Environmental and Geographical awareness in Meghādūta

Baby

All Organisms are dependent on the environment to satisfy their needs. In the same way man is also constantly interacting with environment in-order to fulfill his needs. These needs include the basic needs of air, food and shelter in addition to the social needs like, entertainment, medicines etc. The things that man requires for his survival and comfort are called the resources. Maintaining the natural resources of the environment and their careful use is called conservation. This is conservation of the natural resources. A healthy environment is an absolute necessity for the well-being of all organisms including man.

In our ancient scriptures man saluted nature while recognizing it's physical and spiritual dimensions. The ancient man in India experienced the vibrations from the earth full of spirit throughout his life and said like this:
Iśāvāsyamidaṃ saūvam yatkiñca jagatyām jagat
tēna tyaktēna bhuñjīthāh mā gṛdhah kasya sviddhanam.

We can notice so many similar references in the ancient Indian scriptures including Vedas and Upaniṣads.

Kālidāsa is a universally recognized poet, a dramatist and also an environmentalist. He had a deep in sight in human nature. It is revealed throughout in his work Mēghadūta. The world renowned poet William Shakespeare travelled through the hearts of human feelings, but Kālidāsa travelled throughout the universal power. Kālidāsa sketched his characters with deep sense of nature and human psychology. He mixes nature and human emotions in a manner with the highest sense of aesthetics. The later period moved with this sense of understanding taking the expressions of Kalidasa as the backbone of Indian aesthetics and environmental vision. One feels alike the play of the unseen hand in the joyful and beautiful aspects of nature as

in the workings of the feelings and emotions of the human personality. This conviction permeated the whole environmental attitude in Kālidāsa. Here, the author intends to reveal the environmental and geographical awareness expressed in the classical work called Mēghadūta. The geographical representation is the supporting element to the main theme.

In Mēghadūta, a priceless lyrical gem, the former half is a glowing description of the beauties of nature interwoven with human feelings, and the later half is a picture of the human heart set in the frame of natural beautify. In this, Kālidāsa reveals the deep consciousness of truth to nature working as it does on a vast wealth of minutely observed facts in the kingdoms, both of man and nature, in the forest and the city on the earth and the sky.

Mēghadūta of Kālidāsa narrates the story of an imaginary Yakṣa, separated from his wife due to a curse. The Yakṣa sends a message to his wife through a cloud. The first part of the poem describes the journey of the cloud from Rāmagiri to Alaka, the city of Kubēra. The second part, with a description of Alaka and its citizens, concludes with the message of the Yakṣa for his beloved.

The first poem started with.

कश्चित् कान्त.....रामगिर्याश्रमेषु।

The verse contains the holiness of the spots Yakṣa decided to spend his period of banishment in the place where Rama and Sīta spent the happiest years of their forest life. Then he saw the cloud whose shape is one of the rutted elephants playing on the hills. This situation states that emotion which holds a person in its grip and transforms his whole nature knows no difference between animate objects in-bred with feelings and inanimate nature.

That is,

धूमज्योतिः सलिलमरुतां सन्निपात क्व मेघः
कामार्ताः हि प्रकृतिकृपणाश्चेतनाऽचेतनेषु।।[1]

This deep insight into the heart of nature is fused so wonderfully with his profound knowledge of the human heart.

The Sloka nine narrates that the cloud's journey will be pleasant and comfortable. The wind will be gentle and favorable. The cātaka - making

sounds from the left will be auspicious women. They are happy because tradition has it that they will conceive with the consent of rains.

मन्दम् मन्दम् नुदति पवनश्चानुकूलो यथा त्वां
सेविष्यन्ते नयनसुभगं खे भवन्तं प्रालाकाः।[2]

India is the land of agriculture. The people of India mainly depend on the nectar which is showered from the heaven by the cloud. Kālidāsa says to the cloud-

त्वय्यायत्तं कृषिफलमिति भ्रूविलासानभिज्ञैः
किञ्चितपश्चात् व्रज लघुगतिर्भूय ऐवोत्तरेण [3]

The outcome of the agriculture depends upon the cloud. It is the lifeline- प्रत्यासन्ने नभसि दयिताजीवितालंप्रनार्थी [4] of the Indian people. This reveals the natural needs of human beings. The verse eighteen reveals the description of the cloud seated on the आम्रकूट hill. छन्नेपान्तपरिणतफलद्योतिफिः काननाम्रैः. . . . . मध्ये श्याम स्तन इव भुवः शेषविस्तारपाण्डुः[5] The peak is dark due to the cloud which in all is the vast pale expanse provided with the flowery and fruitful groves of mango trees. To the heavenly couples wandering in the sky, this view gives the appearance of the breast and nipple of the mother earth.

तस्यास्तिक्तैर्वनगज मदैर्वासितं वान्तवृष्टिः
वान्तवृष्टिः. . . . . .
तोयमादाय गच्छेः।[6]

The word, तिक्ता, वान्त has a double meaning. They imply that a man suffering from flatulence (wind affection) should have an emetic given to him first to induce vomiting and then an astringent decoction to prevent the formation of phlegm. This is a substance used in eurative treatment as universal.

With the onset of rains, the flowers bloom, plants become lushly and the rain falling on the forests burnt out in summer and the forest fires kindles the underlying fragrance of the earth beneath. Deers prance about happy in this atmosphere and in these surroundings. [7]

The verse सद्यः फलमविकलं कामुकत्वस्य लप्स्या।[8] reveals a charming picture in typical Kālidāsa style. He conjures up the vision of a lady, a little

annoyed with her lover and listening to his pleadings, still, putting up her upturned face the Vetravati river flowing in Vidiśa the capital of Daśārṇa is compared to a lover kissing his beloved, the sandy fringes of the river to the beautiful ears of the lady, the even flow of the river to the face of the lady and the waves to the knitting of her eyebrows. These reveals the feelings of one who suddenly got the fruit of the interaction with the lovers.

