

River Imagery in Meghadūta of Kālidāsa

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Abstract

Kālidāsa is considered the greatest poet of classical Sanskrit literature. He is specially praised for his delicate style. His style is described to be lucid, uncomplicated and flavoured with unique poetic imagery.

Image

Poetry is the art of expressing something in a peculiar way unlike that has been previously expressed by others. Language is the richest and most subtle means of significant expression. And one of the features that makes the expression a significant one in poetry is to make the language creative and extraordinary by producing vivid images. Poetry is the image of man and nature.

Kālidāsa excels in the art of image making. Rich and varied word- pictures make his poetic language throb with an incomparable grace and charm. So Kālidāsa's poetic language offers great scope for stylistic analysis. It is a language that chooses to chisel language to perfection and create word pictures that form the life- breath of his poetic expression.

The term image denotes several meanings which must be carefully distinguished from one another. Image is an artificial imitation or representation of the external form of any object, especially of a person, or of the bust of a person. An image is a thing in which some quality is vividly exhibited so as to make it a natural representation of such quality. An image is a thing that represents or is taken to represent something else. In other words we can say that it is a symbol, emblem, and representation. An image is a visible appearance, a figure an apparition.

River Images

The present article seeks to bring out the specific features of Kālidāsa's river images depicted in Meghaduta. One of the traits of Kālidāsa's poetic art is his irresistible fascination to nature. Riverine attributes flow into his depiction of word pictures whose variety and richness is conspicuous by their refreshing presence.

It is in Meghadūta that Kālidāsa's poetic language attains greater degree of concentration. The sorrowful love-lorn reminiscences of a separated lover constitute the atmosphere of the poem and therefore his river imagery in the poem seeks to depict the intensity of myriad emotions. The sorrow of separation, yearning desire and expectancy of reunion, a world of such sentiments is portrayed making use of his varied imagery in which rivers appear with their thousand momentary moods. The very first verse of the poem has the mention of the abode of Yaksha among the hermitages or Ramagiri beside which the waters, rendered holy by the ablutions of Śiva. Reva, Vetravati, Nirvindhya, Gandhavati, Gambhira Carmavati, Sindhu, Ganga, Saraswati, Yamuna, Shipra and Vananadi flow into Kālidāsa's poetic imagery with rare splendor and grace. Riverine attributes are particularly infused into human situations and

sentiments. Love in union, love in separation, pathos, joy, heroism, all are pictured with rivers appearing in numerous forms and ways.

They pour into the texture of his imagery with their attributes creatively reconstructed with a tinge of poetic imagination.

In the Uthara Megha the sportive moments of the eyebrows are imagined as the gentle ripples of Rivers-
उत्पश्यामि प्रतनुषु नदीवीचिषु भूविलासा-

न्हनैकस्मिन्कचिदपि न ते चण्डि सादृश्यमस्ति ॥ (उत्तरमेघ : 44)

River images of a lover just separated from his beloved is normally kindled by burning desire induced by recent reminiscences and it is natural, therefore, that his speech becomes suggestive with the veiled pictures of love making-

तेषां दिक्षु प्रथितविदिशालक्षणां राजधानीं

गत्वा सद्यः फलमविकलं कामुकत्वस्य ।

तीरोपान्तस्तनितसुभगं पास्यसि स्वादु यस्मा-

त्सभ्रभङ्ग मुखमिव पयो वेत्रवत्याश्चलोर्मि ॥ (पूर्वमेघः - 25)

In the Purva Megha with the image of clouds mirrored in the Ganga moving alone, the river (ganga) is imagined to appear at once as beautiful as when she was united with Yamuna at a place other than Prayaga. The cloud corresponds to Yamuna due to its dark colour. In another example, the river image becomes yet more sensuous and charming. Having come into contact, on the path of the megha, with the nirvindhya having her waists- band the row of the birds noisy on account of the turbulence of the waves, gliding in a manner graceful by her stumbling and manifesting her navel in the form of eddies, the megha will become the enjoyer of the flavour of the love, for with regard to their lovers, amorous gestures are women's first expression of love. Here, the river image is couched in a language of exquisite beauty.

There is one more śloka couching to get another river image. It brings in a more lovely picture of an amorous girl lying in wait for her lover. It is the river Gambhira. After the megha will have removed her blue garment in the form of waters slipped down her hips in the form of the bank and appearing to be clutched by the hand on account of the branches of canes touching it, it will be with considerable difficulty that the departure of the megha, hanging obliquely, will take place. River Gambhira is pictured in the sloka as a woman with perfect charm and seductive beauty. Kālidāsa's poetic words beautifully paint a girl whose garments slip from her hips and who unsuccessfully tries to clutch them from slipping down. She thus lies there with her loins exposed. The megha may fail to part with her ignoring the intoxicating temptation caused by the exposure of her V bodily beauty. The epithets, Karadhrtamiva, Salilavasana, 2 Jnanasvadah, and Vivrtajaghanam are all pregnant with charming meaning. Such images are too numerous to be analysed not only in the Meghaduta but in other works of Kālidāsa also.

Conclusion

Altogether, a riverine characteristic features play a dominant part in the rich, fertile and varied imagery of Kālidāsa in Meghaduta. Indeed, poetic figures in Kālidāsa are so natural and spontaneous that they are never felt to be the additional adornments of language, but they form part and parcel of the numerous human situations revealing themselves with grace and liveliness in Kālidāsa's art of poetry.

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