



## Ecocriticism in *Meghaduta* of Kalidas

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Since Paleolithic age, human race is connected at various levels with nature. Man rather lived in the lap of nature. This started man's interlinking with nature. Most of mankind's life is derived from nature and various aspects of nature. For instance various colours flowers, leaves, birds, sky etc. taught mankind the colours of life. Thus, human being is indebted to nature. It is obvious that man might respond to nature by reflecting it in his creation.

The seeds of protection of environment are inherent in the glorious treasure of Vedic literature. For example "Do not cut trees because they remove pollution" (Rigveda- 6.48:17), (Satendra viii). The reference of water pollution, utility and preservation of water are found in Atharvaveda (Satendra 41). Trees are 'natural sweepers' (Kulshrestha 32) which absorb our carbon dioxide and gives oxygen.

In this research paper, the researcher intends to discuss literary theory named 'Eco criticism'. Since last two-three decades, the research has started on eco criticism. The paper will evaluate *Meghaduta* of Kalidas as an eco critical text.

Eco criticism is an interdisciplinary field in which literary and cultural studies come together. It analyses the role played by natural environment in literature. The term 'eco criticism' was first introduced in 1978 by William Ruckert in his essay named '*Literature and Ecology: An experiment in Eco criticism.*' There is an official announcement of eco criticism theory in 1996.

The word 'eco criticism' is the combination of two words – eco and criticism. 'Eco' means earth, the whole universe and 'criticism' means study. So eco criticism means study of nature. However, eco criticism is more than nature studies. It widens and gives more comprehensive approach to the study of literature. It includes the study of nature, culture and geography and thus it is interdisciplinary in its approach. Eco criticism is the study of literature and environment from an interdisciplinary point of view where all sciences come together. Eco criticism has broadened the scope from nature writing to the study of literature, society and science, all under one head. Hence, eco criticism is more inclusive term than nature study as the study of natural elements is one of its aspects which also includes other aspects such as society and culture. In nature study, the writers reflect various aspects of nature, the beauty of nature like trees, rivers, clouds, mountains etc. and back side of nature like flood, cyclone etc. While eco criticism is larger in its perspective than nature studies as it involves texts of literature also. "Eco criticism takes as its subject, the interconnections between nature and culture, specifically the cultural artifacts of language and literature" (Chandra 613-614). It is a literary theory which is an interdisciplinary enterprise which seeks to engage with environmental history, philosophy, sociology, science and certainly not limited to nature only.

Nature, ecology, society, culture, animal study etc. are components of Eco criticism. Nature attracts the literary writers and their works embellish with depiction of nature. Buell uses the words 'First wave eco criticism' for such type of the nature writing. The British Romantic poets named Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley and Keats used nature in their poems. William Wordsworth is the high priest of nature. He praises nature in his famous poem *Tintern Abbey*: "Nature is never failing friend....nurse, guide and guardian of mankind" (Rengasamy, ed. 45). In *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, Coleridge has given the reference of bird named Albatross. We should not kill the bird is the indirect message of this poem. Eco criticism studies the protection of animals and birds. "British Romanticism has proved to be a fertile and varied ground for eco critical revisionism" (Buell 3). Eco criticism also guides us to take care of birds and animals. Garrard observes, "Animal study is important ally of eco criticism" (Garrard 144). Society and culture are the parts of eco criticism. Eco criticism looks closely at the human, culture, nature interaction in texts. Eco criticism often presents the scene of an interplay that stresses the cultural aspects of various concepts of nature. Thus, "Eco criticism is means of moving from monoculture view of nature to multi cultural one from world of self isolating societies to world of united and unifying culture" ( Karala and Kathlen xxii).

Kalidas occupies unique place in not only Sanskrit literature but also in world literature. Humboldt appreciates the qualities of Kalidas: "Tenderness in the expression of feelings and richness of creative fancy have assigned to him his lofty place among the poets of all nations" (Dave 65). The celebrated poet Kalidas's summit of all his works is *Meghaduta* (Meghasandesha). It's going to satisfy the connoisseur with best theme and poetic style of Kalidas. It is conceived by the master poet as a lyric of love as well



as that of nature at the same time. It is also Dutakavya and it has influenced the poets of future generation for developing tradition of Dutakavyas.

