



Volume 1, Issue 2, 2024

Intuitions & Insights

An Interdisciplinary Research Journal

ISSN: 3048-6793



Kālidāsa and Nature with special reference to Meghdūta

Dr Jayanta Mandal

Department of Sanskrit, SMM College, Purulia, West Bengal, India

Email: jayantaphd@gmail.com

Abstract : *Kālidāsa*, one of the greatest Sanskrit poets, is celebrated for his profound connection to nature, particularly in his work *Meghadūta*. In this lyric poem, *Kālidāsa* masterfully weaves elements of nature into the fabric of human emotions. The central theme revolves around a *Yaksha*, exiled from his beloved, who requests a passing cloud to carry his message across a vast, vivid landscape. Nature in *Meghadūta* is not just a backdrop but a living, breathing entity, embodying both the *Yaksha*'s emotions and the grandeur of the cosmos. Poet paints an exquisite picture of the natural world, filled with towering mountains, flowing rivers, lush forests, and monsoon clouds. The personification of the cloud as a messenger adds a divine touch, blending the natural and spiritual realms. His portrayal of nature reflects his deep understanding of its cyclic rhythms, portraying it as a powerful force that mirrors human longing and love. The poet's devotion for nature is explicit through his meticulous descriptions and vivid imagery, making *Meghadūta* a timeless poem to the beauty of the natural world. And research of the complex relationship between human emotions and the environment.

Keywords: *Kālidāsa*, Sanskrit, Nature, *Meghdūta*, Human, *Yaksha*, Mountains, forest, cloud, human, environment, emotion, messenger

*Corresponding author: J. Mandal

Received: 07.08.2024; Accepted: 02.11.2024; Published: 14.11.2024

1. Introduction

Kālidāsa, one of ancient India's greatest poets and playwrights, is renowned for his deep appreciation of nature and his exceptional ability to intertwine it with human emotions. Often compared to Shakespeare in terms of his influence on classical Indian literature, *Kālidāsa*'s works capture the subtleties of human experience, especially as expressed through the beauty and power of the natural world. Among his works, *Meghadūta* (The Cloud Messenger) stands out as a poetic masterpiece that vividly showcases his devotion to nature.

Meghadūta tells the story of a *Yakṣha*, a celestial being, who is separated from his beloved and sends a message to her through a passing cloud. In this lyrical poem, *Kālidāsa* describes the cloud's journey over India's varied landscapes with such vivid detail that nature itself becomes a central character. The rivers, mountains, forests, and changing skies are portrayed in rich imagery, evoking the *Yakṣha*'s emotions and longing. *Kālidāsa*'s poetic technique not only beautifies the natural elements but also personifies them, making nature an active participant in human life and love. Through *Meghadūta*, *Kālidāsa* immortalizes nature as a timeless witness to human experiences, blending romance with a profound reverence for the natural world.

2. Review of Literature

Kālidāsa's works reflect his profound sensitivity to the natural world, often portrayed with remarkable detail and personified qualities. Great scholars like P. V. Kane and V. Raghavan have noted that *Kālidāsa* perceives nature not only as a backdrop but as a sentient presence that interacts with human emotions and experiences.

In *Meghadūta*, *Kālidāsa* employs natural elements such as rivers, mountains, forests, and clouds as active participants in the narrative, a technique that enables a vivid portrayal of nature's beauty. *Kālidāsa*'s command over descriptive language allows him to depict nature's grandeur in unparalleled ways. His similes and metaphors in *Meghadūta* have been praised for their precision and beauty.

Scholars like M.R. Kale and A. B Keith highlight *Kālidāsa*'s unique capacity to blend the visual richness of nature with an aesthetic and spiritual experience, allowing readers to feel the landscape in a way that transcends mere description.

Kālidāsa's treatment of nature in *Meghadūta* has inspired numerous poets and writers, from classical

Sanskrit literature to modern ecological studies. His works are often examined through an ecocritical lens, where nature is seen as an essential, life-sustaining force, fostering a sense of ecological awareness.

Modern scholars have explored how *Kālidāsa's* works encourage a reverence for nature and reflect a deep-seated environmental consciousness. They argue that the poet's empathetic portrayal of landscapes reflects an inherent respect for nature and resonates with contemporary ecological concerns.

