

Monsoon, Geography, and Existentialism in Kālidāsa's *Meghadūta*

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Abstract:

Human existence in isolation is a great challenge. Morbid and depressingly suicidal are the experiences, when there is a narrow confinement without the human voice and human contact. It is claustrophobic like a lone presence in a cathedra. However, man in alienation with a green contact is a possibility to foil the anxiety. His presence in the widening circle of a green Nature is a remedial therapy to sick mentality. A meditative silent intercourse amidst the green hues is a healthy tonic to neutralise the contemporary ills resulting in the din and bustle of life. She can neither talk more walk, but her immobility can hear the human voices, feel the agonies of his or her heart, and miraculously support him or her to ease the pain he is suffering from. In this context, the paper attempts to make a green study of Kālidāsa *Meghadūtam*, where *Megha* or the cloud, in sky in early Āṣādhā in the month of mid-June to mid-July with a tremendous aerial traverse from Southern hemisphere in Northern hemisphere having extra ordinarily supernatural skill coupled with masculine potency helps overcome the existential crisis of a demi-god, Yakṣa who is awfully punished to stay in isolation on the Rāmagiri mountain of Earth for a period of one year, from his newly married wife Yakṣiṇī. As a classic of world literature, Kālidāsa's *Meghadūttam*, a long elegiac narrative poem, in the way of ancient story-telling method has tried to redefine the problem of existential dilemma by revisiting the age-old story of *Brahmavaibarta Purāṇa*, where Lord Krishan was narrating the importance of *Āṣādhā Kṛṣṇa Yoginī Ekādaśī* to king Yudhiṣṭhira of Hastināpura small episode of love-separation-union in the larger dimension of a grand narrative. Cloud vegetates, copulates like a sexually potent force, creates fertility and carries the love-message of a lover on Earth to Alakāpurī on Himālaya, proving at last a faithful servant for a cursed man Yakṣa (Hemamāli) and his virtuous wife Yakṣiṇī (Viśālākṣī). The wonderful geographical route of cloud or Megha as a carrier of love-message from Rāmagiri to Alakā is a retelling of the fact that mankind is sustained by weaving a close organic interdependence between the green Nature and human beings, through a network of ecology.

Keywords: Existential Crisis, Elegiac Narrative, *Brahmavaibarta Purāṇa*, Green Study, Ecology

1. Introduction

The paper has attempted to resolve a great existential dilemma of living in utter isolation when someone is supposed to enjoy the conjugal pleasure with one's newly married wife. The victim is destined to suffer from curse on a lone mountain, exactly for a period of one year. He has shrunk and

emaciated due to depression. The actual identity of the victim is Yakṣa, the servitor of Lord Kuvera, the God of wealth at Alakāpurī of Kailāsa *parvata*. Once for the dereliction of his duty, he has been cursed to live on earth on Rāmagiri Mountain. It is mostly uncongenial and seems to be a fish out of water. Yakṣa, the demi-god, as a servant of Lord Kuvera was bringing lotus every day for Kuvera, who offered it to Lord Śiva. But one day after plucking it from Mānasa Sarovara, he offered it to his newly married wife Viśālākṣī, instead of Kuvera who cursed him out of anger. The whole content is an excerpt from *Brahmavaibarta Purāṇa* and given a new dimension in *Meghadūtam* by poet and playwright Kālidāsa, an unparalleled classic of Indian literature, absorbing the readers with an illusion of love, romance and eroticism and equally by opening the avenues for the existential crisis as the challenging issues for the time. Kālidāsa has adapted the original myth with the lull of a romance to our contemporary world where the lovers in utter frustration unable to finding appropriate solution leap to commit suicide as an escape from this depression and anxiety. Kālidāsa has a superbly well-thought-out situation and keeps the reader immersed in pleasure by diverting the whole incident to an imaginary or unreal situation where Megha or cloud in early Aṣādhā is personified to be a messenger of love-tiding from Yakṣa to Yakṣiṇī through the magic of cloud's route of Indian geography in early monsoon from Southern to Northern. This way, Kālidāsa wants to say man anywhere on earth is not alone. The surrounding environment, with flora and fauna, the atmosphere with all the non-earthly ethereal bodies, is sufficient enough to dilute the anxiety that is overpowering a man in utter isolation. The green environment, the sky and the atmosphere above are the props to retaliate the sorrows that haunt a man in alienation.

To be exonerated from this curse of alienation, Lord Krishna is narrating to king Yudhiṣṭhira of Pāṇḍavas that by observing the hard penance of *Yoginī Ekādaśī* of *Aṣādhā Kṛṣṇa*- a difficult task for the people in busy schedule in our society except by a few Vaishnavites or spiritually inspired men, Yakṣa got liberated and was blessed to be united with his wife. *Ekadashi Brata* in Indian Culture, observed two times in a month in two fortnights with strictest measure is a step to be united with Lord Vishnu. However, this is not the way to overcome the depression resulting out of alienation. Thus Kālidāsa by his own creativity revisiting the same myth has oriented it to a new finish with a long lyrical elegy of two parts, impersonating cloud or megha with all the miraculous probabilities to carry out the agonising appeals of transferring Yakṣa's emotions from his bereaved heart to his repining wife at Alakā, who too is equally depressed. Thus he exists in struggle and finds the solution. Love that sustains and helps overcome the depression is really the mystery of love.

