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An Ecocritical reading of Kalidasa's *Rtusamhara*

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Abstract

Ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and environment, it's included everything related to the human and nonhuman elements i.e. earth, water and sky houses, agriculture, caves, hills, plants, trees, oceans, seasons, animals, wind, ancient architecture, rocks, soil etc, are considered a beautiful gallery of portraits in ecocriticism. This research paper is based on an ecocritical study of Kalidasa's *Rtusamhara*. Kalidasa (who lived around 5th century AD.) is a representative of nature poet, his literary works are based on beauty of nature and environment. Therefore, this paper attempts to examine Kalidasa's *Rtusamhara* from an ecocritical point of view.

Key words: Ecocriticism, ecology, Kalidasa, *Rtusamhara*, environment, season, nature and culture.

Simply defined, "ecocriticism" is the study of literature and environment from an interdisciplinary point of view. It is also referred to as Eco, Green study, Environmental literary criticism and the literary ecology.

Ecocriticism as a concept first arose in the late 1970s at the meetings of the Western Literature Association (WLA) and it began developing in the 1990s, which special focuses on the relationship of human and nature. The word “Ecocriticism” was coined in 1978 by William Rueckert in his essay, ‘Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism’. His purpose was to focus on “the application of ecology and ecological concepts to the study of literature” (Glotfelty and Fromm 107). Thus, the relationship between man and the environment will be the most important concept on the study of ecocriticism. Now days this approach has become a part of literary theory in literature, contemporary literary text are deals to environment and literature, both are closely relationships between men and natural. On the other side other literary theory are deals with class, race, gender, etc...but ecocriticism theory is represent to nature and environment, it talks about everything that is directly linked to the earth such as water, sky, land, plants, etc. In a literary work all these things create beautiful scenery to make it adorable and make us feel great affection because of their attractive nature. Besides the appreciation of natural beauty, ecocriticism is welcomed as a movement of environment protection. Lawrence Buell defines, “ecocriticism...as a study of the relationship between literature and the environment conducted in a spirit of commitment to environmentalist praxis” (430). Estok argues that ecocriticism is more than:

simply the study of Nature or natural things in literature; rather, it is any theory that is committed to effecting change by analysing the function—thematic, artistic, social, historical, ideological, theoretical, or otherwise—of the natural environment, or aspects of it, represented in documents (literary or other) that contribute to material practices in material worlds (16-17).

The association for the study of literature and environment helped in the emergence of the field of ecocriticism. Ecocriticism plays an important role in the study of human association with nature as it implores nature and the natural world for better understanding. Ecocriticism is a recently developing literary theory in the field of literary criticism. Literary texts are looked upon from eco conscious eyes of the critics and they seek the environmental consciousness of writers in a work of art. Most environmental conscious literary texts deal with a common concern that is the problem of environmental degradation caused by several human activities. Man has crossed the age of environmental limits consequently damaging the planet’s ecological (basic life cycle) system.

Ecocriticism is included everything related to the human and nonhuman elements i.e. earth, water and sky houses, agriculture, caves, hills, plants, trees, oceans, seasons, animals, wind, ancient architecture, rocks, and soil etc, are considered a beautiful gallery of portraits in ecocriticism. These all components are based on the social and environmental science

(ecological, zoological, social, psychological, and botanical) that is focusing on the relationship between human and nonhuman world. As Thoreau once wrote, “there can be no history but natural history-if one believes that by “nature” we mean the human as well as non-human world” (www.asle.org/wp-content/uploads/ASLE_Primer_DefiningEcocrit.pdf). It is also focuses on the rhetoric of cultural texts and material practices that are related to the environment. All the religious scriptures Veda, Brahmanas, Aranyakas, Upanishads, Puranas, Ramayana, Mahabharata and old places are also represents to ecocriticism. “The Rigveda appeals “Do not cut trees because they remove pollution. The Yajur Veda refers to pollution and exhorts man do not disturb the sky and do not pollute the atmosphere” (qtd in Sulphrey and Safeer 392). Ecocriticism emphasis on literary and environment studies through literary text, which is based on cultural world. Kalidasa writes philosophical poems about nature, which is one of the most important themes in his lyric poetry. Kalidasa, a well-known great poet in classical Sanskrit literature, conveys the human and nature relationship in this way: “Romantic maids, like the adorable gloaming/Lit by the shimmering moon, playfully dally/With lips that hold a ready smile/And with stolen glances from lowered eyes/They soon ignite the flame of love/In the mind of the way worn wanderer”. (Pandit 29)