3. View of Nature in Kālidāsa's Meghdūta

Kālidāsa is widely regarded as the greatest Sanskrit poet and dramatist of all time. All the subsequent poets, and the poets of today's era have been greatly influenced by his poetic style. In Sanskrit literature, *Kālidāsa* is known for his fiction and thought. He is regarded as the poet of Nature who depicts the natural objects as well as natural phenomena in his works in an extraordinary way. The two eminent themes of nature and love, very often blended together with precious beauty and charm are suitable in *Kālidāsa's* works. Of nature, the poet observes the mountains, landscapes, flora and fauna with proper details. The lotus is the most glorious of all the flowers and of birds. We may mention the peacock, *cātaka* (sparrow), *kokila* (cuckoo) and the *cakravāka* (a type of crane). Scenes are depicted as 'brilliant with blossoming trees, fragrant with flowers, gay with the plumage and vocal with the songs of birds, diversified with lotus-ponds steeped in tropical sunshine and with large-eyed gazelles reclining in the shade' (Macdonell).

The matter of this poetry consists of miniature painting depicting amorous sentiments. This picture, sometimes affected with great subtlety and charm, also often becomes conventional, especially in the hands of the latter poets. The love depicted by Sanskrit poets, it may also be remarked, is not so much romantic as sensuous, though, rarely they do succeed in raising it to a spiritual ideal.

Kālidāsa, whose poetic genius is inspired by nature, excels in the description of natural scenery in its beautiful charming and sympathetic aspects. It is no exaggeration to say that the excellent and elevating description of nature is the very soul of *Kālidāsa's* poetry. His great lyric poem, *Meghadūta*, presents a more mature description of nature from the viewpoint of a separated lover. *Kālidāsa's* poetry is renowned for its vivid and intricate description of nature. 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. *Kālidāsa's* keen observation of nature is revealed in his description of seasons, mountains, forests, rivers, trees, plants, flowers, animals, birds and insects.

Kālidāsa's lyrical poem, *Meghadūta* portrays a very fascinating picture of the *Himālayas*, where the exiled *Yakhṣa's* native city *Alakā*, governed by its lord *Kubera*, is situated. Mapping the path of the cloud-messenger to *Alakā*, the *Yakṣa* describes the *Himālayan* scenery right from *Kankhal*, where the river *Gangā* enters the plains, up to *Alakā*, the crystal-clear waters of the river *Gangā*, snowy peaks of the mountain scented with the smell of musk deer, forests teeming with various animals. Resounding bamboo-trees, echoing caves, the white peaks of the *Kālidāsa* serving as the 'mirror of the gods' wives, the lake *Mānasa* abounding in golden lotuses, and the enchanting scenic beauty of *Alakā*. He then proceeds to describe the route the cloud must take before he reaches the city of the *Yakṣa* in the *Himālayas*. He should next soar over the *Vindhya*s, where he would see the river *Narmadā*, breaking into streamlets on the *Vindhya's* rocky side and obstructed in its course by the *Jambubowers*. With the showers poured by him (the cloud) all nature would be gladdened. The Kadamba trees would put forth new buds and the burnt by hot summer forest would exhale sweet fragrance. After visiting its capital *Vidiśā*, and after tasting the rippling water of the river *Vetravatī*, he should rest on the *Nīlācalahills*. Starting thence, he should make a detour to visit the glorious city of *Ujjayinī* of which he must not miss the pleasure of seeing. After a night's repose on some balcony, there he must take his way to limpid stream of the river *Gambhira* and thence to *Devagiri* hills, the abode of *Skanda*, the war-God. Here he should worship him by showering him blossoms wet with the waters of the Celestial Ganges, and then speed away to the river *Charmanvatī*. Beyond this stream lies *Daśapura*, a country famous for the exquisite loveliness of its women. Viewing the several wonders of this mountain, the cloud should pass to the north through *Krauncharandhara*, and come upon the mount *Kailāsa*, sacred abode of *Śiva*. On the top of this mountain stands the city of *Alakā*, the city of perfect glory and bliss.