Many legends are heard about the true identity of Kālidāsa as a famous Indian classic. He was blessed by goddess Sarasvatī and himself prayed Goddess Kali for achieving Poetic excellence. Many controversies are raised about the exact date of his birth and the true Kālidāsa- Kālidāsa during Bhoja's time (1005-1054); Kālidāsa during Chandra Gupta Vikramāditya of 5th century; Kālidāsa during the period of astrologer Barāhamihira of 6th century and finally Kālidāsa as one of nine gems among the Vikramāditya of 1st century B.C. However the instances in his famous play *Abhijñānaśākuntalam* prove that he belonged to the 6th century of Gupta dynasty. Many instances of his text assert that he belonged to the period of king Vikramāditya of Ujjayinī. Similar is the controversy relating to his birth place. Many references to Ujjayinī in his works bring conclusion to the debates and prove Ujjayinī to be his birth place.

He belonged to the Shaivite Sect in his religious ideology. In his creativity, he relates human heart to feel the sensibilities of the inert body. He represents the perfect Aryan culture. There is an organic resemblance between Aryan Culture and Kālidāsa. The beauty of external nature is vividly exhibited from different corners in almost all his major works, but it speaks no less about the human psychology. He has perceived the subtle connections between nature and the human beings. Basically, his works were the exercise of *Rasa* theory, particularly *Śṛṅgāra* (erotic), *Karuṇa* (pathos), *Śānta* (calmness) and *Adbhūta* (wonder)

His fame chiefly rests upon his seven immortal works: three dramas, two epics, one long elegy and one descriptive poem. They are *Malavikāgnimitram*, *Vikramorvaśīyam*, *Abhijñānaśākuntalam*, *Raghuvamśam*, *Kumārsambhavam*, *Rtusamhāra* and *Meghadūtam*. Among all these, his play *Abhijñānaśākuntalam* brought him the world-wide recognition, though *Meghadūtam* was a world classic of elegiac romance of long narrative poetry, devoted to 118 *ślokas*.

***Meghadūtam* in brief**

The paper has primarily focused upon *Meghadūtam*. In form, *Meghadūtam* is a *Khaṇḍakāvya* or lyric. It has been divided into two parts- *Pūrvamegha* and *Uttarmegha*. The lead characters are here Yakṣa and Yakṣiṇī. Yakṣa, the hero, is actively involving the cloud or megha to carry away his love-tiding through chartered routes as the route of megha in sky to his beloved wife at Alakā of Himālaya. Yakṣiṇī has no voice, but the whole content is targeted at her as the sole purpose or destination. In fact, the Megha is the real hero in materializing the desire of Yakṣa, as a catalyst of love. The newly married Yakṣa lives in separation from his wife Yakṣiṇī on Rāmagiri Mountain. Desire of unfulfilled physical enjoyment as “*vipralambhaśṛṅgāra*” (love without attachment) is the actual essence of love dramatized here. This is purely a *śṛṅgārarasa*- based lyric (erotic suffused). Of it, there is no fusion, but pleasure in fission. Kālidāsa has accentuated the matter with the science of geography. The consequent reflex of this suspense ridden love is a mental agony or depression which invites a great existential question.

Existentialism in past in Indian Context

Indian myth is replete with many instances of Existentialism. A world-wide, all time glowing example across the globe is cited from the *Bhīṣma Parva* of *Mahābhārata*, where Lord Krishna in Kurukṣetra battle-field tried best to free the mind of Arjuna from acute depression with a visionary rational deliberation by putting an end to Arjuna's all existential queries and doubts, relating to the meaning of this body and soul, *karma*, *jñāna* & *bhakti*, and finally existence of God and ways to renounce the world by achieving salvation or *mokṣa*. Depression has weakened his body to fight against the Kauravas. Arjuna experiences all the ominous signs before the start of war and is determined to desist from the bloody fight against his relatives. Thus he says in *śloka* 29-30 of *Arjunaviśādayoga* of *Bhagabat Gītā*.

sīdanti mama gātrāṇi mukhaṃ ca pariśuṣyati /

vepathuśca śarīre me romaharṣaśca jāyate //

gāṇḍīvaṃ sraṃsate hastāttvakcaiva paridahyate /

na ca śaknomyavasthātum bhramatīva ca me manah ||

Translated as:

[Feeling weakness in my limbs, seeing the relatives; My face getting parched, tremor is in my body; Bows falling off the hand, burning sensation caused in skin; Feeling dizzy in my mind, not even able to stand.]

Lord Krishna as the *Sārathi* of the Chariot cleanses all his multiple doubts, fortifying his mind to fight against his relatives, kith and kin and his mentor, *Guru Droṇācārya*. Thus he surrenders before Lord Krishna as humble and obedient *Śiṣya*, egoless and inquisitive to learn. He thus instills in him a more metaphysical and transcendental in *śloka* 22 of *Sāṃkhya Yoga* of *Bhagavadgītā*:

vāsāṃsi jīrṇāni yathā vihāya navāni gṛhṇāti naro'parāṇi |

tathā śarīrāṇi vihāya jīrṇā-nyanyāni saṃyāti navāni dehī ||

Translated as:

[As man leaving old clothes, putting on new and fresh so also, the soul discarding the old body, accepts the new body.]

The essence of human existence is that man is to die, leaving this skin as worn-out clothes and to be reborn with another body. However, the soul in him is freed after the death that is unburnt, unkillable, uncut, and unable to be drifted away by air.