श्लाघनीयामन्द्राणां फलमविकलं लफ्स्यते गर्जितानाम[9] Ibid 1:36

This reveals that the ceremonies of the Sandhyā are of a public nature, they comprehend the ringing of bells, blowing the conch and this kind of sound the cloud is directed by the Yakṣa to excite as an act of devotion in the evening worship completely. गंभीरायाः पयसि चरित चेतसीव प्रसंन्ने - means the cloud's beauty is well reflected in the placid waters of the river. The handsome cloud really enters in to the heart of the river as into that of a lady. The lady reciprocates the lover by her bold glances, represented by the agile fish leaping from the waters. Here the poet imagines the cloud as a hero and the river as a heroine.

The last poem described is - प्रणयिन इव उत्सङ्गे[10]Here the poet is likened to a lover, Alaka to a woman reclining on the top of her lover and the white sheet of the water of the Ganges falling from it to a white silk garment. The poet imagines himself to be a lover, Alaka the beloved and the river Gaṅgā her robe. The poet states that the unity of the lovers is very natural and happy.

The richness of Kālidāsa's imagination is revealed in the colourful descriptions of Alaka in Ujjayini, and of the Himalaya. Indeed Kālidāsa's handling of the nature in the first part of the poem shows how to him art has been unsurmountable.

Geographical awareness.

The geographical descriptions would contain the cloud's route viz- mountains, rivers, countries, villages, cities which would be dry and uninteresting.

रेवाद्रक्ष्यस्युपलविषमेविन्ध्यपादे विशीर्णाम् [11]The current of the river is often obstructed, as it has to force its way through a range of rocky hills or a tract of the elevated ground. विन्ध्यपादे -The Vindhya is of seven principal ranges

or mountains called Kulaparvatas. It separates the Hindustan proper form the Deccan, and forms the southern limit of Madhyadeśa. And also the poet imagines Reva shattering its water at the foot of the Vindhya Mountain rugged with rocks, like the decoration with ornamental designs on the body of an elephant..

वक्रपन्था यदपि भवत:प्रस्थितस्योत्तराशां[12] Yakṣa says to the cloud that you might have gone towards; let you not be averse to the acquaintance of the terraces of mansions in Ujjayini. Cross the river Nirvindhyā and soon the cloud shall enter the Avanti country, proceed to its capital Viśāla full of abundant riches and in seeing whose crores of bright necklaces with large pearls as centre-pieces, conches, emeralds green like grass and shooting rays upwards the oceans appear to have only water left behind in them. From there beyond the river Gambhīrā the cloud shall to Devagiri, the usual residence of Skanda. And having crossed the river Carmaṇvatī and passing by dasapura, the plain of Kurukṣētra and the river Sarasvatī and proceed to the river Gaṅgā which flows from the Himālaya.

And having proceeded northward the poet, requested to the cloud would become the guest of Kālidāsa - the looking glass of the heavenly maidens.

गत्वाचोर्ध्वं दशमुखभुजोच्छ्वासित प्रस्थसन्धे:[13]There is an allusion here to Rāvaṇa's attempt to remove Kālidāsa to Lanka. It is situated on a hill called 'Trikūta' and the present halting place Suvela will give a good view of the same. At last the poet imagines तस्योत्सङ्गे प्रणयिनइव स्रस्त गंगा दुकूलां कामिनीवाभ्रवृन्दम्।[1414]

Ibid 1:65

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III. The Mēghadūta Of Kālidasa Publisher Sarvabhāṣa Kālidasīyam, Sastri Nagar, Jodhpur, India. Aḷaka is a city in the lap of the Himalayas. Kālidāsa is a lover of Aḷaka, the beloved and the river Gaṅga her robe.

CONCLUSION

In his Mēghadūta, Kālidāsa having given the natural explanation, has taken the greatest care not to do violence to normal natural experience, throughout the poem he has made the cloud remain a passive listener to the out-pouring of the heart of Yakṣa. The richness of Kālidāsa's imagination is revealed gain the colourful descriptions of Aḷaka of Ujjayini, of Himālaya. In deed his handling of nature in the first part of the poem shows how his art has been maturing. The descriptions of the clouds route would contain geographical description of mountains, rivers, countries, villages, cities etc. Apart from the background of the Yakṣa's emotions the poet has conceived these objects of nature in relationship of friends, of guest and host or mainly of lovers.

Kālidāsa's Meghadūta with its emphatic message of the supreme value of pure domestic bliss, will visit every home on the earth's surface-exactly as the Yakṣa indicated to the cloud the full scope to wander freely after completing the mission to Alaka.

In short, the application of ecological elements in each kāvya is mainly to make the expression of emotions more effective for earning the knowledge of nature and to make the beautiful meaning of Kāvyas practically oriented. And also the ecological relation makes the Kāvya more and more meaningful, enjoyable and most embellished.

Notes and References

(Endnotes)

[1] Meghaduta 1:5

[2] Ibid 1:9

[3] Ibid 1:16

[4] Ibid 1:4

5
Ibid 1:18

6
Ibid 1:20

7
Ibid 1:24

8
Ibid 1:25

10
Ibid 1:65

11
Ibid 1:19

12
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13
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