Youth is the only stage of life among the *Yakhṣas*. Here, the trees bear perennial flowers. The peacocks display ever-resplendent plumages. The evenings are always pleasant by the presence of constant light of the full moon. All the year round grow the flowers of all the seasons. Beautiful garments and all ornaments are supplied to women by Desire-granting tree (*Kalpa- Vṛkṣa*). In such a beautiful city, to the north of *Kuvera's* abode, stands the *Yakhṣa's* house with its jewelled archway. The mind of *Meghadūta* dwells with fondness of the several beautiful features of his dwelling, viz. the oblong well with emerald steps, full of golden lotuses of the emerald pleasure mount with its peak of sapphires, in the midst of a

grove of golden perch hung between them for his wife's pet peacock. The cloud is then instructed to present him before her. It will deliver his *Meghadūta* message in deep, resonant tones. These tones will create confidence in her and comfort her love and tender hope. The cloud will tell his wife not to yield to despair. It assures her that the curse will end soon. The rainy season will be over and his year of exile completed.

Few Natural *ślokas* are mentioned below:

The poet explains the reason why *Meghadūta* used cloud as his messenger-

*“Dhūmajyotiḥśalilamarūtām sannipātaḥ kva megh/
Sandesārthāḥ kva patukaraṇaiḥprāṇibhīḥprapaṇīyāḥ//
Ityutsukyādapariṇayanguhyakastam yayāce/
Kāmārta hi prakṛtikripanāścetanācetaneṣu//” (Pūrva Megh-5)*

A cloud, a mixture of smoke, light, water and wind, and where the import of messages (on the other), fit to (which can only) be conveyed by beings with organs of sense capable of discharging their functions (i.e. men)! Not at all taking into consideration this in his eagerness, the *Yakṣa* addressed a petition to the cloud: For those that are sorely affected by love are naturally incapable of distinguishing between objects, and insentient).

By explain the natural beauty of *Alakāpurī Meghadūta* says to the cloud-

*“Mandaṁ-mandaṁ nudati pavanascānukūlo yathā tvām/
Bāmoścāyaṁ nadoti modhūroṁ cātokoste sagondhāḥ//
Garvādhānakshaṇporicayānnūnmabaddhāmālāḥ/
Sebishwānte nayonosubhogom khve bhobontom balākāḥ//”(Pūrva Megh-10)*

(Since a favourable breeze very gently impels you on, and this *Cātaka* here, full of hilarity, is sweetly singing on your left, assuredly the female cranes, arranged in rows from their experience of the pleasure of conception, will attend upon you, so charming to the eyes, in the sky).

Description of *Āmrakūṭ* Mountain's Nature:

*“Channopāntoḥ porinatophalodyotobhiḥ kānonāmraye/
Stavyyārūddhye śikharomacalaḥ snigdhabeṇīsabarṇey//
Nūnam yāshyatyamaramithunaprekshanīyāmabosthām/
Modhye shyāmḥ stana ibo bhūvaḥśeṣabistārapāṇduḥ//”(Pūrva Megh-18)*

With you resembling a braid of oiled hair resting on its peak, and with its skirts covered with the groves of wild mango trees bristling with ripe fruit, the mountain, looking thereby like the breast of the earth dark in its centre (nipple) and white in the rest of its expanse, will certainly attain to a state fit to be gazed at by the pairs of celestials.

With these various *Śloka*, the poet fondly depicts the natural beauty with fineness. In *Meghadūta*, the poet inter-mingles the nature and humanity with his innovative poetic genius. It is why *Kālidāsa* has rightly been called the “Poet of Nature”. *Kālidāsa* often describes in his lyrical poem, *Meghadūta*, the natural scenery of lakes adorned with trees, creepers, flowers, fishes and birds. In the season of autumn; the lakes, which are adorned with the pairs of merry flamingos and blooming white and blue lotuses, and in which rows of waves are stirred by the mild morning breeze, delight our heart. In winter also the lakes, having clear and cold water, and adorned with blue lotuses and gay swans, fascinate the minds of people. The lake *Mānasa* is often described by the poet as full of golden lotuses, inhabited by cranes, and possessed of crystal-clear water.

However, a few important points in this connection are too be noted here. It is already mentioned that some trees, plants, flowers, mountains, rivers, lakes, birds and animals of different regions of India described in *Meghadūta*. In single verse of *Meghadūta*, *Kālidāsa* describes the ornamental beauty of half a dozen abode of the mountains, with their arms uplifted in the form of peaks, seemed to shed tears in the form of waterfalls; the majestic sun with its pale sphere appeared to be depressed; all the creatures wept in sympathy with her; and the frightened and depressed fawns cried in agony.

