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A Canvas of Perennial Beauty of Nature: An Ecocritical Study of the Works of Kalidas

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Abstract: - Kalidas the renowned poet and dramatist undoubtedly, still remains the greatest Indian author of any epoch. He is a poet who made a glorious and distinct contribution to the sumptuous Sanskrit literature. He has pictured in his works the beauty and divinity in nature and pondered upon how nature can become the eternal source of pleasure and bliss in our lives. He was the true genius who celebrated the wonders of nature, the sky, the sun, the moon, the clouds, the mountains etc and in this way offered his gratitude and prayers to the universal power.

Index Terms: - Distinct, Sumptuous, Divinity, Eternal, Bliss, Wonders, Gratitude, Universal

Introduction: - Nature has been the most powerful inspirational force in the realm of literature since the ancient times. Human beings and the environment are the two inseparable entities. In the true sense human beings remain indebted towards nature in many ways throughout their lives. Nature has not only nourished and pampered the human civilization in its lap but has also played a worthy role as a projecting force for all the writing fraternity since the primitive ages. In the Sanskrit literature too, beginning from the Vedic to the Classical age Nature has ever contributed itself as a preferred medium of creativity.

Kalidas, the great poet and dramatist occupies a significant place in the field of Sanskrit literature. The perennial beauty of his creations and his unsurpassed greatness offers him a worthy title of 'Poet of Nature', not only in India but across the world.

The Vast Canvas of Kalidas

1. **Ritusamhara:** - Ritusamhara, a long poem or a mini epic was composed by Kalidas in Sanskrit. It is a rich and a glorious tribute to nature's beauty, which evokes a bounty and an enduring emotional response in mankind. It is one of the most lively and exuberant of Kalidas's works as it celebrates the passing seasons and thus as a work of literature offers a grand feast for the senses.

The poem is divided into six parts, all the six parts celebrating the six Indian seasons- Grisma (Summer), Varsha (Rainy), Sarad (Autumn), Hemanta (Cool), Sisir (winter) and Vasanta (spring). It picaresquely captures the myriad facets of nature's grace in a kaleidoscope of sumptuous imagery. There is an Indian custom of winding up (meal) with a sweet; and to have spring at the end of the Indian seasonal cycle offers a most luxurious meal for all our five senses. It unfolds the most beautiful scenery before the human eye and the sweetest of the melodies to the human ear.

The sight of the hills adorned with trees
And the varied lovely blossoms
The sequestered peaks ringing with the echo
Of the voices of the singing birds
And the crevices of the rocks strewn with alpine flowers
Comfort the longing eyes.

Ritusamhara VI, 25.

Summer season arrives with all its fury of extreme heat which really pains the lovers, but at the same time it tempers down the wild and predatory instinct of the beasts of the forest.

A quenchless thirst has put an end
To the brave deeds of the lion, lord of beasts
Panting audibly with jaws agape
With lolling tongue and quivering mane
He ignores the nearby elephant
Though he loves the furious fray.

Ritusamhara I., 13-15

The coming of rainy season really appeals to our senses. It presents a beautiful and magnificent sights which is really soothing to our eyes and the most delightful and melodious songs for our ears.

The approaching season of rain, dear love
Comes like a king in pride of power
The rains laden are its rutting war elephants;
The lambent flashes of lightening
Severe for its streaming pennons,
And the reverberating thunder
Is the rattle of its kettle drums;
It is hailed by the host of lovers
As the royal cavalcade is acclaimed
By crowds of suppliant

Ritusamhara.II, I

To Kalidas autumn season is real benediction to the human life.

May autumn, whose face is the open lotus
And whose eyes are the full blown nenuphars
In robes of purest white arrayed.
With the new blown kasa blossoms,
Grant, you, like the ardent sweetheart,
The favor your heart desires.

Ritusamhara III, 26

Kalidas opines that winter season with all its frost and mist evokes the aesthetic spirit and elevates the soul to unknown heights.