He is destined to do the work, not to be worried about the fruits of action. He is to fight relentlessly as a dispassionate involvement with life. God liberates and exonerates from the entire sins of all his life. This is the promised truth of existentialism in Indian context. Thus Lord Krishna in *Śloka*-66 of *Mokṣa Yoga* says:

sarvadharmānparityajya māmekaṃ śaraṇaṃ vraja.

ahaṃ tvā sarvāpāpēbhyō mōkṣayiṣyāmi mā śucaḥ ||

Translated as:

[Surrender me completely, forsaking all religions, or all works Pray me, I shall exonerate you from all sins.]

Yakṣa's depression in *Meghadūtam* subsides the moment he is able to recognize the 'Puṣkara Cloud' in early Aṣādhā as anthropomorphic discordance of a heavenly body, 'Megha' that is used as the whole agent of cloud- machinery of Lord Indra. Yakṣa seems to be surrendering before the superlunary cloud as Arjuna surrendered before Lord Krishna for overcoming the doubts of human existence. Thus he admires the cloud that he belonged to the highest genealogy of clouds family as '*Puṣkarāvartakānām*' whom Lord Indra always used in what so ever way he liked to utilize. It will thus not be an act of misdemeanour if he prayed such a dignified personality even though his prayer resulted

the reverse of expectation. Thus he finds his own existence of living an exalted life overcoming the year's anxiety by surrendering at the feet of Megha, which is understood in Yakṣa' as supplication:

jātaṃ vaṃśe bhuvanavidite puṣkarāvartakānām

jānāmi tvāṃ prakṛtipuruṣaṃ kāmarūpaṃ maghonaḥ /

tenārthitvaṃ tvayi vidhivaśād dūrabandhurgato'haṃ

yācñā moghā varamadhiguṇe nādhame labdhakāmā ||1.6 ||

Translated as: [I know you hail from the family of 'puṣkarāvartaka' of cloud genealogy that is famous world wide

You are the important male agent of Lord Indra

You do whatsoever you wish to do

Misfortune has distanced me from my wife at Alakā

Thus knowing your family, I don't know think

It to be a mean affairs if I pray you

Rather it will be a mean affair to pray

A person of low cadre despite the success the prayer gives]

Existentialism in European Context

Existentialism in European context is an aftermath of II World War. It came up as a philosophical movement in the European continent, immediately after World War II. The writers such as Martin Heidegger, Dostoevsky, Jean-Paul Sartre, Friedrich Nietzsche, Soren Kierkegaard, Albert Camus, Franz Kafka, Simon de-Beauvoir are considered to be the chief practitioners of existentialism. Its origin can be traced back to Danish theologian Soren Kierkegaard and Friedrich Nietzsche. They all emphasize the lived experience of an individual. It is a protest or revolt against the traditional canons of philosophy. A shift from God to man is European existentialism however in Indian context it is vice versa. Though existentialists differed in their opinion but coincided in one point. They all emphasized the state of existing or existence of being. Existence is a concrete fact. Man exists first. Hence, Jean-Paul Sartre called 'existence precedes essence'. This is the greatest human reality. Heidegger spoke the being that exists is man. Man alone exists; the Rocks are, but they don't exist; Trees are, but they don't exist; Horses are, but they don't exist; Angles are, but they don't exist; God is, but he does not exist. Only thing that exists is man. Human existence is fallen and human being is to live in suffering and sin, guilt and anxiety. The clue to the human condition lies in the experience of suffering anguish. Olson the existential critic writes, explaining Heidegger's 'Dasein': 'Man is the being who is immediately present in the world and who must live out his life in and through his inseparable relation to the World'. Sartre

and Heidegger are two prominent figures of European existentialism. When one represented French school of thought, another represented the German School of thought.

Sartre was basically a soldier who was captured in Hitler's concentration camp. He came back to France and joined the Resistance Movement. His Philosophy and literature is the product of self-experience. During his period of improvement, he read Heidegger's *Being and Time* which inspired him to write *being and Nothingness*. Freedom is the key idea of his existence. Man is free to choose. Man is free to choose whether he will extinguish his own being or keep it alive. There for, freedom itself is being. From Sartre's point of view act of suicide and overcoming the motivation of suicide is individual's freedom of choice. Yakṣa's choice of keeping Megha as *dūtta* (messenger) as an escape from anxiety, not to die in anxiety is his freedom of choice.

Green Study: An approach

The paper has attempted a green study of Kālidāsa's *Meghadūtam* in finding the appropriate solution to the greatest existential question whether one can achieve the metaphysical transcendence that has been restricted for a cursed man like Yakṣa who was once, punished by Lord Kuvera to live at Alakāpurī of Lord Śiva's dwelling place. Assuming 'Megha' as important male agent with the identity of '*puṣkarāvartaka*,' Kālidāsa personifies the entire nature with its rivers and mountains as feminine and masculine, where the 'being' in existential identity exists in all pervasive nature to speak out 'you're your inner voice' and liberates the imprisoned self in anxiety.

Green study as a literary discourse is connected with ecology- the interdependencies between the life in any form-man or animal and the immediate surrounding studying this inseparable shared relationship between human beings and the green environment has led to the emergence of recent critical canon of contemporary criticism as 'eco-criticism'.

In *Meghadūtam*, megha or cloud's physical involvement with rivers, mountains and the green pastoral surrounding, the nature's environment through the emotional appeal of Yakṣa, is sufficient enough to suggest the benefits of green study as a probing for further research as human sustenance, not annihilation.

