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The importance of environment in the *Mālavikāgnimitram* of Kālidāsa and its Relevance in the Present Era

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Abstract

Human being is completely dependent on nature or natural environment. Any kinds of intolerance and carelessness towards nature and natural elements may bring destruction to human existence and civilization. Kalidasa occupies a dominant place in Sanskrit literature. He is known as 'the Poet of Nature'. Nature as well as environment takes a very dominant role in his all works of Kalidasa. Among his seven well-known creatures, the *Mālavikāgnimitram* is regarded as the first creation of this great genius. So, it may be an interesting topic to highlight the concept of Environment as revealed in the *Malavikagnimitram* and its relevance in present challenging crisis.

Key words: Nature – Natural Environment – Kalidasa - *Mālavikāgnimitram* - Present Era - Relevance.

Introduction

Environment and human being are considered as the two sides of a same coin. It is an undeniable fact that the well-being of human society depends upon the environment. The survival of human being is perhaps impossible, even for a single moment, without nature or natural environment. The human being flourish in its lap and at the end take eternal rest therein. Any kind of intolerance and carelessness towards nature or natural elements may bring destruction to human civilization. so, the newly emerging concepts, like the concept of Environmental Awareness has make into the mainstream of public life as a major national and international concern intending to make aware about the role of environment in human life.

Generally, the term 'Environment' means the surrounding, i.e. the surrounding where we live. In Sanskrit, the equivalent word for 'Environment' is '*Paryāvarana*'. This word is made up of three components *-pari+ā+vr̥* which the earlier prefix means 'fully', the second means 'completely' and the root has the sense of 'covering'. Thus, it refers to the environment bring depend on it.

As per the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, the term 'Environment' means "The conditions, circumstances etc. affecting a person's life." And the adjective form of it i.e. 'Environmental' means "relating to the natural environment"¹.

According to the Stockholm Conference on Human Environment (1972), "man is not only an animal but he is the creator of his own environment situations. This environment provides him all the opportunities of economic, social and cultural development. Man has achieved all the abilities to change the environment. Nature and biotic environment factors contributes in the well-being of human being"². Similarly, different dictionaries put the meaning of this word in their won languages.

Kalidasa, the immortal poet and playwright, occupies a unique position not only in Sanskrit literature but also in the world literature too. In Sanskrit, he has been designated as the *Kavikulaguru* i.e. 'the mentor of the poets'. The poet has an unfailing eye for the wonderful aspects of nature which lead him to establish himself as 'the poet of Nature' in Sanskrit literature. Among his seven well-known creations, the *Mālavikāgnimitram* is known as the first attempt of dramatic creation of Kalidasa containing the love-story between the king Agnimitra and Malavika as its central theme. In this dramatic creation, we have the depiction of seasons, trees, plants, creepers, gardens, sky, the Sun, the Moon, birds, animals etc. as the natural elements and

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the Asoka-garden, ponds etc as the artificial objects. All these ultimately reflect the aware-mind of Kalidasa towards his nature or natural environment.

Major Discussions: The play *Mālavikāgnimitram* begins with a benedictory stanza, popularly known as *Nandi*, where Kalidasa prays Siva, his favorite deity in its eight forms- the earth, water, fire, air, ether, the Sun, the Moon and the sacrifice- ‘.....*aṣṭābhirastasya kṛtsnam jagadapi tanubhirbibharato nābhīmānaḥ*’³. Although, in the scientific point of view, these are inanimate, but the vital elements for all living creatures and have a significant role to keep the environment in balance. Thus, in the *Mālavikāgnimitram*, the affiliation of the poet towards nature or environment and the theme of the play take steps hand to hand with each other.

In the first act of the *Mālavikāgnimitram*, Malavika has been described as a pupil of Ganadasa who performs her credit in a dance-test and takes her rest at stage by the order of her master enjoying the plentiful breeze. i.e.

*idānmeva pañcangābhinayamudiṣya mayā
viśrumatāmityabhihitā
dirghikāvalokanagavaāksagatā pravātamāsevamānā
tiṣṭhati //*⁴

In the twenty first verse of the first act, the Paribrajika becomes delighted by the sweet voice coming from the stage- “Deep resonant sound, so, dear to peacocks and having the pitch of the middle tone for the its basis, of the tabor, followed by the notes of peacocks with necks erect, suspecting into be the thunder of rain-clouds, delighted the mind.”⁵

In the *Malavikagnimitran*, kalidasa shows the impact of various seasons upon other living being except human life. In the second act of this play, we have a clear description of the impact of mid-day on all living creatures. c.f.

*patracchāyasu haṁgsā mukulitanayanā
dirghikāpadmininīnām
saudhānyatarthatāpadhvalabhiparicayadhvaeṣipar
avatāni/
vindurtkṣepānpipāsuh paripatati śikhī
bhrāntimadhvāriyantram
sarvairusrayḥ samagraistvamiva nṛpagunairdipyate
saptasaptiḥ //*⁶

In the *Mālavikāgnimitram*, here and there, from the beginning to the end, the dramatist portrays his characters in the form of natural objects which reveals his great affiliation towards nature. As an instance, in the tenth verse of the second act, king Agnimitra compares Malavika’s smiling face and her slightly displayed teeth to blooming lotus and budding lotus respectively⁷. similarly in the third act, he compares highly ornamented pale-cheeked Malavika to a *Kundu*-creeper as if appear with only few folder ripened by spring season⁸. Her face has long eyes and luster of autumnal moon⁹.

The third act of the *Malavikagnimitran*, reflects a cordial relationship between nature and man. The heroine Malavika is sent to the Asoka-garden to strike the Asoka-tree which is waiting for the kick of a fair lady to blossom fully. i.e.

