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The Journey through the song of Sanskrit Lyrical Literature

Abstract

Khandakavyas – These are minor poems which have just a fraction of the characteristics of a mahakavya. A poet finds better scope to express his feelings like love, joy, grief, etc in a lyric. Rather than the story part an incident or the feeling is important here. The musical metre, choiceworthy words, novelty of suspense, fertile imagination, tenderness of feelings, the musical harmony of the verses make a lyric most captivating the heart. The lyrical poetry may be broadly classified into a few categories:

- 1) *The erotic type* – *Meghaduta and Ritusamhara of Kalidasa.*
- 2) *Devotional lyric* – *Geethagovinda of Jayadeva and Krishnakarnamruta of Leelashuka.*
- 3) *The Neeti or the didactic* – *Bhartruhari's Shataktraya*
- 4) *The Muktakas* – *Subhashitaratnabhandagara*
- 5) *Anyoktis* – *Anyoktimala of Lakshminarasimha and Jagannatha's Bhaminivilasa.*
- 6) *Vidambana* – *Kalavilasa and Kalavidambana of Kshemendra.*

Key Words: *Lyrics, Kalidasa, Didactic, subhashitas, kavyas, vidambanas, anyoktis*

Introduction to Sanskrit Lyrics:

Meghaduta - The Meghaduta or Cloud Messenger is one of the masterpieces of Indian, indeed world literature. Its 120-odd stanzas, each of four unrhymed lines, were written in the Mandakranta In classical sanskrit literature the Meghaduta is considered as "a priceless lyrical

gem" (Kale). Meghaduta relates the story of a Yaksha (Yakshas are superhuman beings who are the servants of Kubera, the god of wealth- Kubera is also called Yaksheswara -. They guard Kubera's gardens and wealth "Yakshyate Pujiyate iti Yakshaha"), who is living in exile on the mountains of Ramagiri and on seeing a cloud sends a message of his love to his beloved wife, whom he had to leave behind in the city of Alaka. Because the cloud is asked here to bear the important message of love, this lyrical work is titled, the Meghaduta - the cloud messenger.

The very first verse of Meghaduta in which it looks as if each single word was very carefully chosen and aptly used:

**Kashchitkantavirahaguruna svadhikaratpramattaha
Shapenastangamitamahima varshabhogyena bhartuhu
yakshachakre janakatanayasnanapunyodakeshu
snighdhacchayatarushu vasati ramagiryashrameshu II**

"A certain Yaksha banished for a year because of his misdeeds, from his master whose curse deprived him of his supernatural powers, for whom the separation from his beloved was unbearable, made his dwelling among the hermitages on the mountain Ramagiri, whose waters were made holy by the daughter of Janaka by bathing in them and where the trees cast a deep and rich shade."

At the opening of the story, the Yaksha has already spent eight months in banishment and as said earlier is suffering greatly from being separated from his beloved wife, whom he had to leave behind in the city of Alaka. He now sees, on the first of the month of Ashadha, the first month of the rainy season, a big dark cloud hovering near the tips of the mountain. The Yaksha begs this cloud to carry a message of his love to his beloved wife in Alaka. Apart from a couple of verses at the beginning, Meghaduta is made up of the address of the Yaksha to the cloud. Even the fact that a mere cloud is chosen to be the messenger of love here is made deliberately to show the depth of love between the Yaksha and his wife.

Meghaduta is traditionally divided into two parts: the Purvamegha and the Uttaramegha. The first part of Meghaduta, called the Purvamegha, is mainly the description of the route which the Yaksha asks the cloud to take to reach Alaka. He describes the landscapes, cities, rivers, and mountains, over which the cloud must pass to reach Alaka. Kalidasa makes the scenery

come alive by his description of the nature and of the life led in these cities. Trees, flowers, birds, animals play roles equally important as the human beings dwelling there in making these places beautiful and immortal. The cloud is implored to visit the mountain Amarakuta (Amarakantaka), to soar over the heights of the Vindhya range, to greet the river Narmada, to stop at the capital city Vidisha and after tasting the waters of the river Vetavati (Vetravati) to rest on the hills of Nishada, and so on. He is asked to pause and rest on the mountains whenever he is tired and to drink water from the fine rivers whenever he is worn out (# 13). That love is the main theme of Meghaduta is stressed by dwelling on descriptions of the play between the cloud and the rivers, the cloud and the birds like Krouncha, the cloud and the flowers like Lotus, and ofcourse, the cloud and the many lovely girls it would meet on the way. In this section there is a beautiful poem, really, a lyrical miniature painting. It says:

**Vishrantaha sanvrajaha vananaditirajatani sincha
nudyananam navajalakaneiryuthikajalakani
gandasvedapanayanarujaklantanakarnotpalanam
chayadanatkshanaparichitaha pushpalavimukhanam**