Mysteries of Love

Since the mythic era, go-between in love is a common factor between the lover and the beloved. The go-between or the mediator is a catalyst of love, without being involved in love. His or her role is to accelerate love. The mediator carries the message of love from male body to female body and vice versa. Normally, the mediator is a human body who can communicate to each other the feelings treasured in their hearts. However, the case is diametrically opposite in *Meghadūtam* where the messenger of love is an inert body, called megha or cloud. It is impossible how can cloud act as a go-between both for Yakṣa and Yakṣiṇī who are physically detached from each other with countless distances-Rāmagiri on Vindhya mountain and Alakā on Himālaya. The mystery of love is a paradox. Distance has intensified love more than in closeness. Yakṣa has chosen 'puskara cloud' of the cloud-species as '*puruṣa*' who can change shapes as he wishes. This genealogy of cloud was used as the important agent of Lord Indira in Indian mythology for performing all kinds of miracles as to his desire. Kālidāsa might have reminded of

Lord Hanuman's miracle as go-between of love between Rama and Sita when the latter was isolated to be living at Aśoka forest of Lanka in *Rāmāyaṇa* during *Tretayā Yuga*. Like Hanuman combining both animal and human body, traversing the long aerial movement over the sea, is infatuated to see Goddess Sītā. Cloud or Megha with an inert body is scientifically light-winged to fly in air as its body in words of Kālidāsa is composed of 'dhūma, jyoti, Salila, marut' (smoke, fire, water and air) that hints the basic chemistry of cloud much earlier than the advancement of science in modern age. It is mysterious how can cloud comprehend the feelings of Yakṣa and be able to transfer each other's emotions and sentiments to Yakṣiṇī who was lamenting Yakṣa in separation.

This rational sense becomes lost in lover under acute sexual starvation. He is unable to differentiate between inert and a life body what Kālidāsa speaks in *Śloka* – 5:

kāmārtā hi prakṛtikṛpaṇāścetanācetanēsu ||1.5 ||

Translated as

[Lovers in intoxication of sex are blind to differentiate the inert and the life.]

Lovers, mad about sex are unable to see as the blind since birth is lost of vision cloud or Megha impersonated with the spirit of a human body at a later stage by the sheer creativity of Kālidāsa has been able to play many miracles such as cloud as a lover in the act of fornication with rivers impersonated as sexiting female body like Nirvindhya or Narmadā etc. Sexual urge of a lover under starvation is vicariously satisfied through Megha as purush in his aerial movement touching the rivers and mountains as feminine body. The cloud-route are too the key-geographical zones where the magic of love is spurred when the monsoon cloud is activated, surcharged with the movement of south wind towards North.

Kālidāsa's rich sense of Indian Geography in Meghadūtam- Cloude's route from Rāmagiri to Alakāpurī

Yakṣa now suggests route-map to cloud or Megha to reach at his desired place, Alakā in transporting the message of his heart to his bereaved wife as a relish of his sringar or unbridled erotic desire. Thus cloud is accordingly passing through 26 important geographical places such as villages, cities, rivers, mountains, plateaus and ponds etc. having the intricate blending of myth, history and eroticism, where he is passionately indulged in the alternate self of Yakṣa. Cloud-route as planned in Kālidāsa's creative imagination with a rich sense of Indian environmental ecology and geography can be graphically presented as a flowchart:

Rāmagiri—Māladeśa--- Āmrakuṭa—Revānadī--- Vindhyaśāla--- Daśārṇṇa--- Vidiśā Parvata (Mountain)--- Vetravatī River (Revāriver)---Niciḥ mountain--- Nirvindhya river--- Ujjayinī city—Avanti deśa--- Sīprā river--- Gambhīrā river—Dabagiri mountain---Charmanvatī river—Daśapura—Kurukṣetra—Brahmavarta river—Sarasvatī river—Kanakhala--- Himālaya mountain---Krauñcha mountain--- Kailāsa mount--- Mānasa sarovar---Alakā city.

When there was no meteorology, nor cartography, nor any rich climate study, 'Kālidāsa', geographical sensibility about the cloud movement during seasonal monsoon from South to North was a

sheer proof of his far reaching vision and intuition that surpassed the recent development in weather study.

The spirit and flavour of early monsoon as sensed in Indian climate has its best expression in *śloka* 10 of *Pūrba Megha Section of Meghadūtam* when cloud after Yakṣa's prayer sets out its Northward journey, smoothly drifted in air by the favourable mild-stroke of south-west monsoon. Thus Kālidāsa writes in *śloka* 10:

*mandaṃ mandaṃ nudati pavanaścānukūlo yathā tvāṃ
vāmaścāyaṃ nadati madhuraṃ cātakaste sagandhaḥ /
garbhādhānakṣaṇaparicayānnūnamābaddhamālāḥ
seviṣyante nayanasubhagaṃ khe bhavantaṃ balākāḥ //1.10 //*

Translated by Arthur William Ryder as:

[While favouring breezes waft the gently forth,
And while upon thy left the plover sings
His proud, sweet song, the cranes who know thy worth
Will meet thee in the sky on joyful wings
And for delights anticipated join their rings.] (p.197)

According to *Śakuna Śāstra* of Indian ethics, if someone by accident notices cātaka (swallow) *pakṣī* (bird) on the left side at the outset of journey, it is more auspicious. Its singing is equally more promising. Further monsoon rain induces mating desire among the swans who are gathered to fly in parallel with the cloud's movement in air till Mānasa sarovar of Himālaya, the end point of cloud's journey. This way, swans by giving company to the duty-bound cloud as love-messenger will mitigate the pain due to vast expanse of journey from Rāmagiri to Alakā. In between, Yakṣa's cursed-period of eight months is over and the remaining four months of cloud journey will bring a promise of reunion if the love-tiding from Yakṣa is properly communicated to his love-lorn sweet heart at Alakā. In it, there is the working of common Indian geography that clearly demarcates monsoon cloud is active for four months that vegetates the earth with green hues and finally becomes weaker on reaching the Alakā of Northern Himālayan region.

