

Influence of nature in the works of Kālidāsa

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Abstract:Kālidāsa is revered as the most outstanding Sanskrit poet and dramatist. He is undoubtedly the greatest poet of India who is famous for his poetic embellishment utilizing Upama rhetoric quite efficiently suiting the circumstances. While poets who are considered as true scholars augment poetic embellishment using various types of rhetoric and rare words with the view of expressing their scholarship, Kālidāsa made each verse lustrous with simple words and poetic embellishments apt to the circumstance. Kālidāsa was a great poet and nature was his soul. He is acclaimed as the poet of nature. He is one poet who realized nature in every aspect and how man and nature are related to each other. He is a master of human psychology. He also knew the soul of women quite well. His style of presentation is very simple and heart touching. He describes the gorgeous scenery of Himālayamountain in a very captivating manner in many of his kāvyas. His descriptions of rivers and other natural phenomena are highly impressive and lively. The kāvyas of kālidāsa will remain in existence in this world until the existence of the universe itself.

Key Word:Kalidasa, Nature, Kavya.

India is a country which has a unique and vibrant civilization.The ancient Indian civilization is the only one which survived the test of time. The civilization of India, which had its origins in the Vedas, which thrived in the Indus-Saraswati river basins, continues to be vibrantto this day. This came to be sosince some of the most fundamental ideas of Vedic culture and civilization have been disseminated among the people of this ancient land by way of powerful symbols, festivals, and their manifestations in the various art forms of this country. Kālidāsa, no doubt, is the most beautiful and yet, the most authentic representative of this phenomenon of cultural dissemination, who is rightly conferred with the title of 'Kavikulaguru'.

Banabhatta of the 7th century AD, one of the greatest scholars in Sanskrit, says in the introduction of Harṣacaritam refers to Kālidāsa as follows:

"Nigartāsunavākasyakālidāsasyasūktiṣu |

Prītimadhurasāndrāsumañjarīṣvivajāyate" ||

'Who will not be attracted to Kālidāsa after listening to his sweet maxims which provide intense happiness like a blossom.'

Kālidāsa is revered as the most outstanding Sanskrit poet and dramatist. He is undoubtedly the greatest poet of India who is famous for his poetic embellishment utilizing

Upama rhetoric quite efficiently suiting the circumstances. While poets who are considered as true scholars augment poetic embellishment using various types of rhetoric and rare words with the view of expressing their scholarship, Kālidāsa made each verse lustrous with simple words and poetic embellishments apt to the circumstance.

"Dhanvantarikṣapaṇakāmarasimhaśaṅku-
vetālabhaṭṭaghatakarparakālidāsāḥ |
Khyāto varāhamihironṛpateḥ sabhāyām
Ratnānivaivararucinaivavikramasya ||

King Vikramāditya was a great patron of literature. There were nine poets in his court who are quite famous. They are popularly known as the nine gems. Kālidāsa was one of them. Dhanvantari, Kṣapaṇa, Amarasimha, Śaṅku, Vetālabhaṭṭa, Ghaṭakarpara, Varāhamihira and Vararuci were the others.

Kālidāsa was a poet who initiated a literary style which is enchanting beyond comparison. Through his beautiful work Meghasandēśam, Kālidāsa successfully conquered the lofty peaks of the sentiment of love and created an entirely new niche for love-oriented literature.

The intrinsic quality of Kālidāsa to imbibe each minute feature of nature and instill it with elegance and grace is beyond comparison. His works abound with praise of nature and its various phenomena. Even the poets of modern times imbibe the essence of his creations.

Each verse in his work Meghasandēśam which shines in unparalleled elegance reveals the excellence of the poetic embellishment styles of the great poet Kālidāsa, the bard of nature. This work which transforms each feature of nature lively remains as an epitome for the excellence of poetic embellishment of the great poet Kālidāsa.

Since Kālidāsa's time, many have tried and failed to reach the heights that he so effortlessly scaled on a regular basis. This fact is summed up by another great representative of Indian culture and one of the founding pillars of the mighty Vijayanagar Empire, Sāyaṇāchārya (younger brother of sage Vidyāraṇya), who also authored an extensive bhāṣya on Ṛ̥gveda.

