

## Nature As Subject: Presence in Ṛtusamhāra

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**Abstract:** Among the kāvya poets, Kālidāsa stands out as an unchallenged master in his ability to portray nature. He introduces a vibrant, natural world in his poetry as a part of nature and as a part of humanity. In Ṛtusamhāra pratyakṣam, the seasons indicate such a close association between Nature and human life. The combination of nature and emotion in the plays is considered Kālidāsa's most significant contribution to world literature, grounded in the Indian concepts of nāṭaka (dramatic play) and rasa.

In this paper, I explore the depth and richness of Kālidāsa's nature poetry. This would emphasise the defining nature of each season and its relations to animal life, vegetable growth, and human habits. A research-oriented paper of this kind examines how Kālidāsa portrays nature and the extent to which his portrayal reflects modern environmental thought.

**Keywords:** Kālidāsa, Ṛtusamhāra, Seasons, Nature Imagery, Environmental Consciousness, Ecocriticism, Indian Knowledge Systems

### Introduction

Indian literature is replete with discourse on environmentalism. It was present in the Ṛgveda and the Upaniṣads, and appears to have been a self-evident feature of classical Sanskrit epics and village songs. Kālidāsa stands at the centre of this tradition. The picture itself, we may suppose; — that at least as it is conveyed in his immortal poem the Ṛtusamhāra (collection of seasons) — speaks to us things: those are seen nevertheless invisible lines which knit all seasons together and by unseen miraculous unions are bound fast life's body, and vegetation's living growth, that flower from out the earth, and part of human life. In the information-spread world, too, about environmental pollution, that is a path to total ecocide. Kālidāsa's would be found elsewhere: in the Ṛtusamhāra.

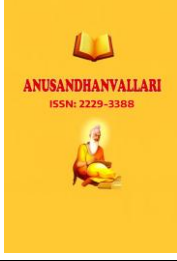
Etymology of the title. The name Ṛtusamhāra is composed of two words, ṛtu – season and samhāra, a representation or imitation of the six seasons. The book comprises six seasons (summer, monsoon, autumn, pre-winter, winter, and spring) and is composed in a superb poetic style. Every season we observe plant life, animal life, human life, and love. The poet's reverence for nature and its harmony is gradually waning and has reached zero in the present era, which is to say that the project is a literary submission as well as a meditation on an extraordinary natural philosophy.

### Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of this study are:

- i. To examine Kālidāsa's representation of nature and the seasonal cycle in *Ṛtusamhāra*.
- ii. To study the six seasons in a backdrop in which the natural environment interacts with that of humanity.
- iii. To investigate and analyse the ecological ideas encoded in Kālidāsa's imagery.
- iv. To determine how *Ṛtusamhāra* should be reinstated to answer contemporary environmental questions, such as climatic alteration, ecological equilibrium, and sustainability.
- v. To uphold *Ṛtusamhāra* as an early example of ecological awareness in Indian classical literature.

### Methodology



The investigation applied a qualitative, textual-analytical approach. The primary source for this research was Kālidāsa's *Rtusamhāra*, in Sanskrit, along with authoritative Bengali and English translations. Specific verses from all six cantos were analysed minutely for the portrayal of the seasons, flora, fauna, feelings of humans, and ecological balance.

Having the responsiveness from secondary sources, like critical works on Kālidāsa, Sanskrit poetics, ecocriticism, and environmental studies, the interpretive and theoretical support is provided for this study; additionally, it considers a comparative and ecocritical approach towards the link drawn between Kālidāsa's seasonal imagery and modern thoughts of environmental ethics, sustainability, and human–nature interdependency. In this interdisciplinary framework, the research interprets the *Rtusamhāra* not merely as a poetic text but as an ecological and cultural text.

### Kālidāsa's *Rtusamhāra* and Environmental Thought

Kālidāsa's *Rtusamhāra*, a lyrical portrayal of nature by the movement of six seasons, occupies an ecstatic space. Through allusion and event-free poetry, the work invents a holistic view of nature in which climate and landscape, flora, fauna, and even human emotions are in a perfect play-off. Consequently, every season in *Rtusamhāra* becomes both an objective and an embrace of the personal, showing the direct ways in which changes in nature plateau into human life, into labour, love, and melancholy. Kālidāsa, through evocative, rich imagery and sensuously charged verses, transforms the biannual seasonal transition into an ecological dialogue of emotional succession.