From Rāmagiri, cloud straight moves to Maladesh (high mountain plateau), enamoured by the innocent beauties of country women as farmer, with the real smell of Earth's fresh- ploughing on the corn-field. Thus Kālidāsa speaks in *sloka*-16

*tvayyāyattaṃ kṛṣiphalamiti bhrūvikārānabhijñaiḥ
prītisnigdhairjanapadavadhūlocanaiḥ pīyamānaḥ /*

sadyaḥsīrotkaṣaṇasurabhi kṣetramāruhya mālaṃ

kimcitpaścād vraja laghugatirbhūya evottareṇa ||

Translated as: [*Fruit of agriculture under thy control*

Artless farmer's wife give thee a glance

Rain thy on Mala to produce

Smell of earth after fresh-plough

O! light winged cloud, thereafter

Go straight northward.]

Indian culture is here united with Indian geography. It speaks the fruit of agriculture is under the control of rain what Lord Krishna in *Bhagabad Gītā* speaks in *karma Yoga śloka* 14 in his exhortation to Arjuna as :

annādbhavanti bhūtāni parjanyaḍannasambhava: |

yajñādbhavati parjanyo yajña: karmasamudbhava: ||

(All men come out of rice and rice alternately originates from rain) (p-65)

This way cloud is suggested by Yakṣa to rain on this mountain plateau to create the smell of fresh-plough and to go straight North ward to hover on Āmrakūṭa or Amarkaṇṭaka. After raining on arid Āmrakūṭa to vegetate the mango trees on top of it, cloud becomes slow and light bellied. It quickly moves to the bottom of Vindhya mountain where river Reba or Narmada flows. Vindhya in Indian geography separates Hindustan proper from the Deccan and forms the Southern limit of Madhyapradesh. The Southern boundary of this region is called Āryabhūmi or Āryāvṛata. Kālidāsa's rich sense of geography is interlinked with history and myth.

In Indian geography, Vindhya is one of the Seven Principal ranges or mountains, called 'Kulaparvatas'. It extends almost from the Eastern to the Western Sea and the highest part of the range deviates a little from the line of tropic. The mountainous tract spreads so widely that it meets river Ganges in several places towards the North and river Godavari is considered to be its Southern limit. Etymologically, Vindhya in Sanskrit aims to arrest the progress of sun. However, the course of the Narmada river indicates the direction of Vindhya hills.

Research excavates the story of *Meghadūtā*'s love and romance is forged with Geography, History, Myth and finally *Kamasūtra* (Sex-ethics). The Super-humanised empty-bellied cloud now departs Vindhya region by drinking the elephant- bathed fragrant water and black-berry cleansed water of river Narmada.

On its journey to Alakā, cloud or Megha now passes through the villages of Daśārṇa, the old name of recent Chhatisgarh in Indian history, whose capital city is Vidiśā. Daśārṇa is too a river,

emerged from Vindhya and passes through these villages. Village fences girdled with ketakī (screw-pine flowers) await the monsoon cloud to be blossomed. Further ripe black berries by this cloud-touch make this place purple coloured. Birds too wait megha to prepare nest among the fences and swans will stay arrested for few days at the advent of rain. Spurred by the fragrance emanating from the Daśārṇṇa-region, cloud now moves to Vidisha where flows Vetravatī river to induce the thirst in cloud. Thereon, the thirst being quenched, cloud then moves to take rest on Nicei mountain of Vidiśā city that reeks with the prostitute's aromatic flavour to entice licentious young fellows for sexual act.

Yakṣa now suggests to take a bend on its straight course to Alakā and have a visit to the city of Ujjayinī. There, the cloud can take the charm of hovering over the sky-kissing palaces of Ujjayinī. It is situated towards the eastern side of Nirvindhyā river that emerges out of Vindhya. River Siprā is too passing near this Ujjayinī city, whose capital city is Avanti. It is famous for being the residence of king Vikramāditya. It is too one of the seven sacred cities of India, visited by pilgrims. Indian geographers and astronomers calculate their longitude from this city, considering it to be their first meridian. The modern Ujjayinī is around a mile distance from the south of the ancient city. However the Indian myth believes heavenly people with the decline of their virtues in heaven are destined to be born at Ujjayinī, another alternate of heaven on earth, for the completion of rest of the virtues. Thus Kālidāsa writes (Śloka-32):

*prāpyāvantīnūdayanakathākovidaग्रामावृद्धान्
pūrvoddiṣṭāmupasara purīm śrīviśālām viśālām ।
svalpībhūte sucaritaphale svargīnām gām gatānām
śeṣaiḥ puṇyairhr̥tamiva divaḥ kāntimatkhaṇḍamekam ॥1.31 ॥*

Translated as: [Virtues declining heaven- dwellers

Destined to be born on Earth's Ujjayinī

A bright prosperous alternate of heaven

To enjoy the rest of the virtues.]