“The path of Kālidāsa, littered with melodiously lucid words, is there for all to see. But Alas! Even as they are seeing it so clearly, none among the poets have been able to tread the same path”

Mallinatha Suri, who has written perhaps the most authoritative and detailed commentary on Kālidāsa's Raghuvamśam, Kumārasambhavam and Meghadūtam, says:

“The greatness and depth of Kālidāsa’s works can be understood and appreciated by Kālidāsa himself, Goddess Sarasvati or Lord Brahma; It cannot be understood by mere mortals like me”.

He is seen to have extolled nature in many angles including picturesque gardens, singing birds, humming bee, cuckoo, mountains, etc. It has to be assumed that Kālidāsa was an authority on human psychology, the ways in which humans think and react in various situations in life and one who mastered the psychology of women. His way of expression is simply superb and amply proven by his great works. Kālidāsa, the super poet and dramatist has been appreciated by the lovers of literature all over the world. The beauty and simplicity of the verses of Kālidāsa coupled with his soft feeling and abundance of imagination remain unparalleled.

Kālidāsa eulogizes nature in his drama Abhijñāna-śākuntalam quite a lot. Creepers, trees, animal like deer, birds, etc play important roles in the kāvyas of Kālidāsa, especially so in Abhijñānaśākuntalam. In the ancient past, man used to live in close contact with nature and all its phenomena. For example, bark of trees was used as clothes and lotus leaf was used for inscribing messages.

Kālidāsa is praised as the poet who discovered the soul of women. Śakuntalā, the heroine in the drama, is presented by Kālidāsa in different states like a lovely girl in the hermitage, as a lover, as a doting daughter of father, as a pregnant woman cheated by her husband and as a loving mother.

'Kāvyeṣunāṭakamramyam

Tatraramyā Śakuntalā'

It becomes quite clear to all concerned the manner in which this famous saying came to be true.

Anagrātampuṣpam, kisalayamalūnamkararuhai-

ranāmuktamratnammadhunavamanāsvāditarasam |

Akhaṇḍampuṇyānāmphalmiva ca tadrūpamanagham

Na jānebhoḥtāramkimihāsamupasthāsyaṭividhiḥ ||¹

This is the way in which King Duṣyata explains to Vidūṣaka as to who will be the lucky person who will be able to enjoy nuptial bliss with Śakuntalā:

'Her body, which is not shattered, is like an un-smelt flower, like a sprout which has not been plucked, like a jewel which is never worn and like the flawless result of auspicious deeds. I do not know who will be permitted by destiny to enjoy this.'

Subhagasalilāvagāḥpāṭalasaṃsargasurabhivanavātāḥ |

Pracchāyasulabhanidrādivasāḥpariṇāmaramaṇīyāḥ ||²

Bathing is delightful during the day time, the fragrant air comes from the forest, that air is scented due to the contact of the pāṭala flowers, sleeping in thick shaded areas becomes effortless which becomes charming at the end of the day.

Eṣadīṣaccumbitānibhramaraiḥsukumārakesaraśikhāni |

Avataṃsayantidayamānāḥ pramadāḥśiriṣakusumāni ||³

Śirīṣaflowers, which are simply kissed by the black bees, are used with a sympathetic heart by the youths as their ear ornaments.

Darbhānkureṇacaraṇakṣataityakāṇḍe

Tanvīsthitākaticidevapadānigatvā |

Āsīdvivṛttavadanā ca vimocayanti

Śākhāsuvalkkalamasaktamapidrumāṇām ||⁴

At the instance of returning to the hermitage after meeting with Duṣyanta, the manner in which the poet has described the picture of Śakuntalā is as follows:

'When Śakuntalā walked a few steps, she stopped suddenly pretending that a sharp edged 'darbha' grass pierced her foot. She also turned her face backwards in the pretext that the cloth of bark got entangled on a branch of a tree and putting up the show of disentangling the bark, though the bark actually did not get entangled on the branch of any tree.'

Pātumnaprathamamvyavasyatijalamyuṣmāsvapīteṣu yā

Nādattepriyamaṇḍanāpibhavatāmsnehenayāpallavam |

Ādyevaḥkusumaprasūtisamayeyasyābhavatyutsavam

Seyamnyātiśakuntalāpatigṛhāmsarvairanujñāyatām ||⁵

' Listen ! listen !ye neighbouring trees of the penance-grove. She who never attempts to drink water first, when you have not drunk, and who, although fond of ornaments, never plucks a blossom, out of affection for you, whose highest joy is at the season of the first appearance of your bloom, that same Śakuntaḷa now departs to the house of her husband. Let her be allowed to depart affectionately by all of you.'