Kalidasa occupies a unique place not only in Sanskrit but also in the world literature. He is considered as the greatest poet of nature (love, romance and beauty). His literary creations clearly reflect the ancient Indian culture and civilisation. According to Kale, “His highly creative powers, his massive intellect, his immense imagination, his marvelous poetical fluency, and his supreme culture, place him in the very front rank of the great poet of all ages” (XV). Kalidasa has presented the worldview of Satyam, Shivam, Sundaram (the true, the good and the beautiful) in his writing style an expert in picturisation of emotions through his art and experience. Kalidasa said to be the most brilliant among the nine gems of the king Vikramaditya’s court. Tandon argues that, “Kalidasa lived and wrote in colourful times, and his works reflected those vibrant colours. In them we find joy, hope, moral values, romance, charity, kindness, a love of nature and high ideals”(29). Kalidasa literary works are deals with the ‘beauty of nature’, ‘love’, ‘romance’ etc. *Rtusamhara* is well known in the world literature, because every stanza of poetry is represents of six seasons. All the stanzas are represents to different atmosphere of earthly life, as we say that, *Rtusamhara* is based on ecological aspect. Chandra Rajan quoting a passage from *Rtusamhara* acknowledges the greatness of Kalidasa:

Dotting the woodlands are charming glades besides streams
Haunted by timorous gazelles easily alarm
-tremulous eyes like deep blue water lilies enchant
And the heart is twisted with sudden longing (15)

The *Rtusamhara* is a collection of six seasons which are different seasons viewed by a lover. Kalidasa's *Rtusamhara* is divided into six parts; all the parts are connected to six seasons with 144 stanzas. The poem has six cantos for the six Indian seasons: *Grisma* (summer), *Varsa* (rainy), *Sarat* (autumn), *Hemanta* (cool), *Sisirs* (winter), *Vasanta* (spring). Each season is divided in two months; all seasons are connected to each other as a cycle of nature. This following table is chronological of season, which is divided into six seasons of Indian 12 months in Hindu lunar Calendar:

No.	ऋतु	Season	हिंदू महीने	Gregorian months
1.	ग्रीष्म	Summer	ज्येष्ठ से आषाढ़	June to August
2.	वर्षा	Rainy	श्रवाण से भाद्रपद	August to October
3.	शरद	Autumn	आश्विन से कार्तिक	October to December
4.	हेमन्त	Cool	मार्गशीर्ष से पौष	December to February
5.	शिशिर	Winter	माघ से फाल्गुन	February to April
6.	वसन्त	Spring	चैत्र से वैशाख	April to June

Summer Season

In the first Cantos of *Rtusamhara* Kalidasa says about to summer season, in this season people are bathing and feeling cool-cool. On the other side, all the animals and birds are searching water for thirsty, elephant; cows, horse etc. are drowning in the river. On the other hand Lotus, rose are blossom in pond. Unlike all the people and animal are searching shade, this season is very hot and dry in all the seasons. All the men and women are prayer to God for rain. The summer season ends up with the development of forest fire due to heat of the sun. At the end of the season as we say that all the element of nature is effect by the summer season which is represent to Ecocriticism:

कमलवनचिताम्बुः पाटलामोदरम्यः

सुखसलिलनिषेकः सेव्यचन्द्रांशुहारः।

व्रजतुतवनिदाघः कामिनीभिः समेतो

निशिसुललितगीतेहर्म्यपृष्ठेसुखेन ॥ (Rtusamhara1.28) (Diwedi 36)

[In which the waters are covered with beds of lotuses, which is delightful with the aroma of patala flowers, when bathing is pleasurable, when moonlight and pearl-strings are enjoyable,- may (such) a summer pass for you, in happiness and with lovely women, at nights on tops of houses where beautiful music is (beings heard).] (translated by Kale 24)
In these opening lines are concerns with spiritual peace, for example fragrance of flowers, Lotus in pond, bathing in cool water etc... all the elements are represent to ecological perspective .

Rainy Season

The Rainy season is a main part of *Ritusamara*, Kalidasa say, this season is a King of all seasons. In this season cloud is changing in black color by water, every corner of the nature is reflecting clean and fresh ground. In the rainy season Ketki and Kadamba flowers are blossom, all the environment is changing in fragrance. In Rainy season Kalidasa has defined beauty of nature such as birds and animals are enjoying with rainy season, dancing of peacock, colorful sky with rainbow, heavy water cloud etc... are attractive of naturally beauty.