Cloud must visit Avantika, the capital city of Ujjayinī, this legendary place or else the purpose of his journey is not accomplished. The geography behind the place Avantika that it is situated towards the north of river Narmadā as per Indian geography. It is 900 miles in circumference. The king of Vatsa country, called Vatsarāja, the prince of Lunar race ruled here. The Capital of Vatsa country was Kauśāmbi, Kosam, the modern name, situated on river Yamuna and about 30 miles above Allahabad. Kauśāmbi was once a celebrated city in ancient India.

Landing upon the famous river Siprā of Ujjayinī, Yakṣa is further directing cloud to visit Mahākāleśvara temple of Ujjayinī near river Gandhavatya where cloud can feel the purity of the place added with the fragrance in cool air. Ujjayinī can cater the pleasure both sensual and metaphysical. Soon after, cloud moves towards river Gambhīrā, where cloud will see the reflection of its own boy on the

transparent water of the river like a man's entry into the heart of woman through the mind's gate. It seems to be a rare fusion in bringing an ease to a fatigued cloud, though the sense of geography is suspended for a while to speak about Nature's rarest mating. Consequently, the appeased cloud will outpour the rain, resulting cool breeze which will further drift him to Devagiri, situated towards the South of Chambal in the province of Malwa, as per geography. This is the place where Kārtikeya or Skanda lives according to Indian myth (*tatraskandam niyatavasatih*). By persistent thundering on this place, cloud will equally please the peacock to dance here who is supposed to be the bearer of Lord Kartika. This way, cloud will indirectly be the right heir to the grace of Lord Śiva and Pārvati. Peacock dancing by the cloud's thunder is both a fusion of geography and ecology.

Kālidāsa, in describing the cloud-route and suggesting the cloud to follow the exact route to Alakā, has exhibited his scholarly vision in making the lines rich with intricate Indian mythical references. As because Kālidāsa is a Shaivite, many examples relating to Lord Śiva, Pārbati and Skanda are highly a scholarly and spiritual information beneath his artistic recreation. Cloud will thus enter the Charmanvatī river which has been emerged from the blood of cows, that were brutally decimated by king Rantideva of Daśapura. The modern naming of this Charmanvatī is 'Chambal' which has been flowing near Jhansi and Gwalior. Cloud, as light-bellied feeling thirsty will further descend upon the river Charmanvatī to drink water and because of frequent showering upon the different places of the earth. This is as scientific as water-cycle. Now, the heavy-bellied *Puṣkara-cloud* will move to other places. Drifting the sky-route, cloud will pass Daśapura Nagar where richly embellished woman will raise their brows to see the cloud and get elated. The modern naming of Daśapura now-a-days is called 'Dashora' or 'Mandasora' in Indian geography. Thus in course of its journey, it will move towards Brahmabarta, a crowd-area which will further lead him to Kurukṣetra. Brahmabarta in Indian geography experiences relatively a little fall of rain. This is situated in between Sarasvatī and Dṛśadvatī. The middle portion of these two rivers as composed by Lord Brahma is known as Brahmavarta. Sitting upon that place, Brahma composed the creation of this entire universe. Passing through this crowded 'Brahmavarta', cloud will reach Kurukṣetra, the holy place where Kauravas and Pāṇḍavas fought to prove the victory of truth and *Dharma* (religion). Cloud is advised to pass this place like a shadow as it is authenticated in Indian geography that this place experiences a very little rain.

Near Kurukṣetra, another river is passing called Sarasvatī, the most sacred. Here Balarāma of *Dvāpara Yuga* drinking the sacred water of river Sarasvatī was cleansed of his sin of killing a hermit's son. Thus, Cloud on reaching river Sarasvatī with a draught of the same sacred water will be equally purged of all the sins before his entry to Alakāpurī. The heavenly abode of Lord Śiva wants someone to be cleansed of mind and heart before entering Alakāpurī, which is the final destination of his journey. Despite the body-colour of cloud being dark, his essence within the covert of dark-body will be instantly sacred; the moment cloud drinks the pious water of Sarasvatī. Thus Yakṣa says in *śloka* 52

kṛtvā tāsāmadhigamamapāṇi saumya sārāsvatīnām /

antaḥ śuddhastvamapi bhavitā varṇamātreṇa kṛṣṇaḥ //

Translated as:

[Even thou drinking the sacred water of Sarasvatī

Thou body's inside, though appearing dark outside, will be

Cleansed of all sins and turned pure]

Then after crossing Sarasvatī river, a place called Kanakhala mountain, an emergence of Himālaya ,will come on your way where sacred Gaṅgā is supposed to have originated by the hard penance of Bhagiratha, a king of Sagara dynasty. From Kanakhala mountain, Yakṣa advises cloud to proceed straight toward Himālaya, where he will be fortunate to see Gaṅgā because of its long legacy of strange descend to earth and equally a claimant upon the heart of Lord Śiva like goddess Pārbati. Both are at rivalry to win the heart of Lord Śiva. Gaṅgā is thus nestled upon Śiva's head inside the matted hair and Pārbati sits upon the lap of lord Śiva, as dearest to heart. Mere factual geography of cloud's route could have not satisfied the readers and scholars. Kālidāsa raison d'être, has collated the mythic sources into factual details, for which the whole work has turned out to be a savoury of artistic works. By the by, explore into the text reveals many layers of Indian myth are fused into the line. For example, Gaṅgā's legendary descent onto the earth by the prayer of Bhagiratha and exoneration of his ancestral forefathers from the curse of Kapila Muni is a wonderful artistic tapestry of Vālmīki *Rāmāyaṇa*'s "*Vālakāṇḍa*". Its further reference to Gaṅgā and Durgā's ire and jealousy aligned with their kin-contest to become nearer to Lord Śiva speaks a lot about the sexual jealousy in contemporary society between two women for one covetous handsome young man.

