A Neytal Feature to Be Found in the Meghadūta?

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0. Introduction

Dealing with metaphors and comparing literary similes between different languages is certainly an interesting subject, but many may object to a comparative study of the conventions of literary creation in different languages, and may refuse that it is possible to determine the origin of certain similes based on natural phenomena. Such a prudence is justified, especially concerning the latter question. It is because some properties of natural phenomena are quite universally understandable and no matter from what linguistic or cultural milieu a person comes, he or she will understand any such simile quite easily, without requiring a special explanation or even 'cultural interpretation'. We could say that such cases are examples of 'semantic universals', or if you like, universals not conditioned culturally, or conditioned only to a limited extent. Indian literature has certainly a great number of similes which are very easy to grasp for everybody, and which are not a part of any special culturally conditioned set of semantic features[1].

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[1]   A good example of such a universally understandable simile may be e. g. a verse from the Mahābhārata, Śakuntalā's words to Duṣynta:

Similarly, there are descriptions of nature, like the following examples from the Rāmāyaṇa, which at first sight we will not suspect to have any other function but providing a general natural background for the described events. On the contrary, we will have the impression that they are more or less realistic reflections of natural phenomena.

I. Rāmāyaṇa

Araṇyakāṇḍa (3)

A: 14. Rāma takes up his abode in Panchavati

...dṛśyante girayaḥ saumya phullais tarubbhis āvṛtāḥ //14//
....
cūtair aśokais tilakaiś campakaiḥ ketakair api/
puṣpagulmalatopetais tais tais tarubhir āvṛtāḥ //17//

...hills are seen covered with blossoming trees (14).....
... covered with various trees provided with creepers with clusters of flowers, and also with Cūtas, Aśokas, Tilakas, Campakas and Ketakas[2] ....

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rājan sarṣapa-mātrāṇi paracchidrāṇi paśyasi /
ātmano bilva-mātrāṇi paśyann api na paśyasi // (MBh. 1.69.1)
King, you see other people's defects,
which are of the size of a mustard seed;
Your own, which are of the size of a bilva,
you do not see, even though you (can) see.

[2] The titles of the chapters and most of the wording of the translations are taken from a relatively free rendering of the text in: The Ramayana, Translated by Hari Prasad Shastri, Shanti Sadan, London, Vol. II, 1976 (3). Occasionally I decided to differ from Hari Prasad Shastri. The text of the

B: 71. Rāma reaches the Lake Pampā

sa tāṃ dṛṣṭvā tataḥ pampāṃ rāmaḥ saumitriṇā saha /
vilalāpa ca tejasvī kāmād daśarathātmajaḥ //20//

.....

mālatīkundagulmaiś ca bhaṇḍīrair niculais tathā /
aśokaiḥ saptaparṇaiś ca ketakair atimuktakaiḥ //22//

anyaiś ca vividhair vṛkṣaiḥ pramadevopaśobhitām ....//23//

Seeing (the lake) Pampā, Rāma together with Lakṣmaṇa lamented, the powerfull son of Daśaratha, because of desire;
... (seeing the lake)
which was adorned like a wanton woman with (23)
bushes of Mālatīs and Kundas, with Bhaṇḍīras, Niculas, Saptaparṇas and Ketakas (22)
and other various trees (23).

Kiṣkindhākāṇḍa (4)

C: 1. Rama describes the spring and the sentiment it evokes in him (around Pampā)

long list of trees and flowering trees 34–41:
.... *ketakyaḥ sinduvārāś ca vāsantyaś ca supuṣpitāḥ ...//36//*
..... *ketakoddālakāś caiva śirīṣāḥ śiṃśapāḥ .....//39//*
... Ketakīs, Sinduvāras and Vāsantīs beautifully blossoming (36)
.... Ketakas, Uddalakas, and also Śirīṣas and Śiṃśapas ...

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D: 27. Rāma describes the rainy season

..... sīteva śokasaṃtaptā mahī bāṣpaṃ vimuñcati //7//
meghodaravinirmuktāḥ kahlārasukhaśītalāḥ /
śakyam añjalibhiḥ pātuṃ vātāḥ ketakigandhinaḥ //8//
eṣa phullārjunaḥ śailaḥ ketakair adhivāsitaḥ /
sugrīva iva śāntārir dhārābhir abhiṣicyate //9//

... like Sītā racked by grief, the earth is shedding tears (7)
Emerging from the heart of the clouds, cool as a camphor,
redolent with the fragrance of Ketaki flowers, the balmy winds
can, as it were, be sipped from the palms of the hands. (8)
This mountain of blossoming Arjuna trees, planted with Ketakas
and anointed by showers of rain, resembles Sugrīva freed from
his foes. (9)

E: praharṣitāḥ ketakapuṣpagandham āghrāya hṛṣṭā (mattā) vananirjhareṣu /
prapāta (pratāpa) śabdākulitā gajendrāḥ sārdhaṃ mayūraiḥ samadā nadanti
//25//

Drunk with the aroma of the blossoming Ketaka trees, amongst
the thundering waterfalls, the great elephants mix their amorous
trumpeting with the peacocks' cries. (25)

F: 41. Monkeys are sent to explore the Western region

(abhigaccha .....//4//) surāṣṭrān .....//5//
tathā ketakaṣaṇḍāṃś ca ...//6//

Visit (4) ..... the coutries of the Saurashtras ....(5) ...
and also tracts covered with Ketakas ....(6)

tataḥ ketakaṣaṇḍeṣu tamālagahaneṣu ca /
kapayo vihariṣyanti nārikelavaneṣu ca //9//

Then the apes shall disport themselves amidst the groves covered with Ketakas and dense with Tamālas and coconut trees (9).

Sundarakāṇḍa (5)

G: 1. Departure of Hanumān

tataḥ sa lambasya gireḥ samṛddhe vicitrakūṭe nipapāta kūṭe /
saketakoddālakanālikere mahādrikūṭapratimo mahātmā //189//

Then the mighty one, resembling a peak of a great hill alighted on the high and lovely summit of the hill covered with Ketaka, Uddālaka and Nālikera trees.

H: 2. Hanumān's arrival in Lanka

(dadarśa .....//8//)
saralān karṇikārāṃś ca kharjūrāṃś ca supuṣpitān /
priyālān muculindāṃś ca kuṭajān ketakān api //9//

priyaṅgūn gandhapūrṇāṃś ca... //10//

(he saw ...(8))
Sarala, Karṇikāra, Kharjūra trees in full flower, and also Priyala, Muculinda, Kuṭaja, Ketaka and (9) Priyangu trees heavy with scent; ....(10)

If you have gone through these examples, you will perhaps agree that the use of words describing nature is not of the same order, not all of them appear to be just a reflection of nature encountered at the moment of describing an event. While some of the descriptions reflect the rather traditional technique of providing 'lists' of various objects, including those of