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Roll of 'megha' or cloud as a messenger of love in Meghaduta: A study

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Abstract

"Meghaduta" by Kalidasa is a great poem of love in classical Indian literature. The poem deals with intense love affair between husband and wife even after their separation. The poem presents their typical love affairs which cannot be restrained in any circumstance. While men tries to restrain human love and emotion, and punish them giving exile, various agents of nature comes forward to fulfill their love. Seasons as changing agent of nature affect human mind in love making. The rainy Season or monsoon season brings freshness in nature and deep love in lovers' mind. The clouds moving from one part of the sky to another part of sky brings rain and message of love in the mind of lovers and beloveds. Lovers and beloveds look towards their love with great eagerness. In the poem "Meghaduta" Yaksha, the lover and his beloved wife are in true love. But soon in their love comes a crisis. Kubera, the Hindu god of wealth under whom Yaksha, has served, displeased as Yaksha has neglected his duty to protect the lotus garden entrusted in his charge. While Yaksha is deeply engaged in love making with his wife, Airavata, the elephant of Indra, the god of heaven has come and spoiled the entire lotus in the garden. Yaksha is not concerned all that happen before him. Discovering this, Kubera becomes angry with Yaksha and punishes him for his offence. He banishes Yaksha from Alaka, the city of Yakshas to the mountain of Ramagiri in Central India for twelve months exile. Thus Yaksha is separated from his home and beloved wife. Though Kubera separates Yaksha physically from his beloved wife, yet there is no bound of love between them. Their love never fades in any circumstance because the true inspiration of love lies in the core of hearts. So, while they are so far from each other, their painful existence invokes pity in the mind of 'Megha' or cloud. 'Megha' or cloud, on request of Yaksha finally agrees to convey the message of Yaksha's love to his beloved wife. 'Megha' or cloud flies from south to north towards Alaka on Mount Kailasa in the Himalaya Mountains to express the feelings and situation of Yaksha in exile. The lady love realizes that her husband though far from her, always keep her in mind. He loves his beloved wife more and more. His love for her is not feigned or imitated and is touched with truth and genuine sincerity. They are eager for meeting each other and soon they will meet. This message of reconciliation heightens the poem in a new era in human society.

Keywords: Love, separation, banishment, exile, circumstance, agent, messenger of love, reconciliation

Introduction

"Meghaduta" is one of the most famous literary works in the Sanskrit literature. The poem is written by great ancient poet of Indian, Kalidasa. Later the poem was translated into many other languages. It is a poem of love full of a sincere, passionate and truthful love between husband and wife. The poem deals with deep and sincere love of Yaksha, a servant of Kubera for his beloved wife. According to mythology Kubera is the Hindu god of wealth living at Alaka on Mount Kailasa in the Himalaya. The poem is divided into two parts, Purva-megha and Uttara-megha. The first part of the poem i.e. Purva-megha recounts how Yaksha, a subordinate of King Kubera (the god of wealth), after being exiled for a year to the mountain of Ramagiri in Central India for neglecting his duties. In the second part of the poem i.e. Uttara-megha convinces a passing by 'Megha' or cloud to take a message of his pain in banishment, his deep and sincere love for her and his return to his wife at Alaka on Mount Kailasa in the Himalaya Mountains. Yaksha accomplishes this by describing the many beautiful sights the cloud will see on its northward course to the city of Alaka, where his wife awaits his return. Yaksha also describes the unique qualities of his wife which would help 'Megha' or cloud to identify Yaksha's wife too easily. 'Megha' or cloud accomplishes his duty bestowed to him seriously and honestly.

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Literature Review

Since ancient time India is a rich land of literary creation. Many great poets, novelists, dramatists and others have given their valuable contribution to enrich literature. They use many languages nourish literature. Since Sanskrit is one of the oldest languages in the world, it has been used by the great Indian poet. Apart from this they represent various themes like men, women, love, nature, spiritual matters, myth etc. "Meghaduta" by Kalidasa is originally written in Sanskrit language. Later the book has been translated in many other languages. The poem deals with man- woman relation and love. Inanimate objects of nature are presented as living beings here. The poet has selected 'Megha' or cloud as his poetic agent or the messenger of love.

"Meghaduta" by Kalidasa is a complete story of love, separation, suffering and union. It is the story of a Yakṣa and his beloved wife. The beginning lines of the poem strikes the emotional breakdown of Yakṣa:

"Where Ramagiri's shadowy woods extend,
And those pure streams where Sita bathed, descend;
Spoiled of his glories, severed from his wife,
A banished Yacsha passed his lonely life;
Doomed by Cuvera's anger to sustain,
Twelve tedious months of solitude and pain."
(Note-1, Page-23, Verse-1-6)

Yakṣa is banished to the mountain of Ramagiri, the hill of Rama. According to the great epic "Ramayana", in his exile, Sri Rama along with his brother Lachshmana and his faithful consort Sita lived there. In "Meghaduta" Yakṣa is banished in Ramagiri Ashrama in order to spend twelve months of his isolation from his beloved wife. When Yakṣa is in exile, he can do nothing better than lamenting for her, recounting their glorious days of love, knowing that there is nothing he can do for her.

The beauty of nature in the beginning of monsoon is described with the following imagery:

"When with Asharha's glooms the air was hung,
And one dark cloud around the mountain clung;
In form some elephant, whose sportive rage,
Ramparts, scarce equal to his might, engage."
(Note-2, Page-23-24, Verse-11-14)

In the month Asharha, rainy season sets in. There is a lot of clouds move in the sky. Clouds are described as wild elephant. When, at the beginning of a monsoon, a cloud perches on the Peak of Ramagiri Mountain, Yakṣa asks it to deliver a message to his lady love in the Himalayan city of Alaka. In a sense the "megha" or cloud is a visible expression of the abstract and intangible nature.

