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Indian Theatrical Experience in Globalising Empires: Recognition of Shakuntala in the Early Modern Europe

Indian theatrical experience has been nurtured and structured through an overall sustained, cumulative and continuous traditions of attested texts and thinkers. This experience is essentially universal and has been presented in a cosmic theatre house. The *Shivasutra*, a text of Kashmir Shaivism, presents a beautiful analogue to the external theatre where the self is the dancer or actor, the inner self is the stage and the knowing senses (*indriya-s*) are the viewers. This 'inner theatre' takes place in the space of *cit* or universal consciousness. There are certain pre-conditions and qualifications on the part of both the viewers and the actors as laid down by the canonical texts in the Indian intellectual traditions.

This has been the theatre and nature of theatrical experience when the Europe came in contact with Indian literature through the translation of Kalidasa's *Abhijanashakuntalam* by Sir William Jones (1789). Drama, in the Indian literary tradition is said to be the most charming and pleasant among the various literary genres and the *Shakuntala* is the most charming of all the dramas. The paper explores the intellectual settings of early modern Europe (particularly 18th C) and contemporary India which was then the part of the global empire. As it is evident that the translation of *Shakuntala* into European languages, thrice in Britain and then in German, French and Italian, introduced the literary East to the West, it is worth to examine and explicate the embedded conceptual structures and elements of drama in this text which were presented to the Western literary traditions. The paper also records and assesses the interactions and interfaces in this inter-culture space.