"After having rested, continue further, sprinkling drops of fresh water on the buds of jasmines in the gardens lining the banks of the river Vananadi, there coming into contact, atleast for a moment, by giving shade, with the faces of the girls who are plucking the jasmine buds, the lotus flowers in whose ears are fading away because they are getting injured when the girls accidentally touch them, while they brush the drops of perspiration from their cheeks "

In the second section of Meghaduta, called the Uttaramegha, the Yaksha describes to the cloud, his beloved city of Alaka. The city is called Alaka because of its grandeur. It is also called Vasundhara. He pictures a city where normally no sorrow is known and where tears flow only for joy, where grief comes only because of separation from a beloved one and where separation is caused only because of love-quarrels. He talks of a city whose mansions are rinsed by the moonlight shed by the brows of Shiva, whose home is a grove lying outside Alaka -"Bahyodyana Sthithaharashirachandrikabhowtaharmya". The verse 64 in which the Yaksha talks of a city where the mansions are comparable to the majesty of the cloud itself is a tribute to Kalidasa's power of finding similes. It says:

**Vidyutvantam lalitavanita sendrachapam sachitaha
sangitaya prahatamurajaha snigdha gambahiraghosham**

**antastoyam manimayabhuvastangamabhramlihagraha
prasadastvam tulayitumalam yatra staistairvisheshaihi**

"Where (in Alaka) the mansions are your equals (because) you have your flashing lightning and they have their women who shine with their personal charm, you have your rainbows and they have their paintings, you have your deep and soothing thunder and they have drums beating for dance and music, you are made up of water and they with floors inlaid with gems, you tower high in the sky and they raise their roofs to touch the sky."

Ritusamhara - It is highly probable that the work, Ritusamhara, is composed by Kalidasa but this fact cannot be established beyond doubt. It portrays, in a lyrical manner, the six Indian seasons. The Kavya begins with summer and ends with the spring. Even though the poetical artistry in Ritusamhara is not comparable to that of Meghaduta, Kalidasa succeeds here in creating the atmosphere typical of the various seasons, in conveying the pleasures felt in them by human beings, especially by young lovers. Each canto ends with a verse of benediction.

1. The Summer - Grishma-Ritu:

The dominating theme of the entire canto is the burning heat of summer and its effect on human beings and animals. For example, let us look at the verses that describe young lovers: They enjoy the cool nights lit by moon rays on the terraces of the palace. The young women try different methods to rekindle the passion of their men who do not feel any longing because of the heat.

An example: Verse I. 3 Suvaasitam harmyatalam manoooharam

**Priyaamukhoocchavaasavikampitam madhu
Sutantrigitam madanatsya diipanam
shuchau nishiithe anubhavanti kaaminaha**

At nights, in summer, the lovers enjoy the beautiful and well-scented terrace of the palace, wine stirred by the breath and lips of the loved ones and well-tuned Vina which inflames passion in the heart.

2. The rainy season - Varsha-Ritu:

The thunder rolls, the lighting flashes. Dark clouds hang heavily on the land. The much awaited rain comes. The rivers, muddy and wild, pull down the trees growing on the banks,

and tumble towards the oceans. The peacocks, freed at last from the heat, dance drunkenly. The forests are covered in fresh green. Their newly born life arouses the longings of the people. The women, accompanied by lightening and thunder, hurry to their lovers.

An example: Verse II: 12 Viloochanendiivaravaarivindubhihi

Nishiktavimbaadharachaarupallavaaha

Nirastamaalyaabharanaanulepanaaha

Sthithaa niraashaaha pramadaa pravaasinaam

The wives of wayfarers stand disconsolate with their charming sultry cherrylike lips wetted by tears trickling from their lotus-like eyes and renounce flowers, ornaments and unguents.

3. The Autumn - Sharad-Ritu:

The Autumn enters like a freshly married woman adorned with jewels. Flowers, the Moon, the swans, all are covered in white. Now the rivers are flowing slowly, proud like the young women walking majestically. The sky scattered lightly with thin clouds appears like a king who is being fanned with a white fly-whisk . The Moon tortures the hearts of the lonely women. The gentle breeze moves through the lotus pond and causes confusion in the hearts of the youth.

An example: Verse III. 24 Aasitanayanalakshmmim lakshayitvootpaleshu

Kvanitakanakalakshmmim mattahamsasvaneshu

Adhararuchirashoobhaam bandhujiive priyaanaam

Pathikajana idaaniiim rooditi bhraantachittaha

The travellers lament loudly as they are bewildered by noticing among the lotuses the beauty of the dark eyes of their beloveds, the tinkle of their golden girdle in the sounds of infatuated swans and the gleam of their coral lips in the Bandhujiiva flowers.

