



Nature in Kâlidâsa's Poetry

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ABSTRACT

Kâlidâsa was a poet of Nature. We get vivid description of Nature in his literary works. Nature has not been introduced in his poetry or drama as an insentient element, but it was used as a separate character. It responds to the call of men and acts according to their necessity. Be it the description of cloud of the rainy- season, or a running deer afraid of arrow of a king or the melancholy sound of a cuckoo – in every cases Kâlidâsa has surpassed everyone. This article throws light upon the mentality of the great Sanskrit poet of the ancient India Kâlidâsa to Nature and his literary technique for using Nature as an essential and inseparable component of his literary composition.

KEY WORDS

Nature, Deer, Separation, Affection, Vivid, Love.

INTRODUCTION

Nature plays an important role in our ancient Sanskrit literature. Though almost all poets like Vâlmîki, Vedavyâsa, Bhavabhûti, Bhâravi, Bhatrîhari, Mâgha etc. have portrayed Nature in their works, yet the participation and involvement of Nature as a primary and indispensable part of literary composition as shown by the great poet Kâlidâsa (dated approximately between the 2nd Century B. C. and the 5th Century A.D.) in his writings are rarely found in their creations. There is no rarity with regard to Nature's poet in the vast English literature also. But the outlook used by Kâlidâsa to experience Nature was completely different from the outlook of the famous poets of the English literature. The renowned English poets are Wordsworth, P. B. Shelly and John Keats etc. Some of them sought higher ethical ideals in Nature, some searched subjective idealism and some got the inspiration for enjoying the beauty of Nature.

But Nature was a separate entity to Kâlidâsa. Nature was involved downright in the incidents— principal or subsidiary, of the daily life of people in his drama and other genres of literary works. Undoubtedly it cannot be said that other poets were also able to express the extreme, close and sweet relationship of man with Nature as Kâlidâsa. The characteristic of Kâlidâsa's heart was looking at the various incidents and emotions of man mingled with Nature. He maintained a superb balance between Nature and man. In this regard he was unparalleled and incomparable. Kâlidâsa is called the Shakespeare of the East. But it will not be an exaggeration that he deserved the higher ornamental throne of the poets in presenting the relation of man with Nature. Shakespeare was basically a poet of the human hearts in spite of his great love for Nature. On the other hand, Kâlidâsa was primarily a poet of Nature in spite of his expertise in the psychological analysis of the human hearts.

Works of Kâlidâsa

Seven books of Kâlidâsa are famous. These are 'Raghuvamsham', 'Kumârasambhavam', 'Ritusamhârah', 'Meghadûtam', 'Mâlavikâgnimitram', 'Vikramorvashîyam' and 'Abhijnânashakuntalam'. In all these compositions the poet has depicted Nature in many ways. If a reader reads any one of these masterpieces then he will delight by the poet's depiction of Nature and his love to it. The explanation of Nature as revealed in these literary works is presented below.

Raghuvamsham

Among the epics of Kâlidâsa 'Raghuvamsham' is the largest and according to some critics it is the greatest. The illustration of the characteristics of the kings of the dynasty originated from the Sun is the subject-matter of this epic of art. It has described 29 kings starting from Dilîpa and ending up to Agnivarna. It comprises of 19 cantos.

The great poet has presented a sweet and charming relationship between man and Nature in this epic. In the first canto we see that the King Dilîpa and His wife Sudakshinâ went to the hermitage of the sage Vashistha to have a son. They went there by boarding on a chariot whose sound was sweet and deep. They looked like the lightning and the Airâvata in the cloud of the rainy season. The pleasing air full of pollen of flowers and scented with the extract of the œâla tree served both of them moving the branches of the trees gently in the forest¹. The King and His wife heard the cry of peacocks sounding like the sadaj note (first note) of Indian music. Two deer stood beside the road. They stared at the chariot. Dilîpa and Sudakshinâ realised that there was a great similarity between their eyes and the eyes of the deer. Looking upwards they saw that the storks were flying across the sky creating rows and erecting gate without pillars in the sky. The air was moving favourably. So the dust raised by the hooves of the horses could not touch the coronet of the King or the hairs of the Queen. They asked the names of the trees situated beside the road to the elderly who gifted newly made ghee to them. They wore new cloths. So their beauty was similar to the brightness of the moon free from dews and connected to the Citrâ star. They could not realise how much distance they crossed as the King was showing the different objects to His Queen.

At the time of birth of Raghu, Râma and his brothers not only the people of the royal palace and the subjects of the kingdom became happy and cheerful, but the whole Nature was also full with pleasure. The sky became clear. The sun dispersed its gentle rays. The air blew gently with its fragrance. When Sîtâ was banished by Râma then Nature expressed its deep compassion out of heart-rending grief. Peacocks stopped their dancing. Trees gave up their flowers. Deer gave up grasses from their mouths. When Râma searched after Sîtâ in the forest after losing her then the trees of the forest had shown their sympathy by bringing down their branches. In the fourteenth canto of this epic it is seen that as it were, the river Ganges prevented Lakshmana from performing the cruel act of banishment of Sîtâ by raising its hands of waves when he took Sîtâ for her banishment following the strict order of Râma.

