

MEGHADUTAM – A TREATISE EULOGISING THE BEAUTY OF WOMEN, NATURE, THE POWER OF LONELINESS AND AN AMBASSADOR OF THE PSYCHE

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ABSTRACT

Since the Paleolithic age, the human race has been connected with Nature. Man has looked up to Nature during times of joy and sorrow. It is an undeniable truth that Nature has reflected on Humans in a powerful way. The different colours in the rainbow, flowers, leaves and birds are a reflection of Nature. Ecology has been pinned to our lives from time immemorial, when man thought of his fight to survive on this planet. According to Indian literature, the Vedic literature shows evidence that protecting the environment is an imperative responsibility of its inhabitants. For instance, there are references to pollution controlling methods in Rigveda and Atharvaveda, by means of saving water and avoiding cutting trees. “Do not cut trees because they remove pollution” (Rigveda-6.48:17)

INTRODUCTION

Many writers have attempted to write on our mother earth. Several of our Indian writers are celebrated for holding the sense of protecting our ecosystem, high. Indian literature worships Nature in various forms of belief. We pray to the Sea God who is considered as the prime protector of the fishermen when they venture into the sea. There is religious worship of Nature and its forms in many areas of India, in the form of Land, Water, Air, Fire and Sky. Eco criticism in literature means a comprehensive study of Nature in literature. Eco criticism includes the study of the environment, culture, geography of that place and the society involved. An eco-critic writer will be able to identify and utilize the natural elements as characters that live alongside human beings. Much is in the imagination of the writer that characterises the elements of Nature and provides an emotional touch to it.

Depiction of Nature was famous during the Puritan age and British Romantic period. Tintern Abbey (William Wordsworth), Rime of the Ancient Mariner (Coleridge) and other poets like Shelley & Keats. Their writings have proved to be a rich and strong ground for eco criticism. It guides us towards the necessity of taking care of the animals and birds. Societal responsibility is conveyed in their poems and there is a strong sense of moving from monoculture to multi culture. In other words, it guides mankind towards unifying rather than isolating oneself. Eco criticism presents the various concepts of Nature, as well as the various Rasas. Human emotions can be comprehended without any warning. However, the warnings of Nature are sometimes never comprehended by human beings. There is anger, joy and calmness in the power of Nature. It calms the disturbed mind and at times, kindles the anger hidden within. Mother Nature always answers our doubts. The more we seek to understand, the deeper it goes.

Kalidasa's Meghadutam is a renowned work in the art of using Nature and its components as characters. Kalidas is famous in Sanskrit literature. His works in Indian literature gave him worldly acclaim. “Tenderness in the expression of feelings and richness of creative fancy have assigned to him his lofty place among the poets of all nations”. These are the words of Humboldt, appreciating him for

lofty expressions and unique writing nature. There is unmatched creative fancy in the writings of Kalidasa. His poetic expressions are marveling every time it is read. The essence of Meghadutam can be called as Dutakavya, which has later influenced many poets and even developed a new tradition of Dutakavyas.

This work- Meghadutam is a lyrical gem. It comprises two parts, Purvamegha and Uttaramegha. It has 120 stanzas. The first part of the poem or *Pūrvamegha*, is a geographical description of India or *Bhāratvarsha* on the path that the *Yakṣa* (the *Yakṣa* lives in *Rāmagiri* in the *Vindhya*s) asks the cloud to take in order to reach his hometown of *Alakā* in the Himalayas. The descriptions of the places and people that the cloud will encounter on his way are one of the best in the entire Sanskrit literature. The description of *Alakā*, the condition in which the cloud is likely to find his wife and the message itself which is of hope and the joyous return of the husband after the end of the rainy season make up the second part known as the *Uttaramegha*.

The poem is a celebration of the beauty of India. There is *Bhāśāsaundarya* (beauty of language used in expressing thoughts) *Nisargasaundarya* is a celebration of all the beings living on earth. For instance, the animals, birds, ants, that are not man made. But man is allowed to appreciate the beauty of Nature. *Strisaundarya* is a celebration of the beauty of women. The poet talks about the beauty of the eyelashes that are capable of confusing the bees by mistaking the eyelashes to be that of the *Kunda* flower. *Vicarsaundarya* is a celebration of the frustrated thoughts in the *Yakshas* mind, and there is much love that he wants to convey to his wife.

