

KALIDASA AS A POET OF NATURE

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ABSTRACT

Kālidāsa was undoubtedly a poet of nature. "Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings of the poet" (Oxford Dictionary). Mary B. Harris in her work, "Kālidāsa, poet of Nature" writes that he was a man of culture and acquainted with the fine arts this we infer from the number and character of these allusions to painting and music, in his lyrics and dramas. He was a Natural student and nature lover as are most of his race; these great world artist of nature whose talent is seen at its highest mark in his poem "The seasons", which also gives rein to the poet's other supreme characteristic of intricate eroticism inter-woven with Nature. "Kālidāsa is renowned for his similes. A well known Sanskrit verse "उपमा कालिदासस्य" praises his skill at 'उपमा' or similes.

Keywords: Kālidāsa, Epic, Ecology, Nature, 'the priest of Nature'.

1. INTRODUCTION

Who is this Kālidāsa? When did he live and where in India was he residing? Much discussion has taken place for a long time about his life and time. Several legends have Sprouted about him.

Kālidāsa's writings is his love of external nature. No doubt it is easier for a Hindu, with his almost instinctive belief in reincarnation, to feel that all life, from plant to god, is truly one; No one has expressed this feeling with such convincing beauty as has Kālidāsa. True to say that he personifies rivers and mountains and trees; to him they have a Conscious individuality as truly and as certainly as animals or men or gods. Kālidāsa's character, by virtue of which he found himself equally at home in a palace and in a wilderness. Kālidāsa possessed that distinct intellect which makes one a great poet. He was a scholar and his works display his poetic Jenius as well as scholarship. Also they are marked by a belief of what is good in life and people's noble goals of life. He could describe the rich and wealthy life of a royal palace and the serene, simple and peaceful life at a hermitage with equal understanding.

Kālidāsa's knowledge of nature is so amazing, and beautiful that one gets absorbed in to the world created by the poet. Not only are the shows and windy music of the Himalayas, the mighty current of the Sacred Ganges, his possession; his too are smaller streams and trees are every littlest flower.

As for as the ancient Indian poetry is concerned, Kālidāsa stands supreme in the depiction of the nature. The description of the flora and fauna in the poetry of Kālidāsa's is remarkable. "The description of nature is inseparable from Kālidāsa's poetry as the moonlight is inseparable from the moon. He displays not only his great power of imagination and keen observation but also the refinement of his aesthetic taste and his concept of beauty in the description of nature." His love for nature reached such a degree of perfection that it has been admired by not only the poets of India but also of the abroad. Furthermore, such portrayal of the beauty of nature has most of its richness in the figures he employee. And a high point is reached in his similies and parallelisms.

Kālidāsa is regarded as the greatest of Sanskrit poets and is admirably called the 'prince of poets' by connoisseurs of Indian literary art. Sanskrit is eminently lucky in this respect. Sage's celebration of the wonders of nature, the sky, the stars, mountains and rivers, the sun, the moon, the clouds, fire and their devout offering of prayers to the universal power are all found in the Vedic classics which are in Sanskrit. *Purāṇas* and historical epics like the Ramayana and the *Mahābhārata* vividly describe the battle between the good and the evil. They also portray the virtues like devotion to truth, a sense of sacrifice, heroism cultured living etc. In Sanskrit there are also beautiful stories of birds and animals like *Pañcatantra*, stories, extolling good and basic qualities of wisdom and intelligence. Sanskrit can also justly boast of a rich treasure house of plays, poems and many scientific and philosophical treatises.

A poet who has made a distinct and glorious contribution to this sumptuous Sanskrit literature is Kālidāsa. He has pictured in his works the beauty in life and pondered upon how we can give pleasure to others by generous and graceful behavior. His portrayals are vivid and heart- warming. His word power is unique. In a few words he is Capable of bringing out the entire meaning intended. His writings touchingly show up a noble, meaningful mode of life for the people to pursue. His works are an intellectual treat to thinkers and common readers alike.

Kālidāsa wrote seven works. 'Kumārasambhavam' and 'Raghuvamśam' are his two epic poems. 'Mālavikāgnimitram', 'Vikramorvaśīyam' and 'Abhijñānaśākuntalam', are his celebrated plays. 'Meghadūtam' and 'Rtusamhāram' is also poetical works of great distinction.

Kālidāsa's writings is his love of external nature. No doubt it is easier for a Hindu, with his almost instinctive belief in reincarnation, to feel that all life, from plant to god, is truly one. No one has expressed this feeling with such convincing beauty as has Kālidāsa. True to say that he personifies rivers and mountains and trees, to him they have a conscious individuality as truly and as certainly as animals or men or gods. Kālidāsa's character, by virtue of which he found himself equally at home in a palace and in a wilderness. Kālidāsa possessed that distinct intellect which makes one a great poet. He was a scholar and his works display his poetical genius as well as scholarship. Also they are marked by a belief of what is good in life and people's noble goals of life. He could describe the rich and wealthy life of a royal palace and the serene, simple and peaceful life at a hermitage with equal understanding.

Kālidāsa's knowledge of nature is so amazing and beautiful that one gets absorbed in to the world created by the poet. Not only are the snows and windy music of the Himalayas, the mighty current of the sacred Ganges, his possession, his too are smaller streams and every littlest flower.