The poem, then, is not just an act of aesthetics but a gesture indicative, perhaps, of early environmental awareness, that intermingle rather than conquer was the better way. In particular, an analysis of the representation of the seasons in this work demonstrates that the *Rtusamhāra* captures an implicit eco-consciousness that closely relates to the modern-day environmental crisis.

**Summer Season:** *Rtusamhāra* opens with a depiction of summer. The summer arrives with scorchers; the sun's intensity brings the urge to bask, so that passion for the moon becomes an element of deep longing. In the *Rtusamhāra* description of the six seasons—Grīṣma, Varṣā, etc.—Kālidāsa depicts them with a wealth of stirring details and their effects on the human heart, particularly the feeling states (bhava) through which lovers must pass.

प्रचण्डसूर्यः स्पृहणीयचन्द्रमाः

सदावगाहक्षतवारिसञ्चयः।

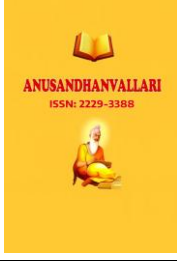
दिनान्तरम्योऽभ्युपशान्तमन्मथो

निदाघकालोऽयमुपागतः प्रिये॥<sup>1</sup>

When the tide did swing across, then of course people felt longing for a moon beam to drop down out of an uncommon fervour and tranquillity lighted by that mother-of-pearl fire.

The sun's fiery tongues spread across the earth, casting off salinity. Beneath the sun's scorching heat, the saltiness of the ground is unacceptable—the scene appears as if it were flames putting salt on salt. The brutal heat of summer exposes human labour, agricultural aridity, and the struggle for animal existence. This brutal side of nature has obvious resonance with contemporary debates about climate change.

In the opening Kāṇḍa of *Rtusamhāra*, Kālidāsa drew out the scorching, sweltering nature of the summer in his unique way of verse. The land languishes for lack of rain; rivers dry up, and birds and animals are perishing from thirst. The thirst impulse prompts us to seek shade and drink water. Thus, the heat should be an exact decadent sense of wilted humanity. Here, all things learn to lean on the touch of water." He shook his fists at the heavens, and undoubtedly, he may have been able to pray and sleep, dreaming of rain. Even in the harsh seasons of nature,



humanity can experience epochs of patience and hope. Summertime serves as the time of waiting in Kālidāsa's imagination.

**Monsoon Season:** When those far from home make contact, they suffer even more during the monsoon season, as showers can be sufficiently painful. Profitable to take up the arrows of separation. The bard feels the passages of broad clouds beat like mighty drums of war; the flashes of lightning resemble the tightening of a bow; the ceaseless rain pours with emulous force like a flight of arrows. Here, he presents vividly before the eye the prancing peacock, elephants bathing in placid waters, a tranquillised doe, essential and nourishing rivers, and magnificent mountain ranges breathing all the grandeur of this season of rain. Would not one think of mālatī, bakula, and kadamba enhancing the beauty of the rainy season? All animals depend on the coming of rain, which sustains all living entities. So let the poet wish that this merciful nectar of the rains may satisfy the desires of all.

जलदसमयेऽप प्राणिनां प्राणभूतः

दिशतु तव हितानि प्रायशो वाञ्छितानि॥<sup>2</sup>

In this verse, Kālidāsa describes the monsoon as the life-force of all living beings and offers a prayer that this season may bestow welfare and fulfil the cherished desires of all.

In the 2nd canto of Ṛtusamhāra (Kālidāsa, in his own way but not in the same manner) brilliantly describes the monsoon. Thick dark clouds form in the sky; a flash of lightning stirs mortals and things: the midsummer rain. Cephalomids<sup>1</sup> Hanging bell (ten) In the moving picture of nature, / we saw our life; now the tears roll/flooding from every bright shade fold; exploding into flower. And here we are again, in a new body; our old dreams awaken. The rice still grows there, lovers parting as if this light were holding them to peace. Monsoon, the mad peacock-dancing, all September's rains...and that unchanging stream of river are each a sad memory of communion and its pain. Kālidāsa's monsoon is heavily symbolic, far removed from the urban scene in which it finds itself when the 'spice of battle' dissolves pleasantly into a soft and perfumed passion.

**Autumn Season:** After the monsoon rain, autumn is quiet and serene — golden ripening rice fields and blossoming lotus flowers with kāśa grass; the gentle murmur of swans like a freshly wedded bride. It looks tranquil and lovely this season. The lotus flowers, the blossoms of the Kāśa, rows of cranes, the firmament and a soft breeze—all these join in this poet to show us only this autumn perennial so delicately sown with fond love, it is almost a tearful sigh.

