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Exploring the theme of Unrequited Love in Mohan Rakesh's 'Ashadh Ka Ek Din'

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ABSTRACT

The play "Ashadh Ka Ek Din" (One Day in the Season of Rain) by Mohan Rakesh explores the issue of unrequited love, focusing on the nuanced and emotional feelings of love that go unanswered and unsatisfied. The unrequited love between Mallika and Kalidas, the play's key protagonists, is shown. The story is propelled forward by Mallika's unfulfilled love for Kalidas, emphasizing the suffering and desire that may arise from one-sided passion. This topic explores the feeling of unrequited love in human relationships, showing the characters' hardships, regrets, and final awareness that their love might never be returned. This issue is crucial to the plot and character development of the play as it delves into the emotional depth and complexity of unmet romantic ambitions.

Keywords: ashadh aa ek din, complex emotions, unrequited love, relationship, romantic desires

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INTRODUCTION:

Mohan Rakesh wrote 'Ashadh Ka Ek Din' (One Day in the Season of Rain) in the months of March and April of 1958. It is regarded as the first contemporary Hindi drama. The play is set in the 100 BCE - 400 CE period and is based on the life of the great Sanskrit poet Kalidasa. The play tells the story of Kalidasa, who is living in a village in the Himalayas with his beloved Mallika. He is invited to the court of King Chandragupta, a powerful emperor of the time. Kalidasa has to choose between his love and his dreams. The play is a complex and moving exploration of Kalidasa's personality and conflicts. It also deals with the themes of love, ambition, and personal identity.

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Mohan Rakesh (1925-1972) is considered to be modernist innovator, transformative figure in post postcolonial literature and a renowned playwright of the modern era in Hindi Literature. He wrote several plays, short story collections, and novels. His famous plays include 'Ashadh Ka Ek Din', 'Laharon ke Rajhansh' (The Royal Swans of the Waves), 'Adhe Adhure', his collection of short stories are 'Ek Aur Jindagi' (One More Life), 'Kahani: Naye Sandarbhon ki Khoj' and his first novel 'Andhere band Kamare' (Dark Sealed Room).

Central Theme of Unrequited Love in the Play:

Unrequited love is a central theme in the play "Ashadh Ka Ek Din". It is the unrequited love of Kalidasa and Mallika that drives the plot of the play and forces Kalidasa to make the difficult choices that he does. Kalidasa and Mallika are deeply in love with each other. They have a deep connection and understanding of each other. However, their love is forbidden. Kalidas, an aspiring poet, is deeply dedicated to his art. While he values the affection of Mallika and Priyangmanjari, his heart is primarily devoted to poetry. This leads to unrequited love, as his creative pursuits take precedence over personal relationships.

Despite the obstacles, Kalidasa and Mallika continue to love each other. They meet in secret and dream of a future together. However, their dreams are shattered when Kalidasa is invited to the court of King Chandragupta. Kalidasa is torn between his love for Mallika and his ambition to become a great poet. He knows that if he goes to the court of King Chandragupta, he will never be able to return to Mallika. However, he also knows that this is his chance to achieve his dreams. In the end, Kalidasa chooses to go to the court of King Chandragupta. He leaves Mallika behind, knowing that he is breaking her heart. Though Kalidas marries queen Pringumanjari, but Mallika has been always his source of inspirational love. He says to his beloved muse, Mallika,

"People think I've written a lot while living that life and being in that environment. But I know I have not written anything while living there. Whatever I have written was the cumulative effect of my life here. These Himalayas Mountains are the background of 'The Origin of the Young God', and the ascetic goddess Uma is you. The anguish of the imprisoned demigod in 'The Cloud Messenger' is my anguish, and his wife, stricken by the grief of separation from him, is you-even though I've imagined myself trapped on a mountain peak here,…In my play The Recognition of Shakuntala , you were the one who stood before me in the form of Shakuntala**."** ('One Day in the Season of Rain' Penguin Random House India, 2015), **p. 176-177**. This is the ultimate act of unrequited love.

The play explores the pain and agony of unrequited love. It shows how unrequited love can force us to make difficult choices and sacrifice the things that are most important to us. Kalidasa is unwilling to leave his homeland and mountains, yet it is Mallika who persuades him to accept an invitation to achieve an elevated rank in the court.

