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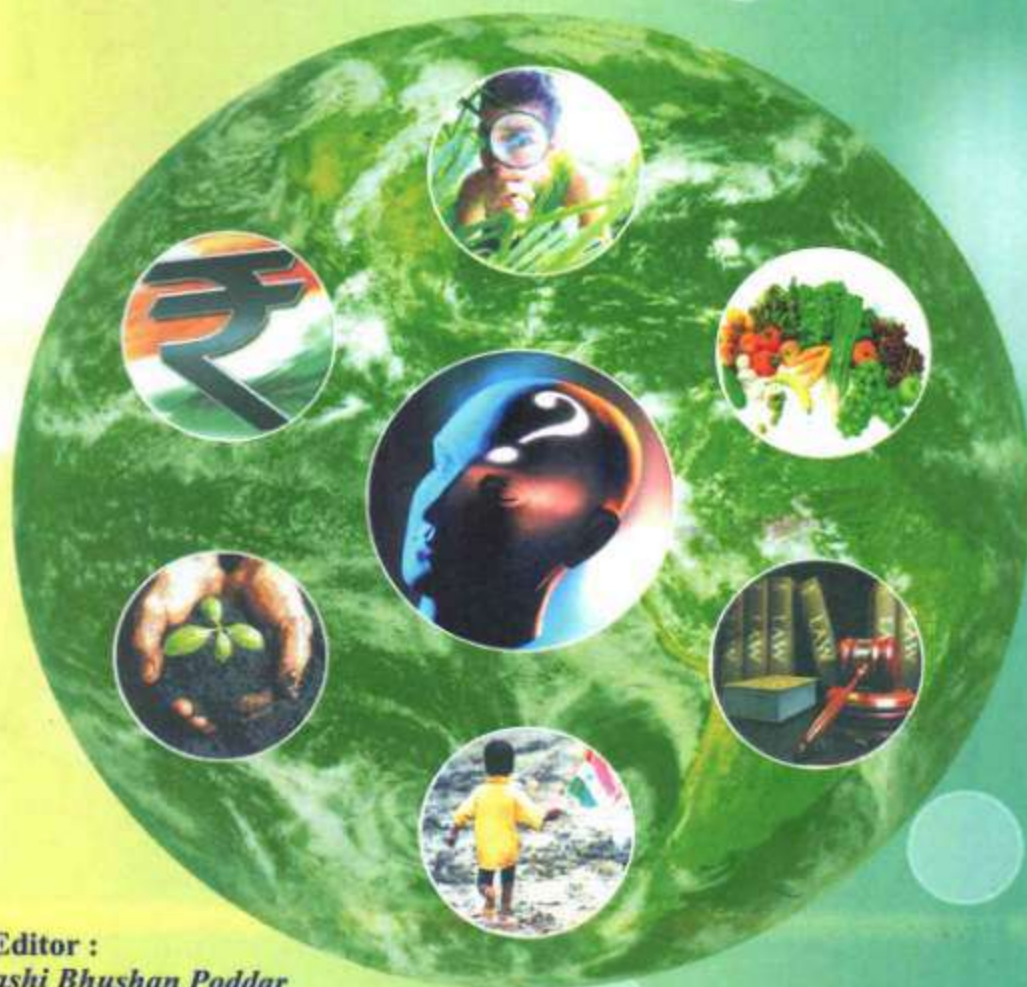
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Ecology in the Context of Kālidāsa's Abhijñāna Śakuntalam

Pitas Das *

Kālidāsa was a poet born most probably before 634 A.D. His greatest creation is his drama Abhijñāna Śakuntalam. This influential work is the specimen of his masterly craftsmanship. It is a document of Kālidāsa's awareness to nature. It is amazing to see how minutely he observed the nature. The present paper tries to understand and explore Kālidāsa's concept of ecology emphasis on the relationship between human society and nature. Man cannot live without nature. Nature and human society cannot sustain without each other. Kālidāsa's Abhijñāna Śakuntalam records these ecological aspects. We must not forget that the ancients were fully aware that man cannot exist without the direct influence of nature. The present paper is a reminder of these phenomena.

