

= Kalidas (film) =

Kalidas (English : The Servant of Kali) , also known as Kalidasa , is a 1931 Indian Tamil @-@ language biographical film directed by H. M. Reddy and produced by Ardeshir Irani . It is noted for being the first Tamil language sound film , and the first sound film to be made in South India . The film was based on the life of the Sanskrit poet K?lid?sa ; it featured P. G. Venkatesan in the title role and T. P. Rajalakshmi as the female lead , with L. V. Prasad , Thevaram Rajambal , T. Susheela Devi , J. Sushila and M. S. Santhanalakshmi in supporting roles .

Kalidas , principally in Tamil , contained additional dialogue in Telugu and Hindi . While Rajalakshmi spoke in Tamil , Venkatesan spoke only in Telugu due to his lack of fluency in Tamil , and Prasad spoke only in Hindi . Despite its mythological theme , the film featured songs from much later time periods , such as the compositions of carnatic musician Tyagaraja , publicity songs of the Indian National Congress , and songs about Mahatma Gandhi and the Indian independence movement . The sound was recorded using the Vitaphone system . Kalidas was shot in Bombay on the sets of India 's first sound film Alam Ara (1931) and was completed in eight days .

Kalidas was released amidst high expectations on 31 October 1931 , coinciding with Diwali day . It was the only Tamil film to be produced and released that year . Despite numerous technical flaws , it received critical acclaim , with praise aimed at Rajalakshmi 's singing performance . The film became a commercial success , grossing over ? 75 @,@ 000 (about US \$ 25 @,@ 252 in 1931) against a budget of ? 8 @,@ 000 (about US \$ 2 @,@ 693 in 1931) . The success of Kalidas spawned numerous other films based upon K?lid?sa , including Mahakavi Kalidasa (1955) , Mahakavi Kalidasu (1960) and Mahakavi Kalidas (1966) .

The film became a major breakthrough in Rajalakshmi 's career , and a trendsetter for future Tamil sound films . Because no print , gramophone record or songbook of the film is known to survive , this makes it a lost film .

= = Plot = =

Vidhyadhari is the daughter of Vijayavarman , the king of Thejavathi . His minister wants the princess to marry his son but she refuses . Annoyed , the minister sets out to find another potential husband for Vidhyadhari . In the forest , the minister finds an illiterate cowman sitting in a tree and cutting into the branch on which he is sitting . The minister persuades the cowman to come to the palace and has Vidhyadhari marry him . When Vidhyadhari realises she has been cheated and is married to a farmhand , she prays to the goddess Kali for a remedy . Kali appears before her , names her husband " Kalidas " and endows him with phenomenal literary talents .

= = Cast = =

T. P. Rajalakshmi as Vidhyadhari

P. G. Venkatesan as Kalidas

L. V. Prasad as the temple priest

Other supporting roles were played by Thevaram Rajambal , T. Susheela Devi , J. Sushila and M. S. Santhanalakshmi .

= = Production = =

Kalidas is the first sound film to be produced in South Indian cinema , and the first in Tamil . It was based on the life of the Sanskrit poet and playwright K?lid?sa . The film was produced by Ardeshir Irani , who directed India 's first sound film Alam Ara , and was directed by his former assistant , H. M. Reddy , for the studio Imperial Movi @-@ Tone . P. G. Venkatesan was chosen to play the title role . L. V. Prasad ? who later founded Prasad Studios ? appeared in a comic role as a temple priest . It was his second appearance in a feature film , following Alam Ara . Theatre artiste T. P. Rajalakshmi was chosen to play the female protagonist ; according to film historian Randor Guy ,

she was the " automatic choice to play the heroine . " Before this , Rajalakshmi had acted in many silent films , and Kalidas was her first sound film . Supporting roles were played by Thevaram Rajambal , T. Susheela Devi , J. Sushila and M. S. Santhanalakshmi . The sound was recorded by German technicians using the Vitaphone system . Kalidas was shot in Bombay (now Mumbai) on the sets of Alam Ara ; it was completed in eight days , using either 6 @, @ 000 feet (1 @, @ 800 m) or 10 @, @ 000 feet (3 @, @ 000 m) of film , as per different sources . Film historian Film News Anandan states that Kalidas " was produced in a hurry , and was technically flawed . "

While Kalidas ' primary language was Tamil , the characters in the film spoke a variety of languages , including Tamil (Vidhyadhari) , Telugu (Kalidas) and Hindi (the temple priest) . Because Venkatesan 's first language was Telugu and he could not correctly pronounce Tamil words , his dialogue was in Telugu . Irani was initially unsure if the German sound recording equipment would record the Tamil language . To clear his doubts , he had some actors speak and sing in Tamil , Venkatesan in Telugu and because the equipment had already recorded Hindi before , he had other actors speak Hindi ; the equipment recorded all the three languages clearly . Owing to the use of multiple languages , sources including Film News Anandan , Birgit Meyer , G. Dhananjayan and Randor Guy have refused to call Kalidas the first Tamil sound film ; the latter two instead call it India 's first multi @-@ lingual film . In the 2010 book Cinemas of South India : Culture , Resistance , Ideology , Sowmya Dechamma states that Telugu dialogues were included in the film , apparently to " increase its market potential in the two important language markets of southern India . " According to Dhananjayan , the film had dialogues in Tamil and Telugu because during that period , both languages were spoken in the Madras Presidency .

