert. "yadi nirvimarśaḥ syāt anīśvaro jaḍaśca prasajyeta"(Parāprāveśikā, p 2) it is this pure I-consciousness or dynamism of knowledge (Vimarśa) that is responsible for the manifestation, maintenance and re-absorption of the universe<sup>12</sup>.

Śiva, all-inclusive Universal Consciousness is also called Anuttara, that is, the Reality than which there is nothing that may be called higher-the Highest Reality, the Absolute. It is both transcendental (viśvottīrna) and immanent (viśvmaya). The Śivatattva is the initial creative movement (prathama spanda) of the Reality. The spontaneity of Śiva and the same is realized by the aspirant as his own nature. As has been said in Pratyabhijñāhṛdayam of Kṣemarāja-

Sarvo mamāyam vibhava ityēvam parijānataḥ.  
viśvātmano vikalpānām prasarē'pi mahēśatā<sup>2</sup>.

The realizer of Śiva (pratyabhijñ) perceives that all this glory in the form of diversity of manifestation is mine (i.e. the ideation of Śiva is not different from Śiva), who realizes that the entire cosmos is his own self, possesses mahēśatā, that is one with Śiva. The text under quote is very pointedly clear about the position of Pratyabhijñā state; the soul is perfected and non-different from Śiva. For a realizer, there is no difference between mundane (bhoga) and sacred (yoga) rather mundane also becomes divine to a Pratyabhijñ (Realizer). Everything becomes good and dear for a realizer.

## CONCLUSION

The concept of Pratyabhijñā is an axiological problem. It emphasizes the need for cultivation of the finite Self into the infinite. If knowledge is Śiva and Śakti is the dynamism of knowledge the ignorance and its modifications are instruments that conceal the knowledge and thus the purpose of life, as Pratyabhijñā philosophy advocates is to remove the ignorance, the defects to reach to the knowledge that is light ; the light of consciousness. Kālidāsa's Abhijñānaśākuntalam is an allegorical dramatization

of Pratyabhijñā philosophy. The object of the Abhijñānaśākuntalam is very much central to recognition of Śivahood with the difference of only dramatic presentation.

From the beginning and the last verse of Abhijñānaśākuntalam it is quite obvious that Kālidāsa is a poet well versed in the Pratyabhijñā philosophy, and this is evidenced from his dramatic way for helping the commoners for better understanding Pratyabhijñā through dramatic narrative. The metaphysical ground and purpose of Abhijñānaśākuntalam is the realization of the Śiva nature and this matter of fact is well observed in the last verse of the drama that reads: punarbhavam parigataśaktirātmabhūḥ<sup>4</sup>.

I should get recognition and my rebirth extinct. In this verse, it is clear that ignorance is the cause of all limitations, suffering, birth and death. The dynamic knowledge is only to be honored as achieved with utmost effort and only after the grace of the Śiva, the realizer gets his Śivahood recognized, that is, realizes Pratyabhijñā. This Pratyabhijñā at story level is made clear by the suffering of Śakuntalā which occurred due to forgetting by the curse of sage Durvāsā and was recognized when the curse that causes suffering is removed. Thus, the metaphysics and axiology of Pratyabhijñā system and the dramatic picturization by Kālidāsa makes the wisdom regarding Pratyabhijñā complete at theoretical and practical level as well. Thus, in brief Pratyabhijñā in Kālidāsa and KS is the recognition of the infinite as infinite after removal of the imposed finite self. This is the realization of Phenomenal Consciousness is substantially the same Absolute Consciousness.

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#### NOTES:

- i. In Pratyabhijñā, the Jīva realizes his own nature and his ignorance and all his limitations are removed. The Jīva realizes that I am Śiva (Sivo'ham). Pratyabhijñā is different from the Vedantins' example of So'yam Devaduttaḥ, Devadutta is the external substratum of the memory cognition of Devadutta perceived sometimes back and the perception of Devadutta standing before at present. So Devadutta is object of both of the knowledge. But in case of Pratyabhijñā there is no external substratum and hence there is no question of subject-object type cognition. The Śiva nature is given but forgotten by Jīva and realized by the Jīva, the forgotten Śiva nature is only Jīva. So there is no question of substratum of memory cognition and the recognition. It is the recognition of one's own nature that takes place after the removal of Jīvo'ham; the prevented is permitted. But there is no case of sublimation in example of Devadutta. There are two sorts of perception of different times, which are there in the example of Devadutta, but that is also in case of Pratyabhijñā the Jīva becomes Śiva. In case of Kālidāsa's Abhijñānaśākuntalam the recognition is nicely explained as the Pratyabhijñā of the king Duṣyanta. In case of Duṣyanta that the forgotten event associated with the ring is recognized after perceiving the ring. So there is sublimation of the Duṣyanta's earlier consciousness to the correct one.
- ii. The word āṇava is from aṇu, which means the individual person. Since the individual (aṇu) operates in the external world of difference, āṇavopāya consists of external means related to the physical world of difference and duality. All forms of external worship and external yoga come under āṇavopāya. Rituals are forms of external worship, so all rituals fall under āṇavopāya.
- iii. The word śākta is from śakti, which is "thinking" (vimarśa). Since this means (upāya) involves thinking, it is called śākta. But the thinking here is not spontaneous as in śāmbhavopāya; this thinking is deliberate (vikalpātmaka). One has to exert one's will (saṅkalpa) and make an effort (adhyavasāya). It is effort-fully done, but in the end it becomes effortless (nirvikalpātmaka). Since śāktopāya is the realm of created thinking or voluntary thinking (vikalpa), there is the sense of doing or ego (abhimāna).
- iv. Śāmbhavopāya is the practice (sādhana) of unity- the practice of visualizing the entire world within oneself as the reflection or projection of one's own consciousness or self. It is actually the practice of identifying oneself with Śiva. He is the lord of the universe (viśveśvara or Śiva), in whose consciousness this entire world of difference appears as reflection. In Śāmbhavopāya we can think of our unity with the universe in three ways: (a) all this has sprung forth from me (matta evoditamidam), (b) all this is reflected in me (mayyeva pratibimbam), and (c) it is not-different from me (madabhinnamidam). This is really the state of universal love where one feels one's unity with all.
- v. The Jīva exhibits its freedom even in this limited state, and performs all of the five functions (pañca-kṛtya) of Śiva, although in a limited way. The five- fold cosmic function (pañca-kṛtya) of Śiva are: creation (sṛṣṭi), preservation (sthiti), dissolution (samhṛti), concealment (nigraha), and grace (anugraha).
- vi. Extinction of the modifications of mind and therefore cessation of all activities in tāntric philosophy is called vikalpa-kṣaya.

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