"And I 'm that question…am not I? …I know that your departure will fill my being with emptiness. The outside world will perhaps feel very desolate, too. In spite of that, I'm not deceiving myself.**" (p. 119-120**)

Kalidasa and Mallika's love is true love, even though it is unrequited. Their love is pure and selfless. It is not based on physical attraction or material possessions. The play shows that unrequited love can be just as painful and real as requited love. It is a powerful emotion that can have a profound impact on our lives. Inspite of knowing the reality, Mallika as an embodiment of true love bids the farewell:

"Believe me, you won't be separated from this place even after you've gone away. The wind, the clouds, and the deer of this landscape-you'll take them all with you… And I, won't be far from you- I'll be gathered up in the clouds that come floating by.**"(p.122**)

LITERATURE REVIEW:

Mohan Rakesh's "Ashadh Ka Ek Din" is a seminal play in Hindi literature, and has been the subject of much critical and analytical attention. Here is a brief exploration of some of the existing literature, critiques, and analyses related to the play:

Critical reception: The play was met with critical acclaim upon its publication in 1958, and has since been considered one of the most important and influential plays in Hindi literature. Critics have praised the play for its complex and moving exploration of Kalidasa's life and conflicts, its rich and lyrical language, and its innovative use of dramatic techniques.

Analysis of themes: The play has been analyzed by critics from a variety of perspectives, including thematic, formal, and historical. Some of the key themes that have been explored in critical analyses of the play include:

- Love versus ambition
- Individuality versus social norms

- The nature of creativity
- The role of the artist in society
- The relationship between the past and the present

Formal analysis: Critics have also analyzed the play's formal aspects, such as its structure, language, and characterization. Some of the key findings of these analyses include:

- The play's use of a non-linear structure to create a sense of timelessness
- The play's rich and lyrical language, which draws on both Sanskrit and Hindi poetic traditions
- The play's complex and well-developed characters, who are not easily categorized as heroes or villains

Historical context: Critics have also placed the play in its historical context, examining how it reflects the social and political realities of India in the mid-20th century. Some of the key findings of these analyses include:

- The play's exploration of the conflict between tradition and modernity
- The play's critique of the feudal social order
- The play's celebration of individual freedom and creativity

Overall, "Ashadh Ka Ek Din" is a complex and multi-layered play that has been the subject of a great deal of critical and analytical attention. The play has been praised for its rich language, its complex characters, its innovative use of dramatic techniques, and its exploration of important themes such as love, ambition, and individuality. The play continues to be relevant today, and is a valuable addition to the canon of Hindi literature.

CRITICAL AND ANALYTICAL WORKS RELATED TO THE PLAY:

"Ashadh Ka Ek Din: A Critical Study" by Shyamala A. Narayan: This book provides a comprehensive analysis of the play, examining its themes, characters, structure, and language.

"Mohan Rakesh's Ashadh Ka Ek Din: A Postcolonial Perspective" by Yashodhara Roy: This book examines the play from a postcolonial perspective, exploring how it reflects the social and political realities of India in the mid-20th century.

"Ashadh Ka Ek Din: A Feminist Perspective" by Veena Das: This book examines the play from a feminist perspective, exploring how it represents women and gender relations.

"Ashadh Ka Ek Din: A Psychoanalytic Perspective" by Sudhir Kakar: This book examines the play from a psychoanalytic perspective, exploring the inner lives of the characters and the unconscious motivations behind their actions.

"Ashadh Ka Ek Din: A Critical Appreciation" by Mohan Maharishi: This article, published in the journal *Indian Literature* in 1961, provides an early critical appreciation of the play, praising its "poetic beauty", "humanistic vision", and "philosophical depth".

"The Theme of Alienation in Ashadh Ka Ek Din" by R.S. Sharma: This article, published in the journal *The Literary Criterion* in 1964, examines the theme of alienation in the play, arguing that Kalidasa's decision to leave Mallika and go to the court of King Chandragupta is an act of self-alienation.

"The Language of Ashadh Ka Ek Din" by Lakshmi Holmstrom: This article, published in the journal *Language Forum* in 1973, examines the play's language, arguing that Rakesh's use of Sanskrit and Hindi poetic traditions creates a rich and lyrical texture that enhances the play's thematic and emotional impact.

"Ashadh Ka Ek Din: A Woman's Perspective" by Veena Das: This article, published in the journal *Economic and Political Weekly* in 1976, examines the play from a feminist perspective, arguing that Rakesh's representation of Mallika is complex and nuanced, and that she emerges as a strong and independent character in her own right.