Keyword- Kalidāsa, Duṣ yanta, Śakuntalā, Ecology, Habit, Environmentalist, Plant, Ecosystem

Introduction : The term Ecology has been derived from two Greek Words, OIKOS meaning house and LOGUS meaning study of, to denote the intersection between living and non-living organism and the relation between biotic and a biotic components in the environment. The German biologist Earnest Haeckel defined Ecology as "the body of Knowledge is concerning the economy of the nature the investigation of the total relation of animal to its inorganic and organic environment including above all this friendly relation with those animals and plants with which it comes directly or indirectly into contact." Charles Krebs of University of British Columbia gave the most comprehensive definition of Ecology as follows: "Ecology is the scientific study of the interactions that determine the distribution and abundance of organisms". In this way, the modern ecologists have widened the sphere of ecology considering all the fundamental aspects in the subject since the influence of Environment on human life is very significant. Ecology has shaped the art, culture and literature of the human since the pre-historic ages¹. We may study ancient Indian literature to find out the ecological awareness. We should not take Sanskrit literature simply to be the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings of the poets but to accept them to be the most valued proof of environment consciousness of the ancients.

Kālidāsa is the most prominent representative of the classical age in India. His literary creations are set in nature. Kālidāsa was a poet of nature. To him nature was a living entity that reacts with human emotion and passions. The creation of Kālidāsa has implicit reference of the knowledge about different aspects of ecology. Most of the scenes of his dramas are set in the midst of nature. There is a perfect unification between organism and the environment. The consciousness of Kālidāsa to ecology is very prominent in his descriptions of hermitages as natural habitats. He minutely observed the relation between plants and animals as in this principal part of life. The present study will try to focus upon Kālidāsa's drama Abhijñāna Śakuntalam to determine Kālidāsa's awareness to ecology.

Objective of the study : The present study aims at understanding the concept of ecology as depicted in Abhijñāna Śakuntalam written by Kālidāsa express the basic idea about man and nature relationship. The biotic and abiotic components of nature are interconnected. Kālidāsa

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emphasises on environmental justice on large extent. He suggests the necessities of forest for the development of human society in terms of the social, historical, economic and cultural aspects. This understanding of the concept of Kālidāsa will enable us to build a story relationship between human society and nature to promote nature awareness that will help us understand the fact that man cannot live without the presence of nature. We all are the indispensable part of nature. Thus understanding will help us to maintain the ecological balance to conserve the nature².

Methodology : The present research works various primary and secondary sources. The method which adopted in this paper is descriptive, while some time narrative technique has also been adopted. At this paper deals with ecology the context of Kālidāsa's Abhijñāna Śakuntalam, the information are mainly collected from the text of Abhijñāna Śakuntalam and Wikipedia, and other web sources.

Habit Ecology in Kālidāsa Abhijñāna Śakuntalam : Nature is a dominant factor in Kālidāsa Abhijñāna Śakuntalam. Duṣ yanta, the hero of the drama comes to sacred hermitage to purify himself here. He was prohibited to kill the hermitage deer - "वैखानसः-(हस्तमुद्यम्य) राजन् आश्रममृगोऽयं न हन्तव्यो न हन्तव्यः ।" (A.Ś - 1st Act p.43). In the forest he notices the ground strewn with Nivāra grains drooped down from the nets of parrots and the oily stones that suggest breakers of Iñ gudī fruits that were used by sacred foresters for softening their mated here.

"नीवाराः शुकगर्भकोटरमुखभ्रष्टास्तरूणामथः
प्रस्निग्धाः क्वचिदिङ्गुदीफलभिदः सूच्यन्त एवोपेलाः।
विश्वसोपगमादभिन्नगतयः शब्दं सहन्ते मृगाः
स्तोपाधारपथाश्च वल्कलशिखानिस्यन्दरेखाङ्किताः ॥" (A.Ś - 1/14 p.52)

The deer of the hermitage are moving freely without fearing the human because their trust on the people of the hermitage. The colours of the leaves of trees have changed because of coming in contact with the holy smoke coming out together with clarified butter. The water channels are scattered around the hermitage. Kālidāsa has depicted the scenic beauty of hermitage in this manner. So, it is evident that Kālidāsa was very much aware of the affect of aesthetic beauty on human mind. Duṣ yanta has justify remarked that the natural beauty has defeated the grandeur of his place.

"शुद्धान्तदुर्लभामिदं वपुराश्रमवासिनो यदि जनस्य।
द्वरीकृता खलु गुणैरुद्यानलता वनलताभिः ॥" (A.Ś - 1/16 p.59)

In the midst of nature he find Śakuntalā in her natural affair an indispensable part of nature he finds the trees. Priyānvadā invites Duṣ yanta to take rest and the Saptaparṇī a Dias to get rid of his fatigue. In the 2nd Act Duṣ yanta the order is general to warm his soldiers not to disturb the tender atmosphere of the hermitage - "राजा-तेन हि निवर्तय पूर्वगतान् वनग्राहिणः। यथा च न मे सैनिकास्तपोवनमुपरुन्धति तथा निषेद्धव्याः ।" (A.Ś - 2nd Act p.144). Similarly in the 7th Act Kālidāsa gives the description of Mārīca Asrama which shows his love for tranquil penance grove. Mātali introduces him with Mārīca Asrama as the hermitage of Prajāpati full of Mandāra trees reared by Aditi Duṣ yanta finds Mārīca Āśrama superior to heaven - "मातलि-महाराज, एतावदितिपरिवर्धितमन्दारवृक्षं प्रजापतेरश्रमं प्रविष्टौ स्वः ।" (A.Ś - 7th Act p.519). Duṣ yanta finds the hermitage full of wish-fulfilling trees. He also finds the ponds assuming golden colour by the nectar of the blooming golden lotus flowers.