प्रभिन्नवैदूर्यनिभैस्तृणामकुरैः समाचिताप्रोत्थितकन्दलीदलैः ।

विभातिशुकलेतरत्नभूषितावरांगनेवक्षितिरिन्द्रगोपकैः ॥ (Rtusamhara 2.5) (Diwedi 42)

(Being full of shoots of grass resembling splintered cat's eye gems, of leaves of kandali plants rising (up from the ground), (and), of the indragopaka insects, the earth appears like a beautiful lady, decked with jewells other than white.) (Translated by Kale 28). In this stanza Kalidasa has described to characteristics of earthly beauty such as earth is green, flowers and trees are blossoms and clouds are laughing by rainy season.

Autumn Season

After rainy season come to Autumn season, in this season Kalidasa say Autumn season as a bride of all seasons. It is a mixture of two seasons (summer and spring season), in this season the crop is brewing in farm, sky is blue with white cloud and leaves are falling from trees. Blue flowers and white lotus are blossoms in ponds. On the other side water has clean by Autumn season, earth has changed in dry, sky is clean. As we can say that this season is showing different attributes.

मन्दानिलाकुलितचारुतराग्रशाखः पुष्पोद्गमप्रचयकोमलपल्लवाग्र ।

मतदिरेफपरिपीतमधुप्रसेकश्चितंविदारयतिकस्यनकोविदारः ॥ (Rtusamhara3.6) (Diwedi

81)

(Its branches having their very beautiful ends waving in the gentle breeze, with innumerable flowers blooming (on it), with its delicate ends of foliage, its flow of honey being shipped by bees,-whose heart is not broken by the kavidara tree?) (Translated by Kale 53). In these lines poet says to beauty of Kovidara, Kachnar trees, which are downed by flowers and fruits, some branches are moving by strong wind, these trees are very attractive to men.

Hemanta Season

The Hemanta is a part of pre-winter season. In this season crops has brewing, flowers has blossoms, blue Lotus are blossoms, Swans are sitting in the ponds, the water is very cold, and the yellow creepers are seems as a beloved by cold stomper. This season is attributes by different types of naturally beauty.

प्रफुल्लनिलोत्पलशोभितानीसोनमादकादम्बविभूषितानि ।

प्रसन्नतोयानिसुशीतलानिसरांसिचेतांसिहरन्तिपुंसाम् ॥ (Rtusamhara 4.9) (Diwedi 123)

(Made beautiful by full-blown blue lotuses, adorned with infatuated Kadamba birds having clear water, (and) being very cool, the lakes attract the minds of men.) (Translated by Kale 75). In this verse Kalidasa has define to four characteristics of ponds which are blue Lotus are blossom, ponds are full of birds group, the water is very clean and cold in ponds. As we can say that all these elements are parts of ecological.

Winter Season

In the fifth Canto, Kalidasa has description of winter season. In this season crops have brewing, birds are warble, beloved are thrilling for physical desire (sexual). In this season people are sun bathing, on the other side lover and beloved are drinking of wine for strong sexual power.

गृहीतताम्बूलविलेपनस्त्रजः सुरासवामोदितवक्त्रपंकजाः ।

प्रकामकालागुरुधूपवासितंविशन्तिशय्यागृमुत्सुकाः स्त्रियः ॥ (Rtusamhara 5.5) (Diwedi

142)

(Taking (with them) betel-rolls, cosmetics and garlands, their lotus-like faces redolent of flora liquor, woman full of longing enter the bed-chamber (which is) thoroughly perfumed with the incense of kalaguru.) (Translated by Kale 85). In these lines Kalidasa say about to lover and beloved are full wine intoxication.

Spring Season

This season is the last part of Kalidasa's *Rtusamhara*. This season as a Yodha (combatant) in all seasons. In this season tree's flowers are blossoms, Lotus are flourish in the ponds, women are full exciting for sensual pleasure, days and nights are pleasure for mankind, people are enjoying with wine. Thus, many characteristics are establishment relationship between man and nature.

