



# International Journal of Sanskrit Research

अनन्ता

ISSN: 2394-7519

IJSR 2017; 3(3): 11-13

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www.anantaajournal.com

Received: 04-03-2017

Accepted: 05-04-2017

**Dr. Tarun Kumar Sharma**

Lecturer, Department of  
Sanskrit, Atarra P.G. College,  
Atarra, Banda, Uttar Pradesh,  
India

## A critical study of ecology in Abhijñāna Śākuntalam

**Dr. Tarun Kumar Sharma**

### Introduction

Ecology is relatively a new science developed very recently dealing with principles governing various complex relationships between the two aspects of nature i.e., organisms and their environments for the first time in 1870, the term 'Ecology' was defined by the German biologist, Ernst Haeckel as follows: "By Ecology we mean the body of knowledge concerning the economy of nature. The investigation of the total relations of the animals both to its inorganic and to its organic environment, including above all its friendly and inimical relation with those animals and plants with which it comes directly and indirectly into contact." The term 'ecology' is coined by two Greek words, Oikos (home) and logos (the study of) meaning thereby that ecology is a study denoting various relationship between organism and environment in a habitat. The recent ecological studies have revealed the fact that not only the living and non-living factors of nature are interrelated but they function in an orderly manner as a definite system. Ecology refers to the study of plants, animals and their environments and thus basic on various interrelationships.

*Kālidāsa* in his drama *Abhijñāna Śākuntalam* introduces the drama with the holy environments of nature. The hero of the drama *Duṣyanta* enters the sacred precincts of the tranquil hermitage<sup>[1]</sup> to purify himself as—

*puṇyāśramadarśanēn tāvad ātmānam puṇīmahi*<sup>[2]</sup>.

and he is refrained from killing of the hermitage-deer. as —

*āśramamrago 'yam na hantatavya na hantavyaḥ*<sup>[3]</sup>.

He sees in the forest that the ground is strewn with *Nīvara* – grain dropped down from the parrot's nests and the oily stones indicative of breakers of *Inguḍī*. He also observes the deer moving freely with confidence and water channels scattered though out the forest. The tender foliage of trees have changed their colour because of the rise of the smoke from sacrificial ghee. From this description of severe atmosphere of the hermitage, *Kālidāsa's* environmental fact is self-evident. This has a lasting effect on the people and is corroborated from the statement of *Duṣyant* when he remarks that penance groves are indeed fit to be entered in a simple dress. as

*Vinī taveṣeṇa praveṣṭavyāni tapovanāni*<sup>[4]</sup>.

Similarly in *Abhijñāna Śākuntalam* in the very introductory stanza called, *Nāndī*, *Kālidāsa* propitiates *Śiva* in this eight forms, the five elements of nature, the sun and the moon as well as the self. In the seventh verse of the second act, *Kālidāsa* compares the hermits as the *Sūryakānta* jewels which do not emit lustre as long as they are not, attacked by counter lustre. As-

*Śamapradhāneṣu tapodhaneṣu gūḍham hi dāhātmakam asti tejah/  
sparśānukūlā iva suryakāntāstadanyatejo' bhībhavād vamanī*<sup>[5]</sup>

Similarly, in the 5<sup>th</sup> verse of the III Act, *Kālidāsa* narrates about the charming effects of the bank of *Mālinī* river, endorsed with bowers of creepers and the free breeze with water drops – fragrant on account of lotuses<sup>[6]</sup>. Again in the 7<sup>th</sup> verse of the same act *Kālidāsa* compares, *Śakuntalā* of love stroke as a person of sun-stroke.