"प्राणानामनिलेन वृत्तिरुचिता सत्कल्पवृक्षे वने

तोये कञ्चनपद्मरेणुकशिपे धर्माभिषेकक्रिया।
ध्यानं रत्नशिलातलेषु विबुधस्त्रीसन्निधौ संयमो
यत् काङ्क्षन्ति तपोभिरन्यमुनयस्तस्मिंस्तपस्यन्त्यमी ॥" (A.Ś - 7/12 p.519)

This habitual ecology is a part of Eco system ecology but Kālidāsa has minutely depicted the relationship between human and nature.

Kālidāsa as an environmentalist with reference to Abhijñāna Śakuntalam : Kālidāsa's description of environment is very artistic. The images of nature are life like and very realistic to the senses of the readers. In Nandī, the introductory stanza of Abhijñāna Śakuntalam, he invokes Siva to save water that exists before Brahma, the Fire, that receives offering, the Worshiper, the person who worships, the Sun and the Moon, the creator of time, the Sky, the Earth, the mother of all living elements, and the Air that helps sustain life to all living creatures. Thus the five elements of nature are propitiated by Kalidāsa.

"या सृष्टिः स्रष्टुराद्या वहति विधिदुतं या हविर्या च होत्री
ये द्वे कालं विधत्तः श्रुतिविषयगुणा या स्थिता व्यप्य विश्वम्।
यामाहुः सर्ववीजप्रकृतिरिति यया प्राणिनः प्राणवन्तः
प्रत्यक्षाभिः प्रपन्नस्तनुभिरवतु वस्ताभिरष्टाभिरीशः ॥" (A.Ś - 1/1 p.1)

Likewise he also praises the hermits to be having the qualities of fire and said that they come to them naturally and tenderly but they have enough energy to burn someone to ashes. Thus he describes hermits as Sūryakānta Mani.

"शमप्रधानेषु तपोधनेषु गूढं हि दाहात्मकमस्ति तेजः।

स्पर्शानुकूला इव सूर्यकान्ताः, स्तदन्यतेजोऽभिभवाद् वमन्ति ॥" (A.Ś - 2/7 p.144)

There is a beautiful description of nature when king Duṣ yanta works on the banks of river Mālinī in search of Śakuntalā. He exclaims in joy to feel the scented breeze. The breeze bearing the fragrance of lotus makes him sexually high.

"शक्यमरविन्दसुरभिः कणवाही मालिणीतरङ्गणाम्।

अङ्गैरनङ्गतपैरविरलमालिङ्गितुं पवनः ॥" (A.Ś - 3/4 p.185)

Kālidāsa described Śakuntalā's physical features with that of Mādhabī Latā, a creeper with colourful followers. Again third act verse nineteen Kālidāsa describes Śakuntalā to be covering her breasts with lotus leaves. Kālidāsa also illustrates a beautiful picture setting Moon and the rising of the Sun is nicely contrasted to suggest the ups and downs at human life where happiness and sorrow follow each other. The water Lilly has lost all her charm and beauty as the Moon sets. This reminds Duṣ yanta that Śakuntalā lost all her beauty.

"यात्येकतोऽस्तशिखरं पतिरोषधीनाः, माविष्कृतोऽउणपुरःसर एकतोऽर्कः।

तेजोद्वयस्य युगपद्वसनोदयाभ्यां, लोको नियम्यत इवात्मदशान्तरेषु ॥"

"अन्तर्हिते शशिनि सैव कुमुद्वती मे, दृष्टिं न नन्दयति संस्मरणीयशोभा।

इष्टप्रवासजनितान्यवलाजनस्य, दुःखानि नूनमतिमात्रसुदुःसहानि ॥" (A.Ś - 4/2&3 p.257)

Kālidāsa draws up a complete harmony between the nature and man through Kaṇ va. Kaṇ va feels disturbed and asks if he is the reason of the condition of the hermitage. Kaṇ va is worried about the reason of disturbances done by someone to the animals of the forest. He also questions if he is being the reason for the creepers stopped blooming flowers and making fruits.