काशांशुका विकचपद्मनोज्ज्वला सोन्मादहंसनिनदनूपुरनादरम्या॥

आपक्वशालिशुचिरा तनुगात्रयष्टिः प्राप्ता शरन्नवधूरिव रूपरम्या॥<sup>3</sup>

Here, Kālidāsa juxtaposes the fading monsoon clouds to white kāśa flowers, the ornamental beauty of blooming lotuses, the melodious call of royal swans. The sound of the rains is equated to the soft tinkling of anklets that grace nature with a fine hue.

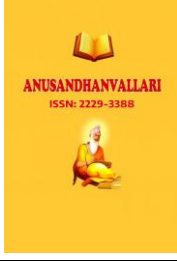
नवप्रवालोद्गमशस्यरम्यः,

प्रफुल्ललोः परिपक्वशालिः।

विलीनपद्मः प्रपतत् यारो,

हेमन्तकालः समुपागतः प्रिये॥<sup>4</sup>

In this verse, Kālidāsa depicts the beauty of the pre-winter (Hemanta) season through descriptions of fertile fields, blossoming trees, ripened rice, withered lotuses, and falling dew—thus indicating the gradual transformation of nature.



The picture of *Rtusamhāra's* purity and brightness, as depicted by Kālidāsa in the third canto, is lovely. The sky is clear, and the full moon lights up the waters under the silvery gaze. The brilliance of golden rice and lush lotuses shines upon Mother Nature. For peasants, it is a time of fulfilment, and both cultivators and lovers alike revel in merry-making. The bright shadow of a running river, gentle breezes, and flat tracts covered with *kāśa* inspire warmth and love in the human heart. Through the harmony of nature's purity and the clarity of the mind, autumn emerges as a symbol of unparalleled beauty.

**Hemanta (Pre-Winter) Season:** Hemanta, rich with ripened crops, reflects the generosity of nature. Golden fields of grain, the roaming of deer, and the calls of the krauncha birds together make this season one of calm and fulfilment.

In these verses on Hemanta, Kālidāsa depicts the extraordinary comfort of the season—freedom from sweat, a gentle chill on the face, and calm yet not dry air—qualities that create both human comfort and beauty. These crops are in the mature stage during the Hemanta season. Kālidāsa links this shift not only in nature but also in human society and agriculture. For the country's food security and agricultural economy, this period is crucial.

In the fourth canto of *Rtusamhāra*, Kālidāsa describes Hemanta's thriving agriculture in an idyllic manner. Fresh crops sway in the breeze, golden fields of paddy shimmer, rivers flow peacefully, and cool breezes make nature joyful again. Hemanta is a time to prepare—of waiting for winter and rejoicing in the fruits of labour, and reflecting human joy and satisfaction. Hemanta is a season for humanity to nurture nature, and for peace in the human mind - a unity of the gentleness of nature and the fruits of human labour.

बहुगुणरमणीयो योषितां चित्तहारी,  
परिणतबहुशालिव्याकुलग्रामसीमा  
सततमतिमनोज्ञः क्रौञ्चनादोपगीतः,  
प्रदिशतु हिमयुक्तः काल एषः सुखं वः ॥<sup>5</sup>

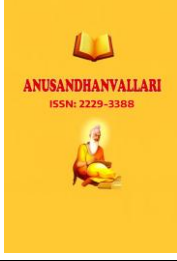
**Winter Season:** Winter, cold is not cruel but cool's dispassionate kindness to Kālidāsa; One sees light on ice: Nature slightly drunk at such a sweet pause. Man's food, clothing, and shelter depend on the temperature during this season. Thick and clean, cold as the ice on the lake. Don't worry; the birds get wet and will go into the bushes. The frigid light of the moon just limns their innocence, and to them, even the most benign accident is so lighted by the moon. Kālidāsa here depicts the delicate exchange between Hemanta and Śīśira, the slow sinking into winter's icy clasp, a headiness caused by winged kind, draughts that inspire sweet laughter in the depths of night.