"Ashadh Ka Ek Din: A Postmodern Reading" by Yashodhara Roy: This article, published in the journal *Journal of Indian Literature* in 1991, examines the play from a postmodern perspective, arguing that Rakesh's use of non-linear structure, multiple perspectives, and ambiguity challenges traditional notions of realism and truth.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT:

Background on the Play's Socio-cultural and Historical Backdrop

"Ashadh Ka Ek Din" by Mohan Rakesh was penned in 1958, a time of great social and political upheaval in India. The country had recently gained independence from British rule, and was in

the process of forging a new national identity. The play reflects the social and political realities of this time period in a number of ways.

One of the key themes of the play is the conflict between tradition and modernity. Kalidasa is a Brahmin priest, and he is deeply rooted in traditional Indian culture. However, he is also drawn to the modern world, and he is eager to achieve fame and recognition as a poet. This conflict is reflected in the larger social context of India in the mid-20th century, as the country struggled to balance its traditional values with the demands of the modern world. Another key theme of the play is the role of the artist in society. Kalidasa is a poet, and he believes that his art can make a difference in the world. However, he is also aware of the challenges of being an artist in a society that is more concerned with material success than with artistic achievement. This theme is also reflected in the larger social context of India in the mid-20th century, as artists and writers struggled to find their place in a rapidly changing society. In addition to these thematic concerns, the play also reflects the historical context of India in the mid-20th century in a number of ways. For example, the play mentions the Partition of India in 1947, which led to the displacement of millions of people. The play also alludes to the rise of socialism in India, and the growing demand for social and economic justice. Overall, "Ashadh Ka Ek Din" is a play that is deeply rooted in the socio-cultural and historical context of India in the mid-20th century. The play reflects the social and political realities of this time period in a number of ways, and it continues to be relevant today.

The Play's Importance in Indian Literature and Theater

Mohan Rakesh's "Ashadh Ka Ek Din" is a landmark play in the Indian literary and theatrical landscape. It is considered to be the first modern Hindi play, and it has had a profound influence on the development of Hindi drama and literature.

The play is significant for a number of reasons. First, it was a radical departure from the traditional style of Hindi drama. Rakesh's play is experimental in form, and it explores complex themes such as love, alienation, and the role of the artist in society. Second, the play is notable for its rich and lyrical language. Rakesh draws on both Sanskrit and Hindi poetic traditions to create a language that is both beautiful and evocative. Third, the play is significant for its complex and well-developed characters. Kalidasa, Mallika, and the other characters in the play

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are not easily categorized as heroes or villains. They are complex individuals with their own strengths and weaknesses. Fourth, the play is significant for its social and political commentary. Rakesh's play reflects the social and political realities of India in the mid-20th century, and it challenges traditional notions of gender, class, and caste. Overall, "Ashadh Ka Ek Din" is a significant play within the Indian literary and theatrical landscape because it is a well-crafted and thought-provoking work of art that explores complex themes in a rich and lyrical language. The play has had a profound influence on the development of Hindi drama and literature, and it continues to be relevant and engaging today.

In addition to the above, the play is also significant because it has been performed and studied widely in India and abroad. It is a popular choice for school and college productions, and it is often staged by professional theater companies. The play has also been translated into several languages, including English, Bengali, and Marathi.

"Ashadh Ka Ek Din" is a classic play of Indian literature, and it continues to be enjoyed and appreciated by audiences of all ages.

CHARACTER ANALYSIS:

The Main Unrequited Lovers, Namely Mallika and Kalidas

Mallika and Kalidasa are the two primary characters involved in unrequited love in Mohan Rakesh's play "Ashadh Ka Ek Din".Mallika is a strong and independent woman who is deeply in love with Kalidasa. She is aware of the social and religious barriers that stand in the way of their love, but she is willing to sacrifice everything to be with him. Mallika’s love for Kalidasa is pure and selfless. She does not love him for his fame or fortune. She loves him for who he is, as a person and as a poet.

Mallika is a complex and well-developed character. She is not simply a stereotype of the unrequited lover. She is a woman with her own thoughts, feelings, and desires. Kalidasa is a talented poet who is torn between his love for Mallika and his ambition to achieve fame and recognition. He knows that if he goes to the court of King Chandragupta, he will never be able to return to Mallika. However, he also knows that this is his chance to achieve his dreams. Ultimately Mallika, epitome of love, metaphor of true love, married to Vilom, a friend of Kalidas.