In *Śloka* 54, Yakṣa advises megha to keep the back side of his body laid upon the sky and the front part of the body bent upon the transparent water of Gaṅgā to drink water where the elephant's reflection upon the crystal clear water of Gaṅgā is supposed to be a union of rare kind. This is referred to the miraculous mythical episode of Lord Indra's distribution of rain on earth. He depends upon eight-direction lord such as 'Agni', 'Yama', 'Nairuta', 'Varuṇa', 'Vāyu', 'Kuvera' and 'Īśa'. Accordingly, their steeds such 'Airāvata', 'Puṇḍarika', 'Vāmana', 'Añjana', 'Puṣpadanta', 'Sarabhouma' and 'Supratika' are authorized to keep their body back and draw water from the mouth facing east and sprinkle according to their alternate position. Airāvata is unique among those eight directed steeds. Thus a version of Sanskrit goes like this

airāvataḥ puṇḍarika vāmanahkumudoñjanaḥ /

pṣpadantaḥ sarabhouma supratikaścadiggajaḥ //

In a very interesting way Lord Indra's geography distributing water in myth is astrologically a valid reason which the recent meteorology might have questioned its authenticity.

Traversing a long distance from Rāmgiri cloud in complete allegiance to Yakṣa's with the exhibition of multiple characters for rivers and mountains, has reached at last Himālaya. His tiresome journey is at last inflamed with the luxury of aromatic flavour all around Himālaya, due to the presence of musk-deer and cloud is thus supposed to be entertained with an atmosphere of joviality and rest like a son-in-law's hospitality in his god-father's house. In other words, the intensity of monsoon cloud in movement from southern to northern region dies in the cold region of Himālaya. Kālidāsa has given the import of Indian geography, beneath the myth-narrative. Cloud in due course has been able to extinguish the forest fire among the profuse deodar plants in Himālaya caused due to incessant friction. This way, it

helps prevent the burning of yoke, due to forest fire and pacify the anger of eight-footed Sarava deer, who is too capable to defeat the ferocious lion. Cloud will thus gradually reach at a place where a stone has the imprint of lord Śiva. Committed yogis have been able to achieve grace by praying this, Lord Śiva. Cloud is thus advised to move around the stone with devotion for obtaining salvation.

It is no doubt a vindication that beneath the cloud's aerial movement from southern to northern Himālaya region, Yakṣa's existential dilemma is the dilemma of all men in physical bondage which comes to an end with the greater realization of Śiva-cult in the peak of Himālaya.

Cloud is thus advised to reach such a place in Himālaya where he will bow down his head on stone-engraved foot-print of Lord Śiva with the composure of genuflection that promises Śiva devotees in availing Śiva-Loka after death. This is the true meaning of human existence. Thus, Kālidāsa speaks in śloka 58 of *Pūrbamegha*

tatra vyaktaṃ dṛṣṭadi caraṇanyāsamardhendumauleḥ

śaśvat siddhairupacitabaliṃ bhaktinamraḥ parīyāḥ /

yasmin dṛṣṭe karaṇavigamādūrdhvamuddhūtapāpāḥ

kalpiṣyante sthiraṇapadaprāptaye śraddadhānāḥ //

Translated as: [Seeing somewhere in stone-floor Lord Śiva's foot print

Śiva devotees always move around in devotion

On whose sight move to Śiva-Loka after death

on exoneration of all corporeal sins]

This is the underlying motif of Yakṣa narrative

Further cloud in its multiple movements in Himālaya producing sound so sweet as flute sound as mythical Kinnaras' music in Indra's conference at heavenly abode, has been able to achieve the grace of Lord Śiva

Enjoying all the important sights in the vicinity of Himālaya such as Gaṅgā, musk-deer touched aromatic stone, forest fire, Sarabha and stone-engraved Lord Śiva's foot etc, Cloud is advised to go ahead to feel the importance of another mountain, adjacent to Himālaya, known as "*Krauñcarandhra*". This is otherwise known as Swan's door or "*Hamsadvāram*". It was popularly famed since 'Satya Yuga' of Indian myth as Lord Parśurām's *Krauñcarandhra* due to Parśurām's arrow-shot to take revenge upon Śaḥsārjuna, the killer of his father making a hole as removing a clod of soil for entry to Mānasa Sarovar on Kailāsa *Parvata* through this small hole.

Beneath the grandeur of story, minute research into the lines of *Meghadūtam* reveals that Kālidāsa's coining of every word, metaphor and image is a condensed Indian myth where the critic's hammer will bring into focus the multiple ripples of superb thoughts, by side-glancing solutions for the

contemporary predicaments, not mere indulging the readers into the web of aesthetic superficiality of story-telling.