Anumatagamanāśakuntalātarubhiriyamvanavāsabandhubhiḥ |

Parabhṛtavirutamkalamyathāprativacanīkṛtabhirīdrśam || 6

Śakuntaḷa is permitted to depart by trees, the foresters'bosom friend and close relative. A song to this effect was voiced by cuckoos which was taken as an answer by them. One of the names of cuckoo is 'vasanta-duta', messenger of spring. Its song is said to be sweet. While embarking a journey, the note of a cuckoo indicates good-fortune. The answer of the trees was effected by the song of the cuckoo. The answer of the 'vanadevtas' was given by a blowing sound of air. This is a classic illustration of the manner in which Kālidāsa brings in the various aspects of nature into his works in quite a natural way.

Śakuntaḷā is permitted by the trees and creepers for departure to her husband's house - the trees, who were her companions during her presence in the forest. At that time, the sweet sound of cuckoo is heard as their word of consent.

Ramyāntaraḥkamalinīharitaiḥsarobhiśchāyādrumairniyamitārkamayūkhatāpaḥ |

Bhūyātkuśeśayarajomṛdureṇurasyāḥśāntānukūlapavanścaśivaścapanthāḥ || 7

This is the description of Śakuntaḷā when she started her journey to her husband's house. May her path be pleasant at intervals with lakes which are full of lotus flowers. May the heat of the sun's rays be moderated by trees providing shadow. May the dust be soft as the pollen from the lotus flowers. May it be cheered by blowing, gentle and favourable breeze.

Udgalitadarbhakavalāmṛgyaḥparityaktanartanāmayurāḥ |

Apasṛtapāṇḍupatrāmuñcatyaśruṇīvalatāḥ || 8

The deer let fall the mouthfuls of Darbha-grass, the peacocks ceased their dancing, the creepers, as they shed their yellow leaves, appear to shed tears due to the departure of Śakuntaḷā for her husband's house.

Bhavantinamrāstaravaḥphalāgamair |

Navāmbubhirdūravilambinoghanāḥ || 9

When Śakuntalā, daughter of Sage Kaṇva, was on her way to her husband's house, trees bent down their branches and the newly formulated clouds hung in the sky very low. This is display of grief by nature at the departure of Śakuntalā. The trees and the sky are said to bend their heads in grief. This is the exquisite way in which Kālidāsa, the great poet brings in the various aspects of nature in a heart touching manner.

"Kālidāsasyasarvasvamabhijñānaśākuntaḷam"

This saying is proven to be true by the fact that Śākuntaḷam is the work of Kālidāsa which has been regarded as the most popular and translated into the highest number of languages. It is also note worthy that Malayalam stands first among those with over forty translations.

In Vikramorvaśīyam ,Pūrūravas goes to Gandhamādana along with Urvaśi to celebrate their honey moon. At Gandhamādana, Pūrūravas kept looking at a Vidyādhara maiden named Udayavati for a long time which made Urvaśi angry. Urvaśi walked away from Pūrūravas and enters Kumāravana where entry for women was not allowed. Since women who enter Kumāravana would turn into creepers, Urvaśi turns into a creeper.

Ṛtusamhāram is another beautiful kāvya of Kālidāsa in which the diversities found in seasons, which is a part of the beauty of nature, is explained drenched in love affliction. All aspects of nature, whether they are live or otherwise, were seen by this great poet as being lively and described the diversities of seasons of India with utmost care and unparalleled poetic excellence. For example, the fall season (śaraṭṛtu), which comes after the rainy season, is envisaged by the poet as a bride who presents herself well adorned with bridal make up. The poetic embellishments comparing them with beauty of women is exquisite. The poet explains that they cause a high tide of emotion in the hearts of youngsters.

"Kalhārapatmakumudānimuhurvidhutvam-

statsaṅgamādadhikamadīṭaḷatāmupedaḥ |

Utkaṇḍhayatyatitarāmpavanahprabhāte

Patrāntalagnatuhināmbuvidhūyamānaḥ ||¹⁰

'The early morning cool breeze which comes patting the flowers of kalhāram, patmam and kumudam, tasting the drops of snow underneath the leaves, activates deep desire in the minds of youngsters.'

The poet describes that the arrival of spring season augments spring in all objects of nature.