Kumârasambhavam

The poet has started his book with the description of the Himalaya which is an emblem of unparalleled splendour and greatness. It keeps the balance of the Earth and it acts as the yardstick. Lord Shiva meditates in the peaceful atmosphere of the Himalaya. Nature is also eager to maintain the peacefulness and discipline of the hermitage of the Himalaya breathlessly being motionless. With the untimely advent of the spring accompanied by Madana there were waves of pleasure in Nature. Immediately Umâ, the daughter of the Himalaya felt deep emotion of love. She came to Shiva with her pride of extraordinary beauty. But the result seemed to be opposite. Madana was burnt to ashes with the fire of anger of Shiva and Pârvatî returned home crying fie upon her beauty. The whole atmosphere of the hermitage became gloomy with the pale shadow of melancholy.

In the first canto describing the Himalaya the poet said that the Himalaya protects the darkness which is afraid of the day from the sun by offering shelter it in the caves. It plays the holes of the bamboo sticks as flute by ejecting the air from its caves. In this description the Himalaya is considered as a conscious being by the poet.

Ritusamhâra

Ritusamhâra is the first creation of Kâlidâsa. In this lyrical poetry the poet has described the six seasons as well as the influence of these seasons on the human minds. How do these seasons affect the diversity of emotions and their sentiments in the minds of the lovers is presented in an attractive style. In one verse the poet describes the spring appreciatively and effectively. The verse goes:

“praphullacûtâmkuratîksnasâyako dvirephamâlâvilasaddhanurgunah|
manâmsi vhetum surataprasamginâm vasantayodhah samupâgatah priye||”

It means that the spring has come. The sharp arrow has been thrown in the hearts of lovers. The full-grown buds of mango trees are the arrow of the spring and the buzzing sound is similar to the sound of the bow-string.

According to critics this composition was the first attempt of Kâlidâsa in his young age. Some scholars do not admit the authorship of Kâlidâsa on this book because of the absence of the connotative meaning in the verses of this lyrical poetry.

Meghadûtam

Meghadûtam is basically a lyrical poetry of the rainy season. The hero of this famous lyrical poetry, a Yaksha (a class of demigods) was banished by the curse of his master Kuvera from his place Alakâpurî to Râmagiri, a memorable place associated with the good memory of Râma and Sîtâ of the Râmâyana, because of his negligence in his duty under the king Kuvera and he was separated from his beloved wife for one year. He spent eight months in that secluded hilly forest only thinking on his wife. After that on the first day of the month of âsâdha he saw a cloud in the sky². By this time he became so sad because of his separation from his dear wife that he lost the knowledge of distinction between the conscious and unconscious elements of Nature. So he asked the cloud to convey his message to his beloved wife as a friend and messenger. He requested the cloud to convey the message that after a few months their separation will come to an end and they will be reunited soon. In its way to Alakâ it will see the flora and fauna of different towns and villages of India. These descriptions comprise of the Pûrvamegha of Meghadûta. The Uttaramegha of Meghadûta is the gorgeous description of the Capital Alakâ. Meghadûta is the fire-test of love through curse. Curse makes love purer and stronger.

Nature in Meghadûta may be compared to a theatre. As a spectator sitting in the auditorium watches various scenes of the play which is being played in the stage by the acting of actors and actresses and he enjoys the performance, similarly, the sympathetic reader of Meghadûta sees the attractive imagery of Nature in every verse of it through his mental imagination influenced by the mesmerism of explanation of Kâlidâsa.

Kâlidâsa's deep love to Nature and the expertise of painting have been expressed in this poetry of love. Different rivers like Revâ or Narmadâ, Vetravatî, Sindhu, Sîprâ, Gambhîrâ, Carmanvatî, Sarasvatî etc. are described through similes.

Abhijnânaakuntalam

The plot of the four Acts of the drama *Abhijnshânashakuntalam* has happened in the natural environment of the hermitage of the great sage Kanva. The plot of this esteemed drama has developed in the lap of Nature. The hermitage of Kulapati Kanva is situated on the bank of the river Mâlinî. The seeds of Nîvâra paddy fallen from the cavity of trees are scattered on the surface around trees habituated by the parrots in this hermitage. The deer roam here and there without fear. They do not run away at the sight of a chariot driven by man because of their faithfulness to man. The sharp and oily stone blocks can be seen here for grinding the imgudi fruits. The roads are marked by water fallen from the wet cloth made of bark of trees and used by the sages. In the peaceful, pleasant and charming environment of this hermitage Shakuntalâ was carefully brought up and protected by Nature with limitless care and love. Shakuntalâ also felt fraternal love for the creepers, animals and birds of the hermitage. The Kesara tree calls Shakuntalâ for having affection by giving a signal of stretching its branches. Shakuntalâ's heart of creeper has bound all the sentient and insentient elements of the forest with the tie of creeper of affection. Shakuntalâ has accepted the young vanajyotsnâ creeper with her affectionate looking.

