ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION IN KĀLIDĀSA'S LITERATURE

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In this era of materialism, it is the human being who is most responsible—directly or indirectly—for the degradation of the environment. It is unfortunate that the very element (environment) under whose protection humans have flourished is being destroyed by humans themselves. This environmental damage caused by humans is irreparable. As a consequence, various natural disasters—both direct and indirect—are becoming increasingly evident in human life, taking the form of excessive rainfall, hailstorms, droughts, landslides, tsunamis, etc.

Environmental concerns are not confined to any single country—they are a matter of global concern, affecting the entire world in various ways. Climate change is a burning example of this in today's context. The environment encompasses all activities related to human life and the entire animate and inanimate world. Hence, protecting it is not only a duty but also a moral responsibility for every human being.

The great poet Kālidāsa establishes a deep connection between nature and the environment in his works. He perceives nature as a living entity, full of human emotions. He desires the environment to be pleasant and harmonious. According to the poet, just like human beings, nature also experiences joy and sorrow.

A vivid example of this is found in his drama "Abhijñānaśākuntalam", where, during Shakuntalā's departure to her husband's home, nature appears to mourn her separation: the deer regurgitate their food, the peacocks stop dancing, and the creepers shed their pale leaves as if weeping.[1]

In "Ṛtusaṃhāra", Kālidāsa takes the six Indian seasons (ṣaḍṛtu) as the central theme, presenting the uniqueness of the Indian calendar, the diversity of India's climate, and the environmental significance of each season. His understanding of seasons is based on Vedic knowledge. Kālidāsa begins this lyrical work with the description of summer.

During summer, the sun's rays are intense, and people bathe frequently. Evenings are somewhat pleasant. While describing the destruction caused by forest fires in summer, Kālidāsa writes that the fire, fueled by wind, blazes fiercely in the mountain caves. Where there are bamboo groves, it crackles loudly, sounding like explosions. Carried by gusts of wind, it spreads through the grasses, causing immense suffering to forest animals.[2]

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[1] उद्गलितदर्भकवला मृग्यैः परित्यक्तनर्तना मयूराः।
अपसृतपाण्डुपत्रा मुञ्चन्त्यश्रूणीव लताः॥- Abhijñānaśākuntalam, 4.12

[2] ज्वलति पवनवृद्धः पर्वतानां दरीषु
स्फुटति पटुनिनादैः शुष्कवंशस्थलीषु।
प्रसरति तृणमध्ये लब्धवृद्धिः क्षणेन
ग्लपयति मृगवर्गं प्रान्तलग्नो दवाग्निः॥- Ṛtusaṃhāra1.25