



APPLICATION OF DIFFERENT CHARIS FROM NATYASAstra IN CHOREOGRAPHING *MEGHADŪTA* OF KALIDASA IN BHARATANATYAM

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Kalidasa's *Meghadūta* is a deeply evocative and poetic work that lends itself beautifully to a Bharatanatyam interpretation. The journey of the cloud messenger, laden with imagery from nature and human emotions, requires the choreographer to employ various **Charis** (basic movements or steps) from the *Natyasastra* to depict both the natural elements and the emotional nuances of the cloud's passage. In Bharatanatyam, **Charis** play a pivotal role in expressing movement, and each type can be utilized to emphasize the cloud's dynamic journey through different landscapes.

The *Natyasastra* defines **Charis** as basic leg movements that form the foundation of all gestures and actions in classical dance. They are categorized as **Bhūmi Charis** (movements performed with both feet on the ground) and **Ākāsha Charis** (movements where one foot is lifted). These movements can be utilized to create the mood and movements of the cloud in *Meghadūta*, as well as the scenery it encounters.

1. Kuttana Chari (कुट्टन चारी)

Description: In *Kuttana Chari*, the dancer strikes the ground with the feet in a deliberate, stamping manner. This is used to show strength and weight.

Application in *Meghadūta*:

- The **Kuttana Chari** is suitable for depicting the weight and majesty of the cloud as it moves through various terrains. In Sloka 20, the cloud is described as being heavy and full of substance. The **Kuttana Chari** can represent the cloud's slow, deliberate movement as it carries the weight of water.
- It can also be used to depict the cloud's encounter with mountains or forests, where its presence is strong and steady.

2. Lūnasa Chari (लूनस चारी)

Description: The **Lūnasa Chari** involves lifting one foot off the ground and then lowering it, giving the appearance of cutting through space. This chari is often used to depict light, graceful movements.

Application in *Meghadūta*:

- In the context of Sloka 2, where the cloud is described as resting on mountain tops or moving gracefully through the sky, the **Lūnasa Chari** can symbolize the cloud's delicate, smooth motion as it floats between mountains and trees.
- It can also be used to highlight the cloud's subtle movements as it changes its pace, pauses briefly, and resumes its journey.

3. Akshipta Chari (अक्षिप्त चारी)

Description: In **Akshipta Chari**, the foot is lifted and thrown or tossed outward, with a quick, dynamic motion.

Application in Meghadūta:

- This chari can be effectively used in passages where the cloud encounters sudden changes in the environment. For example, in Sloka 25, where the cloud is described as gathering water and moving toward the city of Ujjayini, **Akshipta Chari** can convey the cloud's dynamic movement as it adjusts to the terrain, interacting with rivers and streams.
- It can also depict the cloud responding to wind, adjusting its course in reaction to the elements, as the footwork mirrors the fluid, responsive motion of the cloud in the sky.

4. Udghattita Chari (उद्घट्टित चारी)

Description: The **Udghattita Chari** involves raising the foot in a swinging motion and then bringing it back down to the ground. This chari represents lightness and can suggest a soaring or uplifting movement.

Application in Meghadūta:

- In the poetic descriptions of the cloud rising over mountains or crossing vast landscapes (e.g., Sloka 2), **Udghattita Chari** can be used to depict the cloud ascending into the sky, floating effortlessly across valleys and rivers.
- The **Udghattita Chari** also enhances the sense of upward motion when the cloud rises after briefly descending to touch a river or peak, adding lightness to its overall journey.

5. Sarasa Chari (सरस चारी)

Description: The **Sarasa Chari** is characterized by gentle, fluid, and graceful movements. This chari is often used to depict delicate actions or movements that carry elegance.

Application in Meghadūta:

- This chari is ideal for portraying the softer, more romantic aspects of the cloud's journey. In passages where the cloud is depicted interacting with rivers (Sloka 20 or 25), the **Sarasa Chari** can represent the gentle movements of the water and the soft flow of the cloud as it reflects its beauty in the river below.

- The cloud's emotional and sensuous qualities, such as its longing to deliver the message to the beloved, can be subtly expressed through **Sarasa Chari**, giving a graceful touch to its motion.

6. Tala Chari (तल चारी)

Description: The **Tala Chari** involves strong, rhythmic stamping of the feet, giving a sense of weight and authority. It is used to depict power and assertiveness.

Application in Meghadūta:

- The **Tala Chari** can be employed when the cloud encounters the forces of nature, such as thunderstorms, heavy rain, or the dense forest. In Sloka 20, when the cloud is heavy with water and cannot be moved by the wind, this chari symbolizes the cloud's unshakable strength and presence.
- It can also be used when depicting powerful natural elements like the mountains or the force of a river in flood, emphasizing the weight and significance of the cloud's journey.

7. Valita Chari (वलित चारी)

Description: The **Valita Chari** involves turning the body in a circular motion, pivoting while stepping. It is often used to represent rotation or change of direction.

Application in Meghadūta:

- The **Valita Chari** can be used to portray the cloud changing its direction as it moves over the land, navigating around obstacles such as mountains, trees, and rivers. This circular movement mirrors the shifting path of the cloud as it adapts to the natural landscape.
- In Sloka 25, where the cloud approaches the river Vetravati and changes its course, the **Valita Chari** can symbolize the cloud's elegant turn, adding dynamic variation to its journey.

8. Prakampita Chari (प्रकम्पित चारी)

Description: The **Prakampita Chari** involves a trembling or shaking movement of the body, where the foot moves side to side while staying on the ground. This chari is often used to express uncertainty or tension.

Application in Meghadūta:

- This chari can be applied when depicting moments of uncertainty in the cloud's journey, such as when it hesitates before crossing a river or a mountain. The **Prakampita Chari** gives the sense of a trembling or wavering motion, reflecting the cloud's response to sudden environmental changes.
- It can also be used in scenes of tension, such as when the cloud interacts with thunderstorms or the heavier, more tumultuous aspects of nature.

Conclusion

Choreographing Kalidasa's *Meghadūta* in Bharatanatyam offers a rich opportunity to explore the expressive potential of **Charis** from the *Natyasastra*. The cloud's journey, full of emotional depth and vivid natural imagery, can be dynamically expressed through the use of various **Charis**. The **Kuttana Chari** and **Gaja Gati** can represent the cloud's weight and dignity, while **Udghattita** and **Sarasa Chari** can highlight its graceful and fluid movements through the skies. By carefully selecting the appropriate **Charis**, the choreographer can bring to life the emotional and natural landscape of *Meghadūta* with both aesthetic beauty and technical precision.

Citations

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