कान्तमुखघृतिजुषामपिचोद्गतानांसोभामपरांकुरबकद्रुममअंजरीणाम ।

दृष्ट्वाप्रियेसहृदयसयभवेन्नकस्यकंदर्पबाणपतनव्यथितंहिचेतः॥ (Rtusamhara 6.20)

(Diwedi 177)

(Having seen the great beauty of the blossoms of the kurabaka tree, newly appearing, (and) having the loveliness of the faces of the women, the heart of what sensitive man, dear would not be painted with the fall of Cupid's arrows?) (Translation by Kale 107). In these stanza Kalidasa has delineate about to beauty of nature, Kurbak tree has growing bud, all these beautiful elements are represents to mouth of beloved.

After study of all these seasons as we can say that Kalidasa has create a great relationship between men and nature, which is very instinct. Kalidasa is not only showing natural object in Ritusamara but also other works, thus he is an ecological poet like William Wordsworth. In briefly as we can say that, in *Rtusamhara* the Poet has described different type of seasons, which is based on naturally beauty as plants, flowers and trees, its is delineate of an ecological aspects. "Intoxicating winds, cooled/By the hovering clouds laden with moisture/Blow through the jungles/Full of kadamba, sarja, arjuna and ketaki. The scent of their flowers/The shivering trees lend them/Who says in different"? (Ritusamharam 2.17) (Tandon 20). "When it rains, for their coiffures/When thread garlands of fresh kesara/Ketaki and kadamba flowers./With kakubh flowers/When it rains, they make, after their fancy/Ear tops, so beautiful" (Ritusamharam 2.21) (Tandon 21). Thus, Kalidasa's *Rtusamhara* is very significance literary text through the nature and culture. "Ecocriticism takes as its subject the interconnections between nature and culture, specifically the cultural artifacts of language and literature. As a critical stance, it has one foot in literature and the other on land; as a theoretical discourse, it negotiates between the human and the non-human" (Glotfelty and Fromm XIX).

Kalidasa also describes how fresh buds of juhi, jasmine, maulashri and kadamba were used to weave garlands by the rainy season for its beloved, the earth (Ritusamharam 2.25). He writes how black bees suck the oozing honey from kachnar, the Indian orchid, while its abundant blooms sway in the mild autumn breeze (Ritusamharam 3.6) (Tandon

21). (Overpowered by passion/Their fair breasts/The sensuous women anoint/With a paste of musk/Priyangu flowers and saffron) (Ritusamharam 6.14) (Tandon 21)

There are various elements of Kalidasa's *Rtusamhara* which are based on ecological, it's are effective on nature and culture such as people are enjoying with summer season in nights by Moon, *Saras Chandan*(Witty sandalwood)cool air, shade of tree, people are devote to trees etc. "Nature is an interacting process, a seamless web and that nature is responsive to laws that it constitutes a value system with intrinsic opportunities and constraints upon human issues" (Glotfelty and Fromm 118). On the other side in rainy season, every corner are seems to green shade, people are bathing, lovers are exciting for beloved. In the autumn season Poet described about to birds are twitters, wild animals running for green grass, crops are brewing in the farms, unlike people are drinking of wine. In the fourth Cantos poet described to beauty of nature throw plants, flowers, trees, animals, birds, rivers and mountain. In the second last season Kalidasa described about to women are loves to man. In the last season the Poet say that women are feeling sensual pleasure, in this season days and nights are provided pleasure. These all the elements of ecocriticism are represents to eco-aesthetics, social-ecology, natural ethics and eco-spirituality.

Kalidasa not only in his *Rtusamhara* but also in his all literary works have described about to beauty of nature. According to his literary works, as we can say that Kalidasa not only a spiritual poet but also an ecological poet. Kalidasa has defined all the aspect of ecological concerns in his poetry. *Rtusamhara* is the first literary work of Kalidasa, which is emerge of six seasons, from every aspect of the nature. Thus he has been called the naturalist poet. He was belonged to 5th century AD (Keith 145); his all literary works are based on human ethical value. All the ecological elements of social, nature-culture, plants, trees, birds, animals, and flowers etc. are parts of *Rtusamhara*, which are represents to ecological thus Kalidasa has description beauty of nature by his literary works: "Daidens now adorn their heads/With chaplets of fresh-woven blooms/Of kadamba, bakula and ketaki/And design the trinkets, at will, for the ear/With tassels of kakubha blossoms" (Pandit 39). Kalidasa has try to establishment of relationship between human and nature, where all his creations are proof to analysis. Thus, all the elements of ecocritical theory are well evinced in *Rtusamhara*.

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