Kālidāsa does not sacrifice accuracy at the altar of poetic imagination. Whether he travelled across India or based his descriptions on the information provided by traders and pilgrims, he possessed full and accurate knowledge of the geography of India. In his writings *Meghadūtā*, he has elaborately described the itinerary of the cloud from Rāmagiri, near Nagpur, to Alakā, an imaginary place situated in the Himālayas. Kālidāsa mentions mountains, rivers, forests, flora and fauna with perfect detailing. Pearl fisheries, saffron plants, cardamom creepers, sandal wood, palms and fruit plantations are described in connection with those parts of India, where they are found even today.

Just as Wordsworth is regarded as 'the priest of Nature', Kālidāsa is a nature poet. More importantly, Kālidāsa's works reveal a deep sense of 'trusteeship', between humans and nature. Nature is a participant or a character in his works. Śakuntalā, the daughter of the celestial nymph Menakā, was left in the custody of birds as soon as she was born. A cloud is a central character in *Meghadūta*. It is a messenger personified, set for a journey across central India to the Himalayas to convey the message of the lovelorn Yakṣa.

Kālidāsa is the greatest master-mind in Sanskrit poetry. His genius has been recognized in India from very early times. He has been and will ever be enshrined in the hearts of his countrymen as the prince of Indian poets. Most Indian successors of Kālidāsa have expressed his admiration of the poet in suitable words. Bānabhaṭṭa, the famous author of the *Kādambarī*, speaks of him in the following words –

निर्गतासु न वा कस्य कालिदासस्य सूक्तिषु ।

प्रीतिर्मधुरसार्द्रासु मञ्जरीष्विव जायता ॥

The highest place is assigned to Kālidāsa among poets for the construction of happy similes, when it is said –

उपमा कालिदासस्य भारवेरर्थगौरवम् ।

दण्डिनः पदलालित्यं माघे सन्ति त्रयो गुणाः ॥

Jayadeva, who was the later writers, called our poet कविकुलगुरु 'the lord of poets' and the विलास or 'Graceful play' of the muse of poetry.

That his countrymen should place him at the head of all Sanskrit poets, unparalleled and unsurpassed by those who have followed him, is natural enough but he has evoked spontaneous out pouring of praise and manifestations of admiration even from foreign scholars and poets who had access to his works either directly or through translations. Goethe has voluntarily bestowed the highest med of praise on him – so much was he enraptured by the charms of Kālidāsa's muse and struck with his poetic genius. Muse and struck with his poetic genius. He (Goethe) says about the Śakuntalā – "wouldst thou the young year's blossoms and the fruits of its decline, And all by which the soul is charmed enraptured, feasted, fed? Wouldst thou the earth and heaven itself in one sole name combine? I (Goethe) name thee, O Śakuntalā, and at once is said."

Kālidāsa's poetic genius has brought Sanskrit poetry to the highest elegance and refinement. His style is pure and charming. It has neither the laxity of the *Purāṇas* nor the extravagant coloring of later poems. It is inartificial and characterized by brevity consistent with perspicuity. An unaffected simplicity of expression and an easy – following language mark his writings which are embellished with similes unparalleled for their beauty and appropriateness, and with pithy general sayings. His diction is marked by the absence of long compounds, involved constructions, over – wrought rhetoric, and artificial puns. Kālidāsa excels other poets in his description of the sublime and the beautiful. It is a principle recognized by all modern critics that 'Nature must be the life and essence of poetry'. And in respect of this, Kālidāsa may be said to be essentially a poet of Nature. He describes with most effective touches the gorgeous scenery of the mountain Himālaya – its snow – clad and mineral-covered summits, the peaks where sunshine ever reigns, the fragrant and cool breeze blowing there, the wilds with the hunters, the musk deer, the potent herbs shedding luster at night, the chamara deer, the Mānasa lake etc. and his description of the Ganges and the peaceful hermitage life is very

striking and life-like. His descriptive powers are great, and some of the scenes in the Śaku., the *Megha.*, and the *Raghu.* are so enchanting as to hold his readers spell-bound.

Kālidāsa's intimate sympathy with Nature Strikes a student of his work at every step. His young maidens have moonlike faces, creeper like arms, lotus like hands and feet, and flower like exuberance of youth pervading through every limb of their bodies. The various epithets, describing the limbs of the heroines, are both significant and striking. While describing the beauty of his heroines the poet says:

अस्याः सर्गविधौ प्रजापतिरभूच्चन्द्रो न कान्ति प्रदः ।

शृङ्गारैकरसः स्वयं नु मदनो मासो नु पुष्पाकरः ॥

वेदाभ्यासजडः कथं नु विषयव्यावृत्त कौतुहलो

निर्मातुं प्रभवेन्मनोहरमिदं रूपं पुराणो मुनिः ॥ (Vikram. 1.10)

In the act of her creation, was the moon of lovely splendour that became the progenitor? Was it cupid himself who concerns himself solely with the sentiment of love? Or was it the month of spring which has a wealth of flames? For how could the old sage grown dull by the study of the Vedas, and who is devoid of all desires of worldly pleasures, have produced this beautiful form that again.

आभरणस्याभरणं प्रसाधनविधेः प्रसाधनविशेषः ।

उपमानस्यापि सखे प्रत्युपमानं वपुस्तस्याः ॥ (Vikram. 2.3)

“Friend! her beautiful form in ornaments of ornaments, an excellent decoration of decorations and the counterstained of comparisons to all standards of comparison”.

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