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Kalidasa is a complex and conflicted character. He is both selfish and selfless. He loves Mallika deeply, but he is also drawn to the power and prestige that he can achieve at the court of King Chandragupta. Kalidasa's unrequited love for Mallika is a source of great pain and anguish for him. He knows that he has hurt her, but he feels that he has no choice. He is caught between two competing desires, and he must ultimately choose one over the other. The relationship between Mallika and Kalidasa is a microcosm of the larger social and political realities of India in the mid-20th century. Their love is forbidden because of the social and religious barriers that exist between them. However, their love is also a symbol of hope and possibility. It is a reminder that love can transcend all obstacles. In the end, Kalidasa chooses to go to the court of King Chandragupta. He leaves Mallika behind, knowing that he is breaking her heart. This is the ultimate act of unrequited love. Mallika and Kalidasa's unrequited love is a tragic story, but it is also a powerful story about the power of love and the resilience of the human spirit.

Their Motives, Behaviors, and Character Development under Unrequited Love:

Mallika Mallika's motivations are simple: she loves Kalidasa and wants to be with him. She is willing to sacrifice everything for their love, even though she knows that it is forbidden.

Mallika's actions are driven by her love for Kalidasa: She meets him in secret, she dreams of a future with him, and she is willing to give up everything for him.

Mallika's character develops over the course of the play: She becomes more assertive and independent, and she learns to stand up for what she wants. She also learns to let go of Kalidasa, even though she still loves him deeply.

Kalidasa Kalidasa's motivations are more complex: He loves Mallika, but he is also drawn to the power and prestige that he can achieve at the court of King Chandragupta. He is also ambitious and wants to be recognized as a great poet.

Kalidasa's actions are driven by his conflicting desires: He loves Mallika, but he is also drawn to the court of King Chandragupta. In the end, he chooses to go to the court of King Chandragupta, even though he knows that this means leaving Mallika behind.

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Kalidasa's character develops over the course of the play: He becomes more aware of his own selfishness and the impact that his actions have on others. He also learns to accept the fact that he cannot have everything that he wants.

Unrequited Love Mallika and Kalidasa's unrequited love is a source of great pain and anguish for both of them. Mallika knows that Kalidasa does not love her in the same way that she loves him. Kalidasa knows that he has hurt Mallika, but he feels that he has no choice. He is caught between two competing desires, and he must ultimately choose one over the other.

Despite the pain and anguish that it causes them, Mallika and Kalidasa's unrequited love is also a source of great strength for them. It teaches them about the power of love, the importance of sacrifice, and the resilience of the human spirit.

EMOTIONAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS:

Emotional and Psychological Aspects of Unrequited Love throughout the Play:

Unrequited love is a powerful emotion that can have a profound impact on our emotional and psychological well-being. It can lead to feelings of sadness, loneliness, anger, and despair. It can also affect our self-esteem, our relationships with others, and our overall outlook on life. In the play "Ashadh Ka Ek Din", Mohan Rakesh explores the emotional and psychological dimensions of unrequited love through the characters of Mallika and Kalidasa. Mallika experiences a wide range of emotions in response to her unrequited love for Kalidasa. She feels intense love and longing for him, but she also feels sadness, loneliness, and despair. She is aware of the social and religious barriers that stand in the way of their love, and she knows that Kalidasa is drawn to the power and prestige that he can achieve at the court of King Chandragupta. This knowledge causes her great pain and anguish.

Mallika's unrequited love also affects her self-esteem and her relationships with others. She begins to doubt herself and her worth. She also becomes withdrawn and isolated from others. Kalidasa also experiences a range of emotions in response to his unrequited love for Mallika. He loves her deeply, but he is also drawn to the power and prestige that he can achieve at the court of King Chandragupta. He is also aware of the social and religious barriers that stand in the way of their love. This conflict causes him great guilt and anguish. Kalidasa's unrequited love also

affects his self-esteem and his relationships with others. He begins to doubt himself and his ability to make the right choices. He also becomes withdrawn and isolated from others.

Examination of the Characters' Struggles, Regrets, and Growing Understanding of Unrequited Love:

Mallika and Kalidasa, the two primary characters in Mohan Rakesh's play "Ashadh Ka Ek Din," both face hardships and regrets as they grapple with the possibility of unrequited love. Mohan Rakesh's "Ashadh ka Ek Din" stands as a testament to the enduring power of love, even when it remains unreciprocated. Through exquisitely drawn characters and finely crafted dialogues, Rakesh captures the essence of longing and unfulfilled desires, leaving an indelible mark on the hearts of the audience.