प्ररूढशालीक्षुचयावृतक्षितिं,  
सुस्थस्थितक्रौञ्चनिनादशोभितम्  
प्रकामकामं प्रमदाजनप्रियं,  
वरोरु! कालं शिशिराह्वयं शृणु ॥<sup>6</sup>

Here Kālidāsa depicts the beauty of winter—mature *śāla* trees, the calls of krauncha birds, and the clear, cold waters of lakes—together presenting a peaceful and enchanting winter landscape.

Kālidāsa depicts the severity of winter: trees crack under the cold, serpents huddle together within hollows, and the chill is so intense that even their venom seems to congeal.

निरुद्धवातायनमन्दिरोदरं,  
हुताशनो भानुमतो गभस्तयः।



गुरूणि वासांसि अबलाः सयौवनाः,

प्रयान्ति काले ह्यत्र जनस्थ्यसेविताम्॥<sup>7</sup>

Here, the poet brings out the comfort of winter within the household—while the cold rages outside, the windows are shut, and a fire burns within, like the sun, warming the home as loved ones sleep. In such moments lies the true comfort of winter.

प्रकामकामैर्युवभिः सुनिर्दयम्,

निशासु दीर्घास्वभिरामिता भूशाम्

भ्रमस्ति मन्दं श्रमखेदितोरसः,

क्षपावसाने नरयौवनाः स्त्रियः॥<sup>8</sup>

To his tender one, loving Winter, who, in the coordinator lovers, is embracing and making love. “A beautiful narrative of it just being winter days at home will come out.”

In the fifth canto of *Rtusamhāra*, Kālidāsa presents winter as mild and severe. With icy winds and closed windows, the warmth of the family fire and nearness of loved ones, an inhospitable mood is set alongside that lovingly sensual mood of cold season – one that reflects man's need for warmth. She finds warmth there between the cutting cold of nature and human affection. Winter is ultimately a muted yet evocative story of the relationship between nature and human life.

**Spring (Vasanta):** Finally comes spring—the season of love, joy, and renewal. Aśoka and palāśa trees, cuckoos, and bees make nature vibrant and alive. Blossoms adorn every tree, sweet humming fills the air, and fragrance drifts on gentle breezes. For lovers, spring marks the beginning of new life. It is as if nature is reborn. Kālidāsa portrays spring as the season of love and vitality—an exuberant renewal of the natural world.

Flowers, lotuses, fragrant winds, love-struck maidens, and delightful days and evenings together transform spring into a complete festival of beauty and love.

द्रुमाः सपुष्पाः सलिलं सपद्मं,

स्त्रियः सकामाः पवनः सुगन्धिः।

सुखाः प्रदोषा दिवसाश्च रम्याः,

सर्वं प्रिये! चारुतरं वसन्ते॥<sup>9</sup>

Kālidāsa transforms the murmuring sounds of spring—the humming of bees, the calls of birds, and the resonance of bakula and ketakī groves—into an ethereal, celestial music that immerses lovers in the nectar of passion.

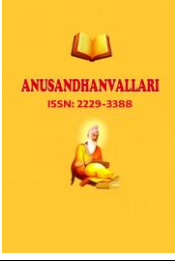
सपत्रलेखेषु विलासिनीनां,

वक्त्रेषु हेमाङ्कुरुहोपमेषु

स्तनान्तरे मौक्तिकसङ्गजातः,

स्वेदोद्गमो विस्तरतामुपैति॥<sup>10</sup>

Kālidāsa presents spring as the complete embodiment of love and desire, in which the half-closed eyes of the beloved, the embrace of the lover, and the touch of Kāma (the god of love) cause both nature and passion to blossom.



नेत्रेषु लोलो मदिगलसेषु,  
गण्डेषु पाण्डुः कठिनः स्तनेषु।  
मध्येषु निम्नो जघनेषु पीनः,  
स्त्रीणामनङ्गो बहुधा स्थितोऽद्या॥<sup>11</sup>

Here, Kālidāsa depicts the erotic imagery of spring: just as bees intoxicated by fragrance busily gather honey from flowers, so too does nature unite with the beauty of beloved women in spring.

मत्तद्विरेफपरिचुम्बितचारुपुष्पा,  
मन्दानिलाकुलितनम्रमुदुप्रवालाः।  
कुर्वन्ति कामिमनसः सहसोत्सुकत्वम्,  
बालातिमुक्तलतिकां समवेक्ष्यमाणाः॥<sup>12</sup>

Kālidāsa presents yet another amorous aspect of spring: fragrant flowers strewn upon the beloved's bed slowly wither, yet swarms of bees still rush to them in search of nectar—an exquisite union of love and nature.