### Correspondence

**Dr. Tarun Kumar Sharma**

Lecturer, Department of  
Sanskrit, Atarra P.G. College,  
Atarra, Banda, Uttar Pradesh,  
India

*Śakuntalā* has worn only bracelets of lotus-fibres for cooling purpose, but due to heat, it gets loose as the *Uśira*-unguent is applied on the breasts<sup>[7]</sup>. Here *Kālidāsa* refers to the role of Sacrifice as purifying the environments. In the 9th verse of the 5th act, *Kālidāsa* brings a complete harmony between environments and human mind. Here *Kālidāsa* observes that the king is the protector of nature. When *Duśyanta* heard about the arrival of *Kaṇva*'s disciples. He is worried about the cause of their arrival. Is it because the penance is marred by the the obstacles? or something unworthy has been done by some one towards the lower animals moving around the holi forest region ? or the creepers have been paralysed by this sing. As-

*Kim tāvat vratī nām upoḍhatpasām  
vighnastapodūṣitam.....etc*<sup>[8]</sup>.

Through analyzing this conflict of *Duśyanta*'s mind, *Kālidāsa* displays his environmental awareness. Life in solitude was a preference with *Kālidāsa*. *Śāngarava* and *Śāradvat* condemn the king's capital city<sup>[9]</sup>. In the 5th act the *Śāngarava* compares the city swarmed with people as a house enveloped in fire. As-

*Janākīrṇam manye hutavahaparī tam grhamiva*<sup>[10]</sup>.

In the 21st *Śloka*, the king refers to *Śakuntalā* as a rever dashing against the bank, making turbid the clear transparent water and filing the tree on the bank<sup>[11]</sup>. In the 7th act *Mātali* refers to the earth as devastatingly charming. As-

*aho udāraramaṇī yā prthivi*<sup>[12]</sup>.

*Kālidāsa* goes on describing his heroine comparing nature with her. She is clad with the bark and appears like a lotus entwined even with moss. However, she is charming like cool-rayed moon even if dusky. As-

*Sarasijam anuviddham Śaivalenāpi ramyam  
Malinam api himānśorlakṣmalakṣmīm tanoti  
Iyam adhikamanojñā valkalenāpi tanvī  
Kim iva hi madhurāṇām mandanam nākṛtīnām*//<sup>[13]</sup>

Again in the next verse *Śakuntalā*'s youth is described by *Duśyanta* as fit to be hankered after attractive like a flower dumped all over here body with lower lip possessed of redness of a sprout and arms reminding tender twigs etc. as-

*adharah kisalayarāgaḥ komalavitpānukariṇau bāhū./  
kusumam iva lobhanīyam yauvanam angeṣu  
sāmnaddham*//<sup>[14]</sup>

In the IIInd Act *Vidūṣaka* asks the king to sit on the seat endowed with canopy of thick creepers under the shade of tree. Thus *Kālidāsa* brings about the interdependencies between man and nature. In the verse 11 of the 2nd act *Kālidāsa* refers to *Śakuntalā* as a flawless beauty like a flower not smelt, a tender sprout not yet plucked by nails, a gem not perforated and fresh honey not tested etc. as-

*anāghrātam puṣpam kisalayam alūnam kararuhair  
anāvidham ratanam madhu navam anāsvādītarasam/  
akhaṇḍam puṇyānām phlam iva ca tadrupamangham  
na jāne bhoktāram kam iha samupasthāsyati vidhih*//<sup>[15]</sup>.

In the 5th verse of the 4th act *Kālidāsa* narrates the nature's sympathy with her daughter. In the daughter's marriage, the silken garments, the paints to be applied to the feet and the ornaments required by her were given as gifts by the trees and the sylvan deities. Thus *Kālidāsa* brings forth a striking similarity between the feeling of both plant and animal. As-

*kṣaumam kenacid indupāṇḍu taruṇā māngalyam  
āviṣkṛtam  
niṣthytas caranopabhogasulbho lākṣārasaḥ kenacid/  
anyebhyo vandevatākartalair āparvabhāgotthitair  
dittāny ābharaṇāni naḥ  
kisalayodbhedapratidvandvibhiḥ*//<sup>[16]</sup>

In the 9th verse of the same act *Kālidāsa* narrates *Śakuntalā*'s love for the plant kingdom and *Kaśyapa* wants the trees bid a fitting farewell to *Śakuntalā* as a daughter of nature loved the trees very much. She first saw that they were watered, before she thought of drinking water herself. She has attachment for ornaments, but did not pluck the tender leaves for fear of injuring the tree and it was a special rejoicing for *Śakuntalā* when plants put forth their first blossom. As –