After the *Yaksha* is punished by *Kuber* and exiled for a year, he understands his mistake. He had deviated from his duties as ordered by his master and hence the punishment. This is a message to the mankind that we ought to remain duty bound at work. The *Yaksha* thus envisages the cloud to be a character through the lines of the poet. He informs the cloud to never miss in recognising the beauty of Ujjain. The poet must have visited these places and wanted to mention the beauty of his hometown in his writings. The depiction of the natural beauty of the city of Ujjain is wonderful. The poet calls the city of Alaka is with its garments- the Ganges water as if lying on the lap of a lover. The beautiful city looks more pretty with its mansions and the clouds showering water as how a woman does with her tresses that is strung with pearls. The water from the clouds falls like the pearls that drop from the clouds.

Harmony

There is harmony between Nature and human beings. The intimacy between the cloud and the *Yaksha* is revealed. The *Yaksha* informs clearly the route that it has to take in order to reach the Himalayan city of Alaka. He renders the various versions of the cloud by addressing the various forms it takes. The poet speaks through the *Yaksha* to celebrate the beauty of the monsoon clouds. For instance, he calls the cloud as *Jimuta* (the refuge for the oppressed)- here the *Yaksha* is the oppressed and is seeking refuge in the cloud to be a messenger to his beloved wife. *Jaladhara* (one who holds water) – here the *Yaksha* considers the cloud to be the carrier of the message. *Subhaji* (fortunate one) -here the *Yaksha* might have felt jealous because the cloud is able to roam freely without being curtailed. Some of the other names used are *Sadho*, *Saumya*, *Kamacharin*, *Jalada* and *Sakhya*,

The social approach

Society emerged from Nature. Man learnt to invent things and materials needed to survive with the creation of God. For instance, Airplanes from Birds. The explanations about the throbbing youth who belong to Vidisha, the harlots of the city and the beauty of the women reflect the critical aspect of the poet. The description moves to the city of mansions and great cultural significance – Ujjayini. Old men who have lived a proficient life doing meritorious deeds are very old now and are fresh to modernity. Modernity includes applying beauty lotion to women's legs and applying perfume to the body. The nature of whores in the city is also mentioned, as a part of the society. Religious beliefs and strong faith in God form the base of a good society. The way of living of the lovers of Alaka clearly indicates the happy life as in heaven.

Comparisons of the cultural aspects of the city in Uttaramegha

The city of Alaka is full of beauty everywhere. The poet describes the mansions of Alaka to be great and beautiful. The city is rich and high in cultural aspects, just as the high clouds that are rich in its beauty. Alaka is bright with its charming lights and beautiful women, just like the cloud that is colourful with its rainbow and the flashing lightning. The noise of the clouds- the rumbling sound of the thunder is musical and is compared to the musical concerts with drums and other instruments that are conducted in the city. The beautiful watery clouds that carry rain water are compared to the floors in the city that have a sapphire look. The old men who have done a great deed of meritorious acts are fresh to modernity. The clouds are so high and the domes in the city are raised to the sky level.

The city of Alaka is beautifully decorated with the flowers that have bloomed in ponds that are decorated with emerald stone steps. The melodious voices of women singing in praise of Kubera, the innocence of the small girls, the happy life of the people in the city of Ujjayani. The wish fulfilling tree mentioned to be found in the city fulfills the wishes of the women in decorating their bodies with ornaments.

Historical References in the poem

There are mythological places like Vidisha, Ujjayani, Kanakhala, Kurukhetra mentioned in the poem. The way of life of the men, women, girls are mentioned in the poem. The beauty lies in the narration of all these. (Bhasasaundarya) people loved to relish the beauty in everything they found around.

Care for Nature

The cloud is informed by Yaksha that his wife fosters the Mandar tree well. This is to show that apart from the daily routine in life the people in the city of Alaka devoted to caring for Nature. This is the value system that is necessary to be imbibed in the minds of the present generation. Nature provides mankind with everything that is needed to live happily. But man is prone to spoiling everything and polluting it.

Exploitation of Nature

Nature has been taken for granted. Man has built homes on the shores of the river banks and marshlands have been converted to community living spaces. This poem Meghadutam not only talks about the love for Nature and the city but also explains the indispensable responsibility of the humans to make the earth a better place to dwell.

This eco-critical poem can be considered as a harbinger to many articles and publications that carry the slogan, Save Earth, Save the Environment. The population of the birds and animals have been decreasing day by day. This poem provides an indirect suggestion to preserve the beings of Nature and prevent the harmful effects of global warming.

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