Kalidas's *Meghaduta* is a lyrical gem. The poem is divided into two parts – Purvamegha and Uttamegha. It consists of 115 stanzas composed in Mandakranta meter. The title of *Meghaduta* itself reflects the theme of the poem. *Meghaduta* means cloud as a messenger. The Opening of *Meghaduta* depicts that certain Yaksha who has deviated from his duty and has been deprived by lord's curse for one year who has lived at Ramagiri, which is situated in natural background.

*Meghaduta* is full of references of ecology. One of the components of eco criticism theory is nature and ecology. The best thought suggested by Kalidas is the choice of cloud as a main character though it is a part of nature. Kalidas has suggested the path of cloud from Ramagiri to Alaka through Yaksha's instruction to cloud. This journey is full of depiction of parts of nature like trees, flowers, rivers, lakes, mountains, wind, sky, rainbow, sun, moon, stars, clouds, Manasa lake, Kalilash, Himalaya, birds, animals, mythological places like Vidisha (Avanti), Ujjayini etc. The cloud will be happy with enjoying favorable breeze, sweet singing of Chataka, company of female cranes and royal swans in his journey to Manasa Lake and also to the mountain Kailasa. The narration of rainbow is very beautiful. Thus eco criticism is here. It depicts nature and also the world of birds and animals. The mountain slopes look beautiful with spreading of ripe mango trees. Through the route of cloud, Kalidas imparts the lively and pictorial picture of mountains like Vindya, Amarkuta, Himalaya and Kailas, rivers like रेवा (Reva), वेत्रवती (Vetravati), क्षिप्रा (Kshipra), सरस्वती (Sarasvati), गंगा (Ganga), यमुना (Yamuna) and मानसरोवर (Manasarovar) and variety of flowers like नीमा (Nima), कुटज (Kutaja), केतक (Ketaka), कदंब (Kadamb), जास्मीन (Jasmina) etc. The reference of flowers like lotus, कुंद (Kunda), लोध्र (Lodhara), कुर्याक (Kuryaka), शिरीष (Shirisha) in Alaka (city) reflect aspects of nature.

Eco criticism studies harmony between nature and human being. The intimacy between cloud and Yaksha is shown. Thus direct and indirect narration of poems show the presence of parts of nature in *Meghaduta*. The story of *Meghaduta* itself is the result of its effect on human being. The dialogue between Yaksha and cloud, Yaksha's instruction to cloud, his treatment with cloud and how he narrates the route to cloud show harmonious tuning between nature and man. Eco criticism studies the relation between nature and human being. In *Meghaduta*, we come across various names of clouds which are addressed by Yaksha. They all are meaningful and symbolic e.g. जीमूत Jimuta (the refuge of those that are oppressed), जलधर Jaladhara (one who holds water), सुभागी Subhaji (fortunate one), कामचारिन Kamacharin (wonder at will), साधो Sadho (good one), सौम्य Saumya (gentle one), सख्य Sakhya (brother), जलद Jalada (water giver) etc. Thus the aspect of eco criticism- harmonious relation between nature and human being- is well expressed here.

Eco criticism advocates the lives of society emerged from nature. The theme of *Meghaduta* has social approach. The reference of Nisha Mountain signifies the throbbing youth. The mountain is the treasure of stone – caves emitting the smell of perfume used in their sports by harlots, proclaims the unrestrained youth of Vidisha. The care to give shade to female who plucks flowers, shows cloud's helping nature to benefit others which is part of society. The depiction gives reference of nich of the mansions of Ujjayini and the trait of female of this city whose tremulous corners of eyes are surprised after seeing the flashes of lightning. The way of living of people in cultural city named Ujjayini (Modern name) reflect its traits. "On reaching the country of Avanti, where the old men of the village are proficient in the stories about Udayana move on to the city of Vishala of great opulence already indicated to you, the city appearing like a bright portion of heaven brought by those who after having lived there, down to the earth with the remaining part of their merit, the fruits of their virtuous deeds having run short" (Unni, 11) (Purvamegha-31). The use of beauty lotion and pleasing smell of blown lotuses on legs of women show the current fashion of society. The nature of prostitute is also shown, which is part of society. Religion and strong faith in God and Goddess are the important aspect of society. The way of living of lovers of Alaka reflects their heavenly happy life. Thus to study society which is one of the eco critical aspects are well reflected here.