= = Music = =

Kalidas featured fifty songs composed and written by Bhaskara Das . Film historian S. Theodore Baskaran mentions in his 1996 book , The Eye of the Serpent : An Introduction to Tamil Cinema , that all of the songs were in Tamil . Birgit Meyer contradicted Baskaran in her 2009 book Aesthetic Formations , stating that the film had Telugu songs , a view supported by Sowmya Dechamma in Cinemas of South India : Culture , Resistance , Ideology , and G. Dhananjayan in his books The Best of Tamil Cinema (2011) and Pride of Tamil Cinema (2014) .

Although the film was based on mythology , it featured compositions from much later time periods , such as those by the carnatic musician Tyagaraja and Indian National Congress publicity songs . Film News Anandan says Reddy was " probably pleased to add on anything artistic that came his way . Relevance was hardly an issue . " The 2008 book Tamil Cinema : The Cultural Politics of India 's Other Film Industry by Selvaraj Velayutham and Aesthetic Formations by Birgit Meyer stipulate that the nationalistic songs featured in the film had nothing to do with the main plot , while Randor Guy states during that period , " Historical accuracy wasn 't as important as the music . It wasn 't uncommon for the deities to sing modern poems or nationalist songs . "

The patriotic song " Gandhiyin Kai Rattiname " (English : The Charkha that [Mahatma] Gandhi handles) , also known as " Rattinamam ... Gandhi Kai Baanamaam ... " , was sung by T. P. Rajalakshmi , and was unrelated to the story of Kalidas ; the song extolled the charkha (spinning wheel) , a Gandhian symbol of nationalism . Rajalakshmi also performed Tyagaraja 's composition " Enta Nerchina " for the film , in the raga Udayaravichandrika . Another song which Rajalakshmi performed , " Manmada Baanamadaa " , became popular among young women , and another , " Indhiyargal Nammavarkkul Eno Veen Sandai " , spoke about the Indian independence movement and the need for unity among Indians . According to Dhananjayan , India 's national slogan " Vande Mataram " was featured in some of the songs . Guy described " Manmada Baanamadaa " as the " first hit song of Tamil Cinema " . No songbook of the film is known to survive .

= = Release and reception = =

An advertisement announcing the release of Kalidas was published in 30 October 1931 issue of the Tamil newspaper Swadesamitran , where it was billed as the " First Tamil @-@ Telugu Talking

Picture " . Kalidas was first released theatrically at the Madras (now Chennai) based theatre Kinema Central (now known as the Murugan Theatre) on 31 October 1931 , during the festive occasion of Diwali and coincided with the Civil Disobedience Movement .

When the film reels were taken to Madras , thousands of people gathered at the city 's central railway station and followed the reel box along Wall Tax Road to Kinema Central , throwing rose petals , breaking open coconuts and burning incense . The posters of the film read , " Tamil Telugu pesi paadu padam " (English : " Tamil Telugu talking singing film ") . An earlier attempt at producing a Tamil sound film , a four @-@ reel short titled Kurathiyin Aadal Paadal (English : Korathi Dance and Songs) , was screened alongside Kalidas as a side attraction . It starred Rajalakshmi and the gypsy dancer Jhansi Bai . In a 2015 interview with The Times of India , Rajalakshmi 's daughter Kamala stated that during the film 's release , " people in Madras used to stand outside theatres for a distance of about 4 @-@ 5km to witness [Rajalakshmi] acting in her first pesum padam . She was welcomed with a roar here . Her name was announced from speakers installed on roads and autorickshaws , as a talkie was something new for the people . "

In his 1997 book Starlight , Starbright : The Early Tamil Cinema , Randor Guy described Kalidas as a " crude experiment " that had poor lip sync ; when characters opened their mouths there was no sound , and when dialogue or song was heard , artistes remained silent . He said the public did not care about technical niceties and flocked to see the film . Swadesamitran printed a favourable review for Kalidas on 29 October 1931 , two days prior to its theatrical release . The reviewer stated , " The film will certainly run for a few weeks " and appreciated the singing of Rajalakshmi , calling the film a " must watch " for all . Kalidas was commercially successful , grossing over ? 75000 (about US \$ 25 @,@ 252 in 1931) and easily covering its budget of ? 8000 (about US \$ 2 @,@ 693 in 1931) . G. Dhananjayan said the film succeeded because it was a " novelty for the audience to witness an audio visual with dialogues and songs of their language " .

= = Legacy = =

The arrival of sound in South Indian cinema , with the release of Kalidas , triggered a migration of theatre artists into cinema . Kalidas was the only Tamil film to be produced and released in 1931 . No print or gramophone record of the film is known to survive , making it a lost film . The Indian Express stated in 2014 that the film had " turned to dust " long before the National Film Archive of India was established in 1964 . The only remaining artefacts include a few stills , a pre @-@ release advertisement and an image of the cover of the songbook .

Kalidas became a trendsetter for sound films in Tamil cinema . It was a major breakthrough in Rajalakshmi 's career , and made her a " bankable singing star " . The film was remade in Kannada by K. R. Seetharam Shastry as Mahakavi Kalidasa (1955) , which was also critically appreciated and commercially successful . Other K?lid?sa @-@ themed films include the Hindi film Kavi Kalidas (1959) , the Telugu film Mahakavi Kalidasu (1960) , the Tamil film Mahakavi Kalidas (1966) , and the Kannada film Kaviratna Kalidasa (1983) .