May this season of frost with manifold charms
And with the peace of the dreaming landscape,
When the fields are mellow and fruitful with rice;
Ever pleasant and encircled by the calling krauncha
Moving the maids to the depths of their souls,

Add to your welfare and joy!

Hemanta or the prewinter season ushers in various shades. It comes loaded with the fragrance of the ripening rice, the fading of the lilies and the falling of the dew.

The spreading barley gleams
 With a tender green embroidery
 The harvest of rice in ripening
 The lodhara trees are a flower
 And the lilies are fading away,
 And so the falling dews
 Usher the pleasant season of frost

In Meghduta also Kalidas's creative fancy gives a vivid and beautiful depiction of nature. He has given a perfect portraiture of the superabundant beauty of nature during the rainy season.

The poem is divided into two parts- Purvamegha and Uttamegha. It consists of 115 stanzas composed in Madakranta meter.

Dr Radhakrishnan in his book 'Living with a Purpose' has whole heartedly accepted and appreciated the perennial beauty of Kalidas's creative genius:

"Kalidas's works preserves for us moments of beauty, incidents of courage, art of sacrifice and fleeting moods of the human heart. His works will continue to be read for that indefinable illumination about human predicament which is the work of a great poet. Many of his lines have become almost like proverbs in Sanskrit."(13-14)

Meghdut is purely a lyric where Kalidas with his masterful portrayals of the lovelorn conditions of Yaksha and his fancy of discovering a friendly messenger in a cloud confirms his forte as a lyricist. In the words of S.K De:

"It should be noted that the ardent feeling in this poem is not isolated but is picaresquely with a great deal of descriptive matter, which stands in the way of regarding the composition as a pure lyric." (Introduction Meghadoot 30)

In the first part of the poem, Yaksha under his extremely lovelorn condition personifies the cloud and entrusts to it the message he yearns to dispatch to his beloved. He describes the path of the cloud from Ramagiri to Alaka, not with the prosaic dullness but with the true poetic pencil which carves out a vivid description before mind's eye.

In this process Kalidasa mentions the various towns, states, rivers and mountains sited on the route to be followed by the cloud as Amrakuta, Vindhya, Himalaya-Kailasa, Narmada, Sindhu, Gandhavari, Gambhira etc.

In the second stanza, the poet describes the condition of the love laden heart of Yaksha and the beauty of cloud. Dr Karmakar reads:

"Having passed some months on that mountain, that uxorious one, separated from (his helpless)wife, with(his) fore-arm bare on account of the sleeping of the golden bracelet(owing to extreme emancipation), saw on the first day of (the month of) Asadha, a cloud resting on a peak,(and) and as charming to look at as an elephant in position to give a side-blow by his tusks, in the sport of battering against a rampart."(2)

The beauty of river Narmada comes as follows,

"You would see the Narmada shattered (into streamlets) at the root of the Vindhya (mountain) rugged with stones (and appearing) like the colored decoration on the body of an elephant, formed in variously painted streaks."(13)

Kalidasa's poetic genius reaches its acme when Yaksha describes his loved one:

"The fair one who may be there, possessed of a slender form, of pointed teeth, of a lower lip as red as a ripe bimba fruit, of a slight baist, of eyes like those of a frightened fawn, of a deep naval, of an ideally graceful movement through weight of her lips and slightly bent down on account of her breasts, as if she were the Creator's first effort in the way of making a woman(or as if she were the super most woman gone from the workshop of God) Meghdut.II,22; Nerukar ed.

Kalidasa concludes this lyrical masterpiece with a blessing for the cloud, which itself reveals his intimate companionship with Nature,

Having done this favour to me, who has preferred an unbecoming request to thee, through friendship or a feeling of pity for me because I am in separation, go O cloud to any regions thou likest, with thy loveliness enhanced by the rainy season. May there be no separation like mine, even for a moment, between thee and the lightening (thy spouse)! (Meghdut.II, 55; Nerukar Ed.)