*pātum na prathamam vyavasyati jalam yuṣmāsv  
apīteṣu yā  
nādatte priyamaṇḍanāpi bhavatām snehena yā  
pallavam/  
ādye vaḥ kusumaprasūṭisamaye yasyā bhavaty  
utsavaḥ  
seyam yati śakuntalā patigrham sarvair  
anujñāyatām*//<sup>[17]</sup>

In the 6th act parabhr̥tika the attendant tells her friend that the cuckoo does indeed become intoxicated having seen the mango bud. These effects of spring, *Kālidāsa* describes where the harmony between plant and animal is well-established.

In the 18th verse of the 6th act, *Duśyanta* paints *Śakuntalā*'s image and feel sorry as “he has not drawn a *Śriṣa* flower with its stalk placed upon the ear and filaments hanging down the cheeks or he has not put up between the breasts a string of lotus-fibres delicate like the rays of the autumnal moon”. Thus in all these instances *Kālidāsa* establishes a complete harmony between plant and animal kingdoms. As-

*kṛtam na karnārpitabandhanam sakhe  
śirīṣamāgaṇḍavilamkesaram/  
na vā śaraccandramarīcikomalam  
mṛṇālsūtram rachitam stanāntare*//<sup>[18]</sup>

In the IIInd Act, the hunting in general is seen to be possessed of evil effects, but for the king this is treated as inspring. May be the king was allowed hunting as a pastime to bring an equilibrium between deadly and innocent animals, although the evil effect of hunting were felt by all in the 6th verse of the same act, the king has ordered not to hunt in the vicinity of the hermitage and thereby to let the buffaloes plunge in to the water of tanks and splash again and again with heroes and let the king of the deer rest in the shade and practice rumination and let the digging up of musta grass be effected at ease in the pond by the rows of boars. Thus *Kālidāsa*'s sympathy for the animal kingdom is evident.

*Śakuntalā*, a new bride is going to her husband's house for the first time and naturally requests her father to send her messages from time to time about her pets. She asks specifically for the pregnant does as she herself is in the same

condition. They young deer is sticking her and hot prepared to learn her mother-like *Śakuntalā* who was taking oil to her injured mouth due to chewing pointing *Kuśa*-grass in early childhood. As-

*yasya tvayā vṛaṇaviropanam ing udīnam  
tailam nyaṣicyata mukhe kuśasūcividdhe/  
śyāmākamuṣṭiparivardhitako jahāti  
so 'yam na putrakṛtakah padavim mrgas tel//* <sup>[19]</sup>

In the 6th act, the police officer laughs at the fisherman remarking sarcastically that he has a holy profession implying thereby that the profession is unholy as it is connected with killing the fishes. Thus the violence in all forms was never tolerated. Although for particular sections of society, it was adopted marginally for professional-sake and that too was referred to by the undignified status. As-

*viśuddha idānīm te ājīvaḥ/* <sup>[20]</sup>

In the last we can say that the intimate relationship between man and animal as discovered by *Kālidāsa* only goes to reveal his awareness on animal-ecology and eco-system. Even the poisonous serpents are described as the guardians of man's hidden treasure the emotional associations between man and animal are established by *Kālidāsa* in so subtle a manner through the use of similes and metaphors. If all these references are studied deeply, this may only lead to reveal the fact that *Kālidāsa* was not only a romantic poet with high imaginations, but he had possessed a keen interest in observing his contemporary society. As a true poet of nature, he has been able to bring about an equilibrium between plants and animals and between living organisms and non-living environments. In *Kālidāsa's* dramas, hermitages are treated as natural habitats for man and animal where reign peace and tranquility, here the violence is prohibited in all its possible forms. *Kālidāsa's* description of ponds, lakes and gardens as well as their specific manner of their maintenance only go to prove that *Kālidāsa* as a perfect environmentalist. Thus in *Abhijñāna Śakuntalam* drama, *Kālidāsa* has displayed various aspects of ecology.

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