

Romantic ecology in Sanskrit literature

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Today, the interest in environmental and ecological awareness is seen spreading its wings to humanities. It embraces literature, art, music, history, religion, philosophy and many branches of knowledge. Environmental humanities is an interdisciplinary area of research, which has been adopted by many scientists. Environment is the natural world or ecosystem. It deals with the surroundings; the mountains, rivers, trees, creepers, birds and the beasts. Ecology is a branch of biology that deals with the relationship of organisms with their environment. This word got coined in the latter half of 19th century from the Greek word '*Oikos*' meaning 'home' This word is cognate with the Sanskrit word *okas* meaning home; compare the word *divaukas* for gods. Romantic is pertaining to an idealised form of love and is conducive to affectionate. Sanskrit dramas and poetry are replete with examples of loving relation of human beings and their surroundings; especially the flora and the fauna. For a focussed study, this paper would deal with only Kālidāsa's works. Himalaya, a pleasure mountain of Śiva and Pārvatī, is white because of the accumulated laughter of Śiva, says Kālidāsa in Meghadūta (1.61). Trees, creepers and flowers come alive in Kālidāsa's sympathetic vision. Śakuntalā bids farewell to her favourite creeper and a fawn with a heavy heart, while leaving for Duṣyanta's palace. (Act 4) In fact a pair of black antelope and a doe is used as a metaphor by Kālidāsa. (Act 6) Environmental awareness of Kālidāsa does not restrict him to mention or describe a variety of trees, flowers, birds, animals, rivers and mountains, but takes him beyond this limit. His poetic genius looks at the surrounding with the third eye of sensitivity, making him empathize with nature and impose human emotions on it.

Keywords: Romantic, Sanskrit, Ecology, Kālidāsa