4. The early winter - Hemanta-Ritu:

The seeds sprout, the Lodhra has flowered, the rice is ripe for harvesting. But there are no lotuses to be seen. The women have to use something else other than the lotus to adorn

themselves: they use sandalwood paste to paint their faces and to perfume their hair. Fields and ponds stir the heart of the people. The priyangu plant, now that is ripe, is as pale as a lonely woman. The night finds the lovers in tight embrace.

An example: Verse IV. 14 **Anyaa prakaamasurataashramakhinnadehaa**

Raatriprajaagaravipaatalanetradyaa

Stratstaansadeshululitaakulakeshapaashaa

Nidraam prayaati mridusuryakaraabhitaptaa

Another lady, warmed by the gentle sun, sinks into slumber, while her body is exhausted by the passion's play and her lotus-like eyes are faded by the total lack of sleep and her unbraided hair are fallen over her shoulders.

5. The late winter: Shishira-Ritu:

Life has returned to the houses. Bundles of sugar cane and rice cover the floor. The wind has cooled down, snow is falling, and even the moon looks cold. The women, satisfied with their love life, pardon their untrue lovers their mistakes. In the nights the lovers sit drinking wine which excites their passion.

An example: Verse V. 10 **Netreshu looloo madiraalaseshu**

Gandeshu paanduhu kathinaha staneshu

Madhyeshu nimnoo jaghaneshu piinaha

Striinaamanangoo bahudhaa sthitoodhyaha

Love is manifest all over the body of women: restless in eyes, languid with wine, pale in cheeks, deep in waist, plump in their hips.

6. The Spring - Vasanta-Ritu:

The Spring appears as a mighty warrior at the sight of whom the hearts of men tremble. He (Vasanta is considered here to be masculine) beautifies everything- the flowering trees, the water in the ponds. The women adorn themselves with beautiful dresses, flowers, chains of pearls, bangles, and anklets. Even the sweat on their faces looks lovely. Bathing in the presence of their lovers, they are overcome by love. They get rid of their heavy winter clothes, and dress themselves in thin and pale coloured clothes that are perfumed. The cuckoo

kisses its mate, the bee flatters its partner. The flowers on the mango trees fill with longing the hearts of the youth; the flowers of the Kurabaka tree, which look like the face of the beautiful woman, confuse them. The earth covered in a red dress appears like a newly married bride.

An example: Verse VI. 2 **Aamriimanju lamanjariivarasharaha satkimshukam yaddhanur Jyaa yasyaalikulam kalankarahitam chatram sitaamshuhu sitam Mattebhoo malayaanilam parabhuutoo yadnindanoo lookajit Aaam voo vitariitariitu vitanurbhadram vasantaanivataha**

May the bodiless one, the conqueror of the world, accompanied by the Spring season ever grant your happiness, he whose sharp shafts are the beautiful mango blossoms, whose mighty bow is the lovely Kimshuka leaf of which the string is formed by the row of bees, whose spotless white umbrella is the Moon: whose lordly elephant is the breeze from the Malaya mountain and whose bards are the cuckoo birds.

Gathasapthashathi - Gatha Saptasati is a Prakrit work pertaining to second century. The significance of the word 'gatha' in the title is that it is written in the prakrit gaha metre. It occupies a unique place as a lyrical poem in the history of ancient Indian Literature. This is said to have been compiled by the King named Hala, the seventeenth of the 30 Andhra rulers of South India's Deccan tableland. The 700 gathas or verses have been written by several poets, with 44 written by the King himself, and have delicate suggestiveness.

The verses are full of wit and are highly entertaining. They have the liveliness of folk poetry. These depict love between man and woman in various aspects, like search, elation and despair etc. Along with this, these verses describe the scenes from villages, forests, fields, seasons, engagements in work, moments of happiness and grief etc.

The Gathasaptasati is perhaps the oldest extant anthology of poetry from South Asia, containing our very earliest examples of secular verse. The anthology has attracted several learned commentaries. The popularity of the work may be inferred from the fact that it has been widely commented upon. The speakers are mostly women and, whether young or old, married or single, they touch on the subject of sexuality with frankness, sensitivity and, every once in a while, humour, which never ceases to surprise. The Absent Traveller includes an

elegant and stimulating translator's note. The work has the unparalleled speciality in describing the erotic life of a common people in ancient Indian Society.

Shringara Shataka - The *Shringara Shataka* deals mainly with various facets of erotic love; it goes to great lengths to describe nuances of feminine allurements, their behaviour in various stages of sensual arousal.

The importance of the Bhartrihari Shataka is nothing less than Ramayana, Geeta or Mahabharata. This Shataka unites the complex knots of life and directly captivate the human heart. People could feel divine acquiring inspiration from the Shataka. One can seldom find anything comparable to Bhartrihari Shataka, especially with relation to philosophy of life. Bhartrihari was not only a king but was a distinguished scholar, a gifted poet, a philosopher, thinker, and a religious person.