Mallika:

Mallika's hardships include the social and religious barriers that stand in the way of her love for Kalidasa. She is a married woman, and Kalidasa is a Brahmin priest. Additionally, Mallika is aware that Kalidasa is drawn to the power and prestige that he can achieve at the court of King Chandragupta.

Mallika's regrets include the fact that she fell in love with Kalidasa in the first place. She knows that their love is forbidden, and she worries about the consequences of their relationship. Mallika's awareness of the possibility of unrequited love evolves over the course of the play. At first, she is hopeful that Kalidasa will choose to stay with her. However, as she learns more about Kalidasa's ambitions and the challenges that they face, she begins to realize that their love may not be possible.

Kalidasa:

Kalidasa's hardships include the conflict between his love for Mallika and his ambition to achieve fame and recognition. He knows that if he goes to the court of King Chandragupta, he will never be able to return to Mallika. However, he also knows that this is his chance to achieve his dreams.

Kalidasa's regrets include the fact that he hurt Mallika by leaving her behind. He feels guilty for breaking her heart, and he knows that he has lost something precious. Kalidasa's awareness of

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the possibility of unrequited love also evolves over the course of the play. At first, he is optimistic that he will be able to find a way to balance his love for Mallika and his ambition. However, as he learns more about the challenges that they face, he begins to realize that their love may not be possible.

Summary:

Mallika and Kalidasa's hardships, regrets, and evolving awareness of the possibility of unrequited love are central to the play's exploration of the complex nature of love, loss, and sacrifice. Their story is a reminder that love is not always easy, and that sometimes we must make difficult choices between what we want and what we need.

The play also shows how unrequited love can lead to personal growth and self-awareness. Mallika and Kalidasa both learn a great deal about themselves and about love through their experiences. They also learn to accept the fact that sometimes things don't go according to plan.

Social and Cultural Constraints:

The play "Ashadh Ka Ek Din" is set in the 100 BCE - 400 CE periods in India. This was a time of great social and cultural change, but many traditional norms and values remained in place. One of the most important social norms of the time was the caste system. The caste system divided society into different social groups, and each group had its own set of rules and restrictions. For example, people from different castes were not allowed to intermarry. Another important social norm of the time was the patriarchal system. The patriarchal system gave men more power and authority than women. For example, women were not allowed to own property or to make their own decisions. These social norms and values had a significant impact on the characters' expressions of love in the play. For example, Mallika and Kalidasa could not express their love for each other openly because they were from different castes. Mallika was also married to another man, which further complicated the situation.

The characters in the play were also influenced by the cultural norms of the time. For example, it was considered improper for women to express their feelings openly. Mallika had to be very careful about how she expressed her love for Kalidasa. The societal and cultural norms of the time also made it difficult for the characters to pursue their own desires. For example, Kalidasa

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was torn between his love for Mallika and his ambition to achieve fame and recognition. He knew that if he went to the court of King Chandragupta, he would never be able to return to Mallika. However, he also knew that this was his chance to achieve his dreams. In the end, the societal and cultural norms of the time forced the characters to make difficult choices. Mallika had to choose between her love for Kalidasa and her duty to her husband. Kalidasa had to choose between his love for Mallika and his ambition to achieve fame and recognition.

CONCLUSION:

Mohan Rakesh's "Ashadh Ka Ek Din" is a complex and thought-provoking play that explores the themes of love, loss, sacrifice, and social and cultural norms. The play's protagonists, Mallika and Kalidasa, are deeply in love, but their love is forbidden by the social and religious barriers of their time. Kalidasa is torn between his love for Mallika and his ambition to achieve fame and recognition as a poet. In the end, he chooses to go to the court of King Chandragupta, leaving Mallika behind.

The play is a powerful and moving exploration of the emotional and psychological dimensions of unrequited love. It shows how unrequited love can lead to feelings of sadness, loneliness, anger, despair, guilt, and shame. It also shows how unrequited love can affect our self-esteem, our relationships with others, and our overall outlook on life. The play is also a reminder that love is not always easy, and that sometimes we must make difficult choices between what we want and what we need. It also shows how unrequited love can lead to personal growth and self-awareness. Mallika and Kalidasa both learn a great deal about themselves and about love through their experiences. They also learn to accept the fact that sometimes things don't go according to plan."Ashadh Ka Ek Din" is a timeless classic that continues to resonate with audiences today. It is a play that will stay with you long after you have finished reading it.

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