In *Kālidāsa*'s writing, we see that the rivers, the mountains, the forests, the trees and flowers, the beasts and birds are treated as conscious beings like the man (the figure of personification used) and their personal life like man and therefore dignity and worth are recognized by the poet. This deep insight into the heart of nature is fused so wonderfully with his profound knowledge of the human heart that it is impossible to see in his poetry where the poet of nature ceases and the poet of human emotion begins. They are interfiled are perhaps treated as two sides of the same coin, reflecting the thought of human living should be in unique with the nature. In *Meghadūta*, a priceless lyrical gem, the former half is a glowing description of the beauties of nature, interwoven with human feeling, and the latter half is a picture of the human heart set in the frame of natural beauty. The poet's high-soaring imagination here

reveals in the creation of rose-hued pictures and yet is ever held by a deep consciousness of the “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 in the city, on the earth and in the sky. All forms of nature—from the mountain to the tiniest flower for him are conscious individual beings as human beings. In the description of the route to be followed by the cloud, which we have already summarized above, we can note how skilfully the poet has blended the portrayal of the various aspects of nature eventuate with the varying emotions of the human heart. This description of the route, to which the first part of the poem is devoted, the powers of our poet are to be seen at their best. Even in the second part, in which he has to give the ‘message’ he fills its major portion with a descriptive picture of the human abodes which are also in harmony with the nature and rest on the lap of the nature.

Alakā, its environs, and the gay sports of its denizens, making each verse a piece of masterly miniature painting. When he passes from nature to emotion, he exhibits his powers with equal mastery, the description he made to *Meghadūta*, of all the magnificence, of his wife and her house, which was in the midst of a city, where people lived in perfect bliss; she lived alone and without joy. This opposition also tells us the other side of the nature.

It, we look into the deeper side, we see the followings: He described the path of the monsoon, which the land fertile. There must be rain in *Alakāpuri*. The peacocks must spread their plumage. The nature and its beauty must be preserved, or else we cannot survive. The nature’s system alone can remove the grieves of the human kind and nothing else. *Yakhṣa* is treated in Indian mythology as higher beings than the humans. By making a *Yakhṣa* worshipping the nature the message of importance of the nature and its preservation has been propagated to humans.

Alakā is the place of *Kuvera*, who is the king of the *Yakhṣa* as well as the presiding deity of the wealth. It is messaged to humans that our wealth is from nature and we must keep it intact, which can be described in the language of modern-day social scientists as “sustainable development”. In our *Upaniṣada*’s words—“*tenatyaktenabhuñjithāmāgrdhaḥkasyasviddhanam*”. *Tenatyaktenabhuñjithā* means ‘what is given by him, allotted to you, you enjoy that.’ And *Māgrdhaḥkasyasviddhanam* means, ‘But we not encroach upon others.’ This is *Īsopaniṣad*, Vedas and the same idea is explained in different *Purāṇas*.

The poet’s devotion for nature is explicit through his meticulous descriptions and vivid imagery, making *Meghadūta* a timeless poem to the beauty of the natural world. And research of the complex relationship

between human emotions and the environment.

4. Conclusion

The study highlights how *Kālidāsa's* nature descriptions are rooted in Indian culture. Spirituality, where elements like rain, mountains, and rivers carry symbolic meanings, intertwining physical and metaphysical themes. Through *Meghadūta*, *Kālidāsa* elevates the natural world as a conduit of emotional expression and universal connectivity, showcasing his appreciation for nature's inherent beauty and spiritual essence. The paper concludes that *Kālidāsa's* work is not only a poetic expression but also a philosophical reflection on humanity's deep bond with nature, making his poetry timeless and universally resonant.

References:

- [1] Kale, M.R. The *Meghadūta* of *Kālidāsa*, Rep. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2008.
- [2] Nandargikar, G. R. *Kālidāsa Meghadūtam*, Delhi: Bharatiya book-corporation, 1998.
- [3] Sharma, Bijendra. *Meghadūtam*, Meroth: Sahitya Bhandar, 1997.
- [4] Giri, Prohallyad Goswami. *Meghadūtam*, Ist.ed. Delhi, Varanasi: *Bharatiya Vidya* Prakashan, 1992.
- [5] Unni, N. P. *Meghasandēśa* of *Kālidāsa*, Delhi, Varanasi: *Bharatiya Vidya* Prakashan, 1987.
- [6] Gopal, Ram. *Kālidāsa His Art and Culture*, New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 1983.