The soul of Yakṣa would remain passionate in exile:

"Long on the mass of mead-reviving dew,
The heavenly exile fixed his eager view;
And still the melancholy tear surpress'd,
Though bitterest sorrow wrung his heaving breast."
(Note-3, Page-24, Verse-15-18)

In Ramagiri Ashrama, Yakṣa has spent his time restlessly and consoled himself by remembering the sweet memory of the days past. The sweet memory of love acts as a soothing balm in the heaviest breast of Yakṣa in exile. He is well aware that his wife eagerly waits for his return. Her pain of heart has no

limit. So, lovelorn Yakṣa decides to send the message of his return to his beloved wife. He makes a prayer to the "megha" or cloud to carry this message to his beloved wife:

"The Yakṣa thus the cloud majestic prayed."
(Note-4, Page-25, Verse-36)

Yakṣa considers "megha" or cloud as his friend or counselor. He considers "megha" or cloud as reliable friend to send his message to his wife:

"Hail! Friend of Indra, counselor or divine,
Illustrious offspring of a glorious line;
Wearer of shapes at will; thy worth I know,
And bold entrust thee with my fated woe."
(Note-5, Page-25, Verse-37-40)

The "megha" or cloud must have travel a long way to reach the city of Alaka to deliver the message to Yakṣa's wife. Yakṣa is very much confident that the "megha" or cloud must do it. The "megha" or cloud only can help him in his distress:

"Thou art the wretch's aid, affection's friend!
To me unfortunate, thy succour lend;
My lonely state compassionate behold,
Who mourn the vengeance of the God of gold."
(Note-6, Page-25, Verse-43-46)

Yakṣa has given the "megha" or cloud a wide and vivid description of the way to the city of Alaka. The "megha" or cloud travels a long way to the city of Alaka. When the "megha" or cloud reaches the city of Alaka, Yakṣa's beloved wife is eagerly waiting looking forward the way of her husband Yakṣa's return. The pain of their separation makes her sick. Lovers are true in their love. This restlessness increases as consciousness in Yakṣa's mind and forces him to describe the passion of love:

"Lone as the widowed chacravaci mourns,
Her faithful memory to her husband returns;
And sad, and shalt thou find my wife,
Half of my soul, and partner of my life."
(Note-7, Page-53, Verse-537-540)

The "megha" or cloud gives her the good news that her husband will return the city of Alaka soon. He will return home with romantic dream. He has spent eight months of his twelve months banishment. Yakṣa reminds sweet miseries of those days, he has spent with his beloved wife. And feels how she has occupied half of his soul as life partner. She must come to know about her husband's true and faithful love:

"True love no time nor distance can destroy,
And independent of all present joy,
It grows in absence, as renewed delight,
Some dear memorial, some loved lined excite."
(Note-8, Page-64, Verse-741-744)

Yakṣa tells the "megha" or cloud how he is eager in love making with his wife. The "megha" or cloud is requested to express the feelings and situation of Yakṣa in the exile:

"Thy task performed, consoled the mourner's mind,"
(Note-9, Page-65, Verse-753)

While the “megha” or cloud reaches the city of Alaka, it conveys the message of Yakṣa’s return to his wife. “...the messenger of air conveyed to Alaca his wild despair;” that:

“The God of Wealth, relenting, learnt his state,
And swift curtailed the limit of his fate,
Removed the curse, restored him to his wife,
And blest with ceaseless joy their everlasting life.”
(Note-10, Page-65, Verse-768)

Conclusion

The “megha” or cloud is but a go-between in their effort to make their love fruitful by conveying the message of the good news. This inanimate object plays a vital role with its adventurous journey to the city of Alaka. The “megha” or cloud consoles Yakṣa’s wife with the assurance of his husband’s quick return. After complication of eight months out of twelve months in solitary seclusion, Yakṣa is prepared to meet his beloved wife. They are ruled by their mutual love to such a level as to surpass any difficulty. They are suffering from love sickness, and the woes lead the problem of this unhappiness in their mind. In such condition the “megha” or cloud begins its northward course to the city of Alakā, where Yakṣa wife awaits her husband’s return. The “megha” or cloud is a messenger of love as we notice many glimpses of human activities within its activities.

Research Methodology

This work is mainly based on secondary source of information, such as published documents, books, literary reviews, autobiography, journals, critiques etc. I adopt Descriptive Research Method to present my research paper. I have involved myself in intensive and critical reading of Meghaduta written by Kalidasa which enabled me to collect information about the protagonists and their love, roll of cloud as messenger, and various facts and points relevant to the study. The collected data has been analyzed to find out how love can overcome all barriers; how nature support to establish true love, and the challenges, the protagonists faced in their separation. This paper tries to point out how Kalidasa has used the literary device ‘Personification’ to heighten literary effect. He has used inanimate object “megha” or cloud as living entity. “megha” or cloud plays an important role in literary urgency of the message sent by Yakṣa to his beloved wife.

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Data Collection

The primary source of data of the work is taken from Horace Hayman Wilson’s The Mégha Dúta, Or, Cloud Messenger: A Poem, in the Sanscrit Language. Calcutta: College of Fort William. Retrieved 11 November 2010. Note-1 to 10 are cited from here.

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