"किं तावद्भ्रतिनामुपोढतसां विघ्नैस्तपो दूषितं
धर्मरिन्यचरेषु केनचिदुत प्राणिष्वसच्चोष्टितम्।
आहोस्वित् प्रसवो ममापचरितैर्विष्टम्भितो वीरुधा।

मित्यारूढवहुप्रतर्कमपरिच्छेदाकुलं मे मनः ॥" (A.Ś - 5/9 p.342)

Śakuntalā as a river moving forward breaking the bank and felling the trees.

"व्यपदेशमाविलपितुं किमीहसे जनमिमं च पातयितुम्।

कूलकंषेव सिन्धुः प्रसन्नमम्भस्तटतरुं च ॥" (A.Ś - 5/21&3 p.370)

Mātali described earth as having destructively charming power (7th Act).

Plant Ecology in Abhijñāna Śakuntalam

We find a number of references of plant ecology in Kālidāsa's Abhijñāna Śakuntalam. Kālidāsa presented Śakuntalā, as the daughter of nature. She is a nature lover. She takes care of all flora and fauna of the hermitage of Kaṭva. She loves the plants and animals very much. She is looking beautiful warning a bark.

"सरसिजमनुविद्धं शैवलेनापि रम्यं, मलिनमपि हिमांशोर्लक्ष्म लक्ष्मीं तनोति।

इयमधिकमनोशा वल्कलेनापि तन्वी, किमिव हि मधुराणां मण्डनं नाकृतीनाम् ॥" (A.Ś - 1/18 p.65)

In the next verse Śakuntalā's beauty is described by Kalidāsa. He says Śakuntalā's lower leap is as reddish as a new leaf; her two hands are like two young branches a tree and her youth is like flowers covered in her body.

"अधरः किसलयरागः कोमलवितपानुकरिणौ वाह।

कुसुममिव लोभनीयं यौवनमङ्गेषु सन्नद्धम् ॥" (A.Ś - 1/19 p.69)

Vidūṣ aka requests the king to seat under the cool shade of canopy made by creepers - विदूषकः "साम्प्रतम् एतस्यां पादपच्छायां विरचितलतावितानदर्शनीयायाम् आसने निषीदतु भवान्, यावद् अहम् अपि सुखासीनः भवामि।" (A.Ś - 2nd Act p.147). In this way Kālidāsa tries to convey that man and nature are interdependent. Again Śakuntalā is described as someone whose fragrance has never been smelt; a new twig that has not been broken with nails; a new honey that has never been tasted.

"अनाघ्रातं पुष्पं किसलयमलूनं कररुहै, रनाविद्धं रत्नं मधु नवमनास्वादितरसम्।

अखण्डं पुष्पानां फलमिव च तद्रूपमनघं, न जाने भोक्तारं कमिह समुपस्थास्यति विधिः ॥" (A.Ś - 2/10 p.154)

In the 3rd act Gautamī prescribed Śakuntalā 'Śāntijala', water made with special grass which has a healing effect - "गौतमी- अनेन दर्भोदकेन निरावाधम् एव ते शरीरं भविष्यति।" (A.Ś - 3rd Act p.235). Nature is personified when in the occasion of Śakuntalā's marriage some trees gave garments; some gave a coloured liquid to apply on her feet as ornament. The Gods of forest assumed the shape of human and gave all these things stretching their hands.

"क्षीमं केनचिदिन्दुपाण्डु तरुणा माङ्गल्यमाविष्कृतं

निष्ठयूतश्चरणोपभोगसुलभो लाक्षारसः केनचित्।

अन्येभ्यो वनदेवताकरतलैरापर्वभागोत्थितै

दत्तान्याभरणानि तद् किसलयोद्भेदप्रतिद्वन्द्विभिः ॥" (A.Ś - 4/5 p.273)

Through this personification Kālidāsa brings harmony of humans with nature. Kāśyapa is seen treating trees of hermitage as human beings when she asks permission from them when Śakuntalā leaves for her in laws house after her marriage. In this connection he asserts that Śakuntalā never drank water before giving the same to the trees; never tore a single leaf for her ornaments; felt the time of first flower blooming as a ceremony.