आदीप्तबह्विसदृशैर्मरुतावधूतैः,  
सर्वत्र किंशुकवनैः कुसुमावनम्रैः।  
सद्यो वसन्तसमये सम्पागते हि,  
रक्तांशुका नववधूरिव भाति भूमिः ॥<sup>13</sup>

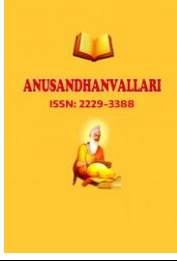
Kālidāsa hints here at the sweetest and free from love, the main points for the late entry of spring decisively toward the pet pollen, into the dearly embracing arms, so that, as it were, they could become the tools of supreme happiness for the loved one.

पुंस्कोकिलैः कलवचोभिरुपात्तहर्षैः,  
कूजत्पिरुन्मदकलानि वचांसि भृङ्गैः।  
लज्जाम्बितं सविनयं हृदयं क्षणेन,  
पर्याकुलं निजगृहेऽपि कृतं वधूनाम् ॥<sup>14</sup>

The sixth “canto” of *Rtusamhāra* is such an epiphany of that singular conjunction between nature and love. Spring is in the bloom of blossom, burst-of-green-leaf and hum-of-rainbow; a sight and sound to make even those droning bees burst into song. The blossoming trees, sweet winds and honey-filled leaves all conspire with love. Consequently, love and nature-relying women become games to play with, and life skips merrily about in a grimace. Mutual play of lovers, women's latent desire and Kāma's pranks — it is nature that begins to look serene, dream-like. Spring is the radiant heart of the profoundest longings, the union with nature and human life in eternal wedlock. This canto transforms the beauty of nature and the unspoken language of love into an everlasting song.

### Modern Environmental Thought and *Rtusamhāra*

The massive intercommunal character of contemporary human problems, such as global warming, air and water pollution, deforestation, and wildlife extinction, is a product of human consumerism. The impact of the environment on humankind, urbanisation and industrialisation, and the continued wanton degradation of the environment at our own peril and that of posterity, frowns in an ugly face. The *Rtusamhāra* by Kālidāsa reminds



us that Humans are not masters of nature; instead, nature has created humans. His representation of the natural flow of the six seasons and the interrelated waterways, trees, beasts, and birds is evidence of a profound ecological consciousness—nature, never a means of exploitation, but a friend, —a guardian to Kālidāsa.

At a time when both the environment, agriculture, water conservation, biodiversity protection, and renewable energy are at the forefront of public consciousness, Ṛtusamhāra aims to inspire respect for nature's laws. Kālidāsa emphasises that when the rhythm of nature is disrupted, human life and the social order suffer. And the Ṛtusamhāra is not only a poeticisation of the seasons, but also a contribution to overall residual imagery, sustaining ecological equilibrium as nature helps in wild nature. This description of cohabitation as a relation between nature and humans chimes well with contemporary environmental discourse. Thus, reading this book is a lesson in the ecology of mind, not just literature.

### Conclusion

The worldview of the relationship between nature and humans, as conceived by Kālidāsa in the Ṛtusamhāra, remains relevant today. Under such circumstances, it is also difficult to avoid the conclusion that this lack of interest in nature undermines the very sustainability of civilisation. The pivot on which all six seasons of highly flowing nature rest is nature itself as an ecological balance - So interlocked with the global here and there, that any rampant may disturb the other, consequently, to the extent that the Ṛtusamhāra is regarded not just as a cataloguing of the six seasons but as some testament to ancient ecological awareness. Rivers, trees, animal life, and human life apparently grow to be a part of nature; why not? —and surely all that is life is an endless circular play between both! Nature, to Kālidāsa, was never for exploitation but in perpetual partnership with life. The principles taught by Ṛtusamhāra remain as applicable today and also offer lessons on the relationship between humans and nat

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<sup>1</sup> Ṛtusamhāra – 1/1

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., – 2/28

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., – 3/1

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., – 4/1

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., – 4/18

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., – 5/1

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., – 5/2

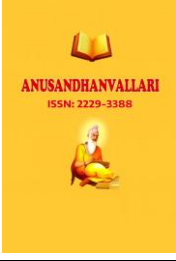
<sup>8</sup> Ibid., – 5/7

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., – 6/2

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., – 6/7

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., – 6/10

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., – 6/17



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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., – 6/19

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., – 6/21