"Drumāḥsapuṣpāḥsalilamsapatmam

Striyaḥsakāmāḥpavanaḥsugandhiḥ |

Sukhāḥpradoṣādivasāścaramyāḥ

Sarvampriyamcārutaramvasante ||¹¹

'Trees turn out to be full of flowers. Lotus ponds overflow with lotus flowers. Wind blows gently carrying sweet smell. Both the day and night remains in a happy state.'

In the spring season, the poet narrates, sexuality and beauty augments in women. Cuckoos getting drunk on ripe mango juice kiss their mates. In the spring season which captivates mind, mango flowers and karṇikāra flowers which are in full bloom, sweet warbling noises of birds, the buzzing noise of bees - all these augments the emotion of love.

Meghasandēśam of Kālidāsa is another exquisite kāvya which initiated a new trend in kāvya literature. Each verse of this work which shines with unparalleled beauty declares the lofty level of excellence of poetic embellishment of the great poet, Kālidāsa. This kāvya, which is oriented towards the sentiment of love, expresses vividly the various aspects of love exquisitely, especially 'vipralambhaśṅgāra'.

"Bhitvāsadyaḥkisalayaṣṭamdevadārudrumāṅām

Ye talkṣīraśrutisurabhayodakṣiṇepravṛttāḥ |

Āliṅgyandeguṇavati, mayātetuṣārādrivātāḥ

Pūrvasprṣṭamyadikilabhavedaṅgamabhistaveti" ||¹²

'The Himālayan winds which blow in a southwardly direction forcing open the young buds of Devadāru trees (Deodar trees) and carrying the sweet smell of the milk of those trees, Oh! my dear who is of good nature, I hug them thinking that they have had contact with your body earlier.'

Kālidāsa had the unique expertise to unite the phenomena of nature with the characters of his kāvyas. An example of such a

situation is as follows:

"Utpaśyāmidrutamapisakhe, malprijārthamiyāsoḥ

Kālakṣepamkakubhasurabhouparvateparvatete |

Śuklāpāṅgaiḥsajalanayanaiḥswāgatīkṛtyakekāḥ

Pratyudyātaḥkathamivabhavāṅgantumāśuvyavasyel ||¹³

'My friend, (cloud) please have the desire to go fast to attain my wish. I foresee that you are likely to get delayed at each mountain on which the sweet smell of 'neermarutu' lingers. When peacocks welcome you with their shrill noise how will it be possible for you to leave that place in a hurry?'

Peacocks are friends of cloud. Peacocks start dancing filled with happiness when they see rain clouds. It is not possible to leave that place neglecting the love of friends. The forward movement of the cloud will also be hampered by the peaks of mountains drenched in the sweet smell of 'neermarutu'. This is the gist of the above.

Meghasandēśam of Kālidāsa remains as the classic example of Kālidāsa's lofty capability of poetic embellishment making each object of nature totally radiant, overflowing with poetic beauty.

To conclude, Kālidāsa was a great poet and nature was his soul. He is acclaimed as the poet of nature. He is one poet who realized nature in every aspect and how man and nature are related to each other. He is a master of human psychology. He also knew the soul of women quite well. His style of presentation is very simple and heart touching. He describes the gorgeous scenery of Himālaya mountain in a very captivating manner in many of his kāvyas. His descriptions of rivers and other natural phenomena are highly impressive and lively. The kāvyas of kālidāsa will remain in existence in this world until the existence of the universe itself.

Footnotes

1. Abhijñānaśākuntalam. Act 2. śloka.10.

2. Abhijñānaśākuntalam. Act. I. śloka.3.

3. Abhijñānaśākuntalam. Act. I. śloka.4.

4. Abhijñānaśākuntalam. Act. 2- śloka.12.

5. Abhijānaśākuntalam.Act.IV. śloka.9.
6. Abhijñānaśākuntalam.Act.IV. śloka.10.
7. Abhijñānaśākuntalam.Act.IV. śloka.11.
8. Abhijñānaśākuntalam.Act.IV. śloka.12.
9. Abhijñānaśākuntalam.Act.V. śloka.12.
10. R̥tusamhāram- canto.3-śloka. 15.
11. R̥tusamhāram- Canto - 6 - śloka - 2.
12. Meghasandేశam- Canto -2 - śloka -44.
13. Meghasandేశam- Canto -1 -. śloka -22.