"पातुं न प्रथमं व्यवस्यति जलं युष्मास्वपीतेषु या

नादत्ते प्रियमण्डनापि भवतां स्नेहेन या पल्लवम्।

आद्ये वः कुसुमप्रसूतिसमये यस्या भवत्युत्सवः

सेयं याति शकुन्तला पतिगृहं सर्वैरनुज्ञायताम् ॥” (A.Ś – 4/9 p.284)

The description of Śakuntalā's leave from 'Vanajyotsna' is very emotional. In other occasion 'Parabhṛ tikā' informs her friend about the cuckoo's being intoxicated to see the mango bud (Mukula) in the spring time. After painting the portrait of Śakuntalā Duṣ yanta feels dissatisfied for the fact that he has not down the 'Śirīṣ a' flower worn by Śakuntalā which is hanging up to her cheeks and also he did not paint the garland of lotus that is hanging between her breast like the moon being in autumn.

“कृतं न कर्णापितवन्धनं सखे, शिरीषमागण्डविलम्बिकेसरम्।

न वा शरच्चन्द्रमरीचिकोमलं, मृणालसूत्रं रचितं स्तनान्तरे ॥” (A.Ś – 6/18 p.460)

Animal Ecology and Ecosystem in Abhijñāna Śakuntalam : Animal killing is prohibited in Abhijñāna Śakuntalam as 'Vaikhānasa' forbids king Duṣ yanta to kill the deer belongs to the hermitage. He tells the killer that the arrow is like the fire in heap of cotton on the body of the deer. The king declares that nobody will kill any animal in the vicinity of the hermitage.

“न खलु न खलु वाणः सन्निपात्योऽयमस्मिन्, मृदुनि मृगशरीरे तुलराशाविविप्रिः।

क वत हरिणकाणां जीवितं चातिलोलं, क च निशितनिपाता वज्रसाराः शरास्ते ॥” (A.Ś – 1/10 p.43)

The king also order not to disturb the animals the buffalos so that they can plant into the water intake birth freely, and let the deer ruminate under the shade of trees, and while let us hogs merrily uplift the 'Muthāgrass', while let his bow take rest.

“गाहन्तां महिषा निपानसलिलं शृङ्गैर्मुहुस्ताडितं, छायावद्धकदम्बकं मृगकूलं रोमन्धमभ्यस्यतु।

विश्रव्यं क्रियतां वराहततिभिर्मुस्ताक्षतिः पल्लवे, विश्रामं लभतामिदं च शिथिलज्यावन्धमस्मद्धनुः ॥”

(A.Ś – 2/6 p.140)

In this way Kālidāsa has expressed his sympathy for the wild animal. While leaving to her in-law's house Śakuntalā tells her father to take care of her pet animal. She feels worry about the pregnant though for she is also the same condition. The nature is taking interest and feels sorry for Śakuntalā is leaving the hermitage. The grass drops from the mouth of the deer, the peacocks stop dancing.

“उद्रलितदर्भकवला मृग्यः परित्यक्तनर्तना मयूराः।

अपसृतपाण्डुपत्रा मुञ्चन्त्यश्रूणीव लताः ॥” (A.Ś – 4/12 p.290)

A doe is trying to resist Śakuntalā from leaving the hermitage.

“यस्य त्वया व्रणविरोपणमिङ्गुदीनां, तैलं न्यषिच्यत मुखे कुशसूचिविद्धे।

श्यामाकमुष्टिपरिवर्धितको जहाति, सोऽयं न पुत्रकृतकः पदवीं मृगस्ते ॥” (A.Ś – 4/14 p.295)

Even the profession of a fisher man is also regarded as unholy for it has association with killing animals³.

Conclusion : Abhijñāna Śakuntalam perfectly interweaves man and nature. The human, the plants and the animals are indispensable part of a single being that is a nature. Man is never isolated from flora and fauna. The plants and animals in Abhijñāna Śakuntalam perfectly understand and record human emotion and vice-versa. The strong bondage of love and affection that Kālidāsa shows is very remarkable. Love is the greatest treasure that can heal any wound and Abhijñāna Śakuntalam is the perfect specimen of that perfect man and nature relationship. No matter what we are, whether hermit or king, we must understand that without love and sympathy towards nature we are incomplete. So Kālidāsa shows that perfect harmony between the soul of human beings and the soul of nature. Both have awakened consciousness because we all are created by God; the same elements create both a leave of a grass and the king of all kings. The beauty of a sunrise is made with the same beauty of Śakuntalā. Abhijñāna Śakuntalam perfectly creates the imageries to remind us about these

facts with such a poetic beauty. Kālidāsa shows his masterly artistry in *Abhijñāna Śakuntalam* to show us that how conscious he was about ecology and the conservation of nature to create a golden life.

Reference :

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3. Kālidāsa. *Abhijñāna Śakuntalam*. Edi. Dr. Chakrabarty Satyanarayan. Kolkata: Sanskrit Pustak Bhandar, 1988 1st edition. p. 1-580