Eco criticism advocates cultural aspects emerged from nature. The opening verse of Uttamegha gives beautiful comparison of mansions of Alaka (city) with beautiful cloud. It also reflects cultural study of that city. "(The city) where the mansions are quite capable of standing comparison with you- you possessed of the flashing lightning, they of beauties bright with their charms; you having the (many coloured) rainbow, they the picture (in various colours); you giving out a deep but pleasant rumble, they the (pleasantly grave sounds of) tabours beaten for the musical concert, you with your watery interior, they with the floors paved with sapphires (thus having a water like appearance); - you towering high in the sky, and they raising their domes that touch the sky" (Kale, 109) Uttamegha-1). The artistic Alaka city with young women with flowery decoration to their parts of body, flowery trees with humming of bees, lakes with blooming lotuses give pleasurable atmosphere with unique culture of Alaka to readers. The happy and satisfied lives of Yaksha with their beloved, the innocent playing of divine girls, the painting of seven stored mansions, enjoyment of inexhaustible treasures by yaksha in their house, sharing sweet moments, melodious voice with singing the glory of Kubera in company with kinnaras at Vaibhraj garden impart the glorious heritage of Alaka city. In this divine land, the reference of desire-yielding tree depicts that all the demands of women regarding ornament to ornate their bodies are fulfilled by this tree which shows uniqueness of Alaka city. The delineation of Yaksha's home like arched gateway like a rainbow near clusters of flowers of Mandar tree, beautiful pond furnished with a flight of steps formed of emerald stones with



full blown golden lotuses, Pleasure Mountain with fence of golden plantain trees and fine sapphires peak reflect the artistic lookout of Yaksha. The mythological places like Vidisha (Avanti), Ujjayani, Kurukhetra, Kanakhala etc. are well shown here. Kalidas also depicts the way of living of men, women, girls, prostitutes, female plucking flowers, etc. from society and there is also delineation on of divine and mythological characters. Thus, Meghaduta observes culture emerged from nature which is the part of eco criticism. The narration of all above highlight the beauty and positive side of nature which is enjoyed by person. The depiction also suggests people's liking to enjoy the parts of nature and to relish the life with beauty of nature. Yaksha's wife fosters Mandar tree which shows how persons care for trees. She makes peacock dance with clapping of her hands with jingling of her bracelets. It suggests that how people pay attention of animals and birds. This value system and ethics are suggested in the poem. The poem reforms modern sensibility of persons to take care of plants, trees and also to take care of birds and animals. All these aspects are there in eco criticism which is well elaborated in *Meghaduta*. So the poem is full of eco critical ideas.

Literature is the medium to reflect the current problems of society. The development of science and technology put the world in summit of progress. But the lives of humans are in danger. Eco criticism alerts the persons of society through literary works to sensitize with all problems. So theory of Eco criticism is most appropriate and useful in 21st century. "If mortals dwell in that, they save the earth and if poetry is the original admission of dwelling, the poetry is the place where we save the earth." (Bate 183) All these thoughts are well noticed in *Meghaduta* as Kalidas is foreseer. At present, the world suffers from the problem of the global warming. We see slogans like 'Save environment and tree'. The population of birds and animals are decreased. Kalidas gives indirect suggestion through this poem to preserve nature and to take care of birds and animals. Thus the various aspects of eco criticism are well reflected in *Meghaduta*, so it is an eco critical text.

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"विद्युत्वनतं ललितवनिताः सेन्द्रचापं सचित्राः  
संगीताय प्रहतमुरजाः स्निग्धगम्भीरघोषम् ।  
अन्तस्तोयं मणिमयभुवस्तुडगमभ्रंलिहाग्राः  
प्रासादास्त्वां तुलयितुमलं यत्र तैस्तैर्विशेषैः ॥"  
(Uttarmegha-01)
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"प्राप्यावन्तीनुदयनकथाकोविदग्रामवृद्धा-  
न्यूर्वद्विष्टामनुसर पुरीं श्रीविशालां विशालाम् ।  
स्वल्पीभूते सुचरितफले स्वर्गिणां गां गतानां  
शेषैः पुण्यैर्हृतमिव दिवः कान्तिमत्खण्डमेकम् ॥"  
(Purvamegha-31)