As to direction and supplication of Yakṣa, faithful cloud or Megha has at last reached the Kailāsa *Parvata*, on top of Himālaya, as Lord Śiva's arena, through the hole of Krauñca mountain. Cloud will be enamoured to see the splendour of this pious mountain which is supposed to be the destination of all Śiva devotees. This is sky-touching formidable mountain, white as snow-blanced and sun-reflected and the mirror of heaven's goddesses. This snow-covered Kailāsa *Parvata* seems to be the laughing of tri-eyed Lord Śiva as “*tryambaka*”. Thus, Kālidāsa speaks through the mouth of Yakṣa in *śloka*-61:

tvā cordhvaṃ daśamukhabhujocchvāsitaṣṭaprasṭhasandheḥ

kailāsasya tridaśavanitādarpaṇasyātithiḥ syāḥ /

śṛṅgocchrāyaiḥ kumudaviśadairyo vitatya sthitaḥ khaṃ

rāsībhūtaḥ pratidinamiva tryambakasyāṭṭahāsaḥ //

Translated as: [Standing sky-heighted Kailāsa spreading all around seeming as white as lily And looking like every day's treasured laughter of tri-eyed Śiva.]

This way, cloud containing water-moisture during monsoon looks brightly dark and whose touch on glossy collyrium reaching the silver-white lily coloured Kailāsa looks like the dark drapery around the shoulder of fair Balarāma of Lord Krishna's brother. Further, this snow-blanced whitish Kailāsa looks like the fresh-cut elephant tooth. This sight, worth seeing has to be enjoyed at any cost. This Kailāsa is the place of union between Pārbati and Śiva where Pārbati is boldly moving holding the snake-free braceleted hand of Śiva. To gain the blessings, cloud is advised to become a hardened step with moisture in preparing steps that would help ascend Pārbati towards the peak of *Mañitāta* or jewelled mountain.

Kailāsa *Parvata* is the luxurious sportive ground of the heavenly deities. The celestial damsels will try to imprison the cloud for getting relief from the scorching summer. The hard points of their jewelled bracelets will pierce the cloud-house to discharge water for a cool taste to retaliate the hot summer. Thus, Yakṣa advises cloud to terrorise the heavenly goddess with ear-shattering thunder for quick release from their clutches.

The final identity of cloud is supposed to be the guest of Kailāsa *Parvata*. As the story goes, there is the myth-famed Mānasa Sarovara. In it blooms the golden lotus. Thus, more craving, more flavour, and more drinkable is its water. Consequently, cloud will get a solace to drink its water; Yakṣa rightly directs cloud to drink its water and says:

hemāmbhojaprasavi salilaṃ mānasasyādadānaḥ

kurvan kāmam kṣaṇamukhapaṭaprītimairāvatasya /

dhunvan kalpadrumakisalayānyamśukānīva vātai-

rnānāceṣṭairjaladalalitairnirviṣeṣṭaṃ nagendram || (Śloka-65)

Translated as

[Drinking thus the water of Mānasa Sarovara/ cloud feels to be drinking water from golden pot]

This mountain is specifically the meeting ground of gods and goddesses in heaven and equally sportive rendezvous of celestial deities. Cloud will thus get a chance to enjoy Airāvata Elephant's embellished clothes. Banyan trees abounding in Kailāsa Mountain, overgrown with newly budded leaves will create a sound of tremor being in touch with cloud. Cloud will hence be privileged to enjoy this triple splendour of flavoured- water of Mānasa Sarovara, clothes spread on Airāvata elephant and Banyan trees' leaves tremor.

At last, the long distant aerial journey of Megha from Southern with Yakṣa's love-tiding to Yakṣiṇī at the Northern Himālayan region comes to an end, the moment cloud reaches Alakā. Here, Kālidāsa has humanised Kailāsa as male lover on whose lap-top Alakā has been nestled like a young beloved. The luminous white flow of water from river Gaṅgā of Alakā has been compared to a white saree unconsciously falling off the lady- Alakā's body. It looks like a long-suspended saree, which will be of no obstruction in recognising Alakā- the destination. Further, the lofty mansions of Alakā in touch with snow-white cloud moisture during rain-shower seeming to be a woman lavishly decorated with various ornaments do her tresses intertwined with white ball of cloud-pearls. Life in cloud and mountains with the imagination of a sensuous young lover and beloved are united in one entity of a majestic life beyond their insensate nature. This is no doubt Kālidāsa's superb imagination with the play of words.

Conclusion

The sustained research and study therefore, on cloud as the love-messenger in *Purba-Megha* of *Meghaduttam* through the complex traverse of sensitive spots, with a remarkable importance of Indian geography during 4 months' monsoon from mid-June (early Aṣāḍha) till mid-October, that is, from southern region till the peak of Himālaya reveals ultimately that monsoon cloud has its own natural course to meet the end-point-Himālaya. Beyond the scientific geographical discourse, this is an allegory of human existence. Yakṣa's existential crisis-the research question finds its solution through the cloud-route from southern part of India till Alakā Mountain of the northern peak of India. The research finding is that life has limitless possibilities to explore through pain, pleasure, anxiety, sorrow and above all the endurance to take the brunt of uncertainties which ultimately assures to open the ajar to *Satyam Śivam Sundaram* (=Truth, Divinity and Beauty). Self itself is a journey from the visible outer world like cloud's movement towards the ultimate invisible reality. Thus, it emphasizes the absolute metaphysical union in the void of a long-distance physical separation between agonized two selves- Yakṣa and Yakṣiṇī. The geography of cloud is a mere fake drama of Kālidāsa to emphasize the highest values of human existence through Hindu Shaivite cult.

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