*ādāya karṇakisalayasasmādiyamatra
caraṇamarpayati /
ubhayuḥ sadṛśavinimayādātmanām vañcitam manye
//*¹⁰

The plant kingdom has a great importance in an environment. The emphatic mind of Kalidasa to protect the plant ecology finds place in the fourth act of the play when the Vidusaka asks the Vakulavalika to prohibit the antelope from eating the twigs of Asoka-tree. “*vakulavālike eṣa vālāśokabrṅksasya pallavāni laṅghayati hariṇaḥ / ehi nivārayāva enam*”¹¹

In the *Mālavikāgnimitram*, Kalidasa artistically presents the effects of environment on living beings. In the beginning of the fifth act of the play, one Vaitalika suggests the king to go to the *Asoka*-garden where he can delightfully hear the sweet notes of the cuckoos; can pass his time very enjoy fully like the god of love in a bodily form¹².

In this play, Kalidasa presents both animate and inanimate objects in the same platform. Both have the capacity to share with human feelings and emotions. In the fifth act of the *Mālavikāgnimitram*, Vidusaka refers to the youthful vibrant that spring has assumed in the *pramodavana*. “*bho vayasya kimcitparibrttayauvana iva vasantah pramadavane lakhsyate*”¹³.

In the *Mālavikāgnimitram*, the *Asoka*-plant and the serpent ring plays a very significant role. In the third act, for the first time, the hero Agnimitra unites with the heroine Malavika in the *Asoka* -garden. Again, they are finally united in the blissful *Asoka*-vana in the fifth act of the play with permission of queen Dharini.

Similarly, in the *Mālavikāgnimitram*, Kalidasa includes the serpent episode for a very significant purpose. Vidusaka is dissolved in thought because Malavika had been put the cellar by Dharini with an order to door-keeper for not to kill letting her free until and unless the signet ring bearing the seal of serpent is presented before him. Vidusaka pretends to be bitten by a venomous snake on his finger. The snake-physician asks for a serpent seal, due to sympathy towards Vidusaka, Dharini gives it away which ultimately helped Malavika to be released¹⁴.

Various trees and plants have been considered as a very sacred and respected by the Indian since antiquity and this stands as a norm of environment includes tradition. The *Mālavikāgnimitram* carry outs a clear instance regarding this aspect. In this connection, the queen compares Malavika as sandal-wood which feel pity for her as she used sandal-wood for her shoes. Some other references found in the *Mālavikāgnimitram* which reflect Kalidasa’s view on protecting the plant kingdom. For example, in the fourth act of this play, Vidusaka asks Bakulavalika to prohibit antelope eating away the schools of young *Asoka* i.e. “*bakulavālike eṣa bālāśokabrṅksasya pallavāni laṅghayati hariṇaḥ / ehi nivārayana enam*”¹⁵

Thus, in the *Mālavikāgnimitram*, Kalidasa portrays a very delightful and exciting picture of environment. The heroine of the play Malavika, the Paribrajika, the king Agnimitra, the Vidusaka etc. who become delighted by such type of environment. Moreover, Kalidasa keenly observes the impact of the hot Sun-shine of the mid-day Sun upon the birds or animals. Kalidasa makes an interrelationship between man and nature. As discussed above, the heroine, Malavika goes to the *Asoka*-garden to strike the *Asoka*-tree which is eagerly waiting for the kick of a fair lady to blossom fully. Similarly, Malavika has also cordial attraction towards nature. Due to close attraction towards nature she always wears different natural ornaments¹⁶. Agnimitra, Vidusaka etc. also became too much attracted by seeing the vernal beauty. To make an intimate relationship between man and nature, Kalidasa establishes this concept that the natural objects have also the capacity to share with human feelings. In the third act, the intoxicated cuckoos

with pleasant notes asked the king that if the love-torture is bearable¹⁷. All these reveals as Kalidasa's attraction towards a peaceful natural environment. Again, this play reflects Kalidasa's emphatic mind to protect the plant kingdom. By comparing the natural elements to the hero and to the heroine of the play, the poet establishes an equal harmony between man and nature where the natural objects are stands in human form. Sometimes, Kalidasa places animals in higher position than man. All denotes as Kalidasa's aware-mind and great concern towards his surroundings.

Conclusions

From the above discussions, it has been observed that the *Mālavikāgnimitram*, reflects a very stimulating, artificial environment of nature. Here the environment consists of picture of seasons, trees, plants, creepers, pleasant gardens, the sky, the Sun, the Moon, the clouds etc. as natural objects and the Asoka-garden, ponds etc. as the artificial objects of the same. Kalidasa depicts various charming and exciting picture of nature with their large enduring impact on all living beings. Moreover, the playwright tries to make an intimate relationship between man and nature which is probably very rare and unique.

The present century, the century of science and technology, human civilization has achieved tremendous progress and enjoys maximum comforts. At the same time, it is also an undeniable fact that human being has failed to give required attention to Mother- Nature. Kalidasa's *Mālavikāgnimitram* is abundant with innumerable moral lessons and ethics regarding care, protection and concern towards own surrounding including all living and non-living objects of nature. So, the great teaching of Kalidasa, about the relationship between Nature and Human being may surely help and show us the way to build an eco-friendly society in the true sense.

Notes & References

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5. Ibid, V.21
6. Ibid, II,12
7. Ibid, II,10
8. Ibid, III, 8
9. Ibid, II, 3
10. Ibid, III, 16
11. Ibid, Act IV, p-142
12. Ibid, V,1
13. Ibid, Act V, p-170
14. Ibid, Act IV, pp-125-131
15. Ibid, Act IV, p-142
16. śarākaṇḍapāṇḍugandasthaleymābhāti parimitābharaṇa /
mādhavapaṇatapatrā katipayakusumeva kundalatā //
17. Ibid, III, 4

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