He expressed all those feelings through poetry, which he imbibed through different experiences of life. Technically speaking the art of Bhartrihari's poetry is inexplicable. No amount of discursive writing can ever encompass the uniqueness of style, the benevolence of emotions, the structure of words, and all these sublime factors simultaneously.

Some of the verses from Shringarashataka are quoted here -

**SMITENA BHAVENA CHA LAJJAYA PRIYA
PARANGMUKHAIRARDHAKATAKSHA VIKSHANAIHAI
VACHOMIRIRSHYA KALAHENA
SAMASTA BHAVAIHI KHALU BHANDANAM STRIYAHAI**

Beautiful attractive women, by their blissful smiles, their feelings that exhibit their desire for sensual pleasure by their shyness, their way of looking. Their soft hypnotizing speech, Jealously and art of lovemaking and all their other expressions in form of words bind men to the material and physical world.

**BHRUCHATURYATKUNCHITVAKSHAHA KATAKSHA
SNIGDHA VRACHO LAJJITATANSCHA HASAHA|
LILAMANDAM PRASTHITHAM CHA STITHAM CHA
STRINAMETADA BHUSHAN CHA AYUDHAM CHA|**

The movements of the eyebrows, soft speech, their smile, shyness, elegance and poise in their walk, are all the ornaments as well as the weapons of women.

**KAANTETYUTPALALOCHANETI VIPULA SHRONIBHARETYUTSUKAH
PINOTUNGPAAYODHARETI SUMUKHAANBHOJETI SUBHRURITI| DHRISTVAA
MAADYATI MOHATEABHIRAMATE PRASTAUTI JAANANNAPI
PRATAKSHYAASUCHI PUTRIKAAM STREEYAMAHO MOHASYA
DUSHCHESHTITAM||**

Learned people regard a woman as a statue of impurity. Still such learned people come to rut when they see a pretty woman. Mere sight of an amorous pretty woman causes tremendous joy to these learned people who fall instantly in love with her and appreciate her beauty. They compare her eyes with lotus, her breasts with domes and her eyebrows with the bow of Kamadeva.

Chaura panchashika -

According to tradition, the love-lyric consisting of fifty verses (panchashika), is based on the incident of poet Bilhana himself. The story, perhaps a legend, was that the talented Kashmiri Pandit, Bilhana himself was appointed a tutor to instruct the princess. But, according to the southern recession, the father, in order to safeguard against the possible developments of the young persons of a poetic and romantic bent of mind, resorted to a naïve subterfuge. He told the princess that her tutor was but a terrible leper, and the Pandit was told that his talented disciple was blind and could not see. But the ruse was soon discovered by the Pandit and the princess, and the inevitable happened. Their illicit love was discovered and the Pandit was sentenced to death. When the latter was taken to the gallows amidst thronging crowds of popular sympathizers, and when he was asked to repent of his misdeeds, Bilhana had nothing but the fifty verses to recite, detailing his amours with his beloved, each verse beginning with the refrain, "I still remember her". Needless to say, their effects were electrifying--on the royal father, that is--who not only reprieved the poet but sanctified the lovers' mutual sentiments with marriage.

I still remember that mark of deep nailprints on her thigh anointed with gold-dust and sandal paste; I saw the mark as she got up and I snatched her shining garment; she shyly covered the mark with her hand, as she walked away.

And then I still think of her (sad plight), when, in the white house, the darkness was dispelled by a flood of light from rows of diamond lamps when I was eager to see her face to face, while she turned away her eyes in bashfulness and fear.

I still remember that my beloved, smiling, bowed with the weight of her breasts, her pearls making a white collar around her neck, she, the bright, shining flowery flag on Mandara, the sport-hill of the god of love.

Conclusion:-

Sanskrit lyrical poetry has not produced many works of considerable length. Kalidasa's works are perfect creations of lyrical literature. His lyrical talent has also been manifested in his plays.

However the courts of Ancient India delighted in eloquent speech, words of counsel and ethical and philosophical musings. There is no redundancy of words, brilliant condensation, independent stanzas metrical complexity, compound words and figures of speech, metaphor, simili, allegory, synecdoche, antithesis, hyperbole and the like.

The ornamentation and the three codified gems fragmentary lyric (khanda-kavya), narrative lyric (maha-kavya) and dramatic lyric (darsya-kavya) are not always totally distinct and at times prominent and at times blurred.

Classical Indian lyric poetry may be approached in its own terms focussing on metaphors, images, figures of speech and structures of both verses and longer forms. Lyrical literature will always be a favourite of connoisseurs of literature.

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