Raghuvansham: Raghuvansham is regarded as one of the best epics of Kalidasa in mature poetic style. It is a composition in verse which throughout bubbles with the beautiful depiction of nature. The theme of Raghuvansham is concerned with the description of the glorious dynasty of Raghu. The gala description of the bravery and the humility of the various noble kings like Dilip, Raghu, Aja, Dasharath and Rama etc add beauty and color to this epic and also play a significant role in holding the attention of the readers. There is an abundance of marvelously depicted eco-critical references in the poem. King Dilip, the predecessor of Lord Rama, showed his concern for the animals in his extreme devotion for his cow. Similarly in canto 14 of the poem there is an instance where Goddess Sita in the state of abandonment cries bitterly and thus shares her grief and sorrow with the various vegetation she finds around her. It proves that nature can manifest itself as the best companion of human beings as and when required. The epic also fosters the message of plant conservation by allocating the divine status to various trees like Kalpvruksha and Asiptravruksha. In the same way Lord Rama's return journey from Lanka to Ayodhya is also full of beautiful descriptions of ecological beauty. Kale has well depicted the beauty of forest in the following words:

“The wind charged with the spray of the mountain streams, and bearing the fragrance of the gently shaken flowers of trees, served him who purified by his righteous conduct was oppressed by heat as he had no umbrella with him.”

It proves that Raghuvansham is full of ecocritical references.

Kumarsambhavam: Kumarsambhavam again echoes with several ecocritical references. In the very opening section of the poem the poet has delved deep to emphasize the natural beauty of Himalayas. He has portrayed Himalayas as the dwelling place of various precious herbs which are important for the sustenance of human life. This beautiful description of Himalayas has given a pictorial effect to the poetic art of Kalidas. Chandra quotes, “The Mountain fills the hollow bamboo stems, with breeze he excels through his cave mouths, as if wishing to accompany with flutes, note by note, the high clear melodies of the faunas.”

By appreciating the vast beauty of Himalayas, the poet has praised the Creator, that Supreme Being and expressed his gratitude towards him for creating the laurels of beauty. In Kumarsambhavam, the beauty of nature also manifests itself in the form of spring season. It is depicted from verse 25 to 39. The beauty of nature ranges from the description of the glittering sunrays, morning breeze laden with the fragrance of flowers, the absolute greenery of huge trees to the various colorful flowers. This spring season overlaid with beauty and variety casts a very soothing effect on the flora and fauna. Goddess Parvati has been portrayed as nurturing the trees as her child in the hermitage of Guru Vashista. All this proves that Kumarsambhavam also echoes with ecocriticism.

Conclusion: From the above discussion we can safely derive the conclusion that literature is essentially a very powerful instrument for reflecting the problems and crisis of our contemporary society. Fortunately through our technical innovation and scientific advancements we have reached the zenith of material progress where we can fetch all the comforts and luxuries in our lives but unfortunately this blind pursuit has left man nowhere in this world. We have created a threat to our own lives. Even the entire nature is at stake. Man has created an ecological imbalance. Ecocriticism has proved useful to man as it warns about the upcoming dangers through various literary creations. Therefore in the 21st century this theory has gained the momentum. In the immortal works of Kalidas we find a beautiful description of the perennial beauty of nature. Not only this his creations also serve as a vehicle for conveying a universal truth across the globe that if we want to attain a blissful state on this earth, we must learn ‘to love nature, to serve nature and to abide by its rules.’ Bate rightly remarks, “If mortals dwell in that they save the earth and if poetry is the original admission of dwelling, the poetry is the place where we save the earth.”

All these eye opening thoughts are well synthesized in the vast canvas of Kalidas's poetic works. Through his immortal works Kalidas has conveyed a universal message to preserve nature and thus to save life on earth.

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