In the description of the naturel sights also the poet has expressed his masterly expertise. In the seventh verse of the 1st Act of this drama there is a vivid description of a deer which was running for saving its life from the arrow which would be cast by the king Dushyanta³. It looks at the chariot again and again by moving its neck. It is so afraid of the arrow that the later portion of its body shrinks and it goes to front side. It is so tired that the half-chewed grasses are falling from its open mouth on the road. It was jumping so long that most of the time it stayed in the sky and seldom touched the ground.

In the 2nd Act the king Dushyanta stopped hunting for one day. He said in the 6th verse, "Let the buffalos take their bath by stirring the water of the small pond by their horns today. Let the deer ruminate the grasses chewed before in the shadow of trees together. Let the wild boars uproot the muthâ (a kind of grass with aromatic roots) fearlessly in the pool. Let my bow of loose chord rest today."

The plot of the 3rd Act also took place in the natural environment of the hermitage of Kanva. Here being suffered from the fever of love Shakuntalâ is lay on the bed of soft wild flowers on a stone. Priyamvadâ has brought the ointment of cuscus and the lotus leaf with stick to mitigate the heat of Shakuntalâ's body. Mother Gautamî has brought holy sacrificial water to sprinkle upon Shakuntalâ to ward off her evils. Anasûyâ is busy to fan Shakuntalâ ith the leaf of lotus. The king saw her in the hut made of creepers. Shakuntalâ became very thin and pale because of the thought of Dushyanta.

Shakuntalâ was so close to Nature that the deities of the forest gave her clothes, ornaments, lac-dye as gifts for her ornamentation like relatives at the time of her going to her husband's home. She did not drink water until she had sprinkled water on the ridge of the trees of the hermitage. Though she was fond of ornaments yet she did not pluck the new leaves out of love. The sprouting of flowers seemed to her as festival. When sage Kahva sought permission from the trees and creepers for the department of Shakuntalâ from the forest to her husband's house then they gave the permission through the sweet sound of cuckoos immediately.

When Shakuntalâ said that though her mind was eager to see her husband yet her foot was not moving forward then Priyamvadâ expressed this view that not only she was sad because of separation but the whole hermitage became gloomy because of her separation. The grasses fell from the mouth of deer. The peacock did not dance anymore. The leaves fell from the creepers⁴. As if the whole Nature wept for her. Being obstructed Shakuntalâ asked who pulled her cloth. Kanva answered that the little deer which had been served by her with oil to cure its wound created by the kusha grass and which had been brought up by her

with the Shyâmâ paddy was pulling her cloth⁵. The readers of this drama also feel united with the inhabitants of the hermitage after reading this vivid description.

In the 6th Act of this drama Nature expressed sympathy to the king Dushyanta who was suffering from the separation of Shakuntalâ. Though mango trees blossomed yet pollen could not be seen in the bud. Though the kuravaka flowers blossomed yet they were in the budding state. Though the winter has passed yet people could not hear the sweet song of cuckoo. Being timid the deity Madana has also taken back his arrows though he tried to through them.

In the drama 'Mâlavikâgnimitram' the heroine Mâlavikâ is portrayed as the embodiment of Nature. In the drama 'Vikramorvashîyam' Nature has been presented as the celestial nymph.

CONCLUSION

According to Kâlidâsa man is a part and parcel of Nature. Man cannot live showing negligence to the Nature. They are inter-dependent to each other. The great poet of our modern India Rabindranath Tagore said that if the hermitage is omitted then not only the plot of the drama 'Abhijnânashakuntalam' is obstructed but the character of Shakuntalâ remains also incomplete. Her character is developed with the shadow and spike of the creeper of Mâdhavî. The description of the external Nature given by Kâlidâsa in this drama is not kept outside, but it has been manifested in the character of Shakuntalâ. In his "Prâcîna Sâitya" Rabindranath Tagore commented that in the drama 'Abhijnânashakuntalam' the Nature of the hermitage is also a special character like Anasûyâ, Priyamvadâ, Kanva and Dushyanta. An allegorical drama may be composed by the personification of Nature, but without changing the nature of Nature and simultaneously making it so alive, apparent or visible, pervading or prevalent and intimate and the fulfilment of the purpose of the drama with the direct help of Nature cannot be seen in any other literary work. "Meghadûtam" is so famous that it has become the source of hundred poetries after Kâlidâsa. Kâlidâsa has taught us how to love and respect Nature. To make our life more happy and pure we must protect Nature from being polluted. We cannot bring back the environment of the ancient hermitage in this 21st century based on science and technology. But we can plant more trees for our sustainable development. Thus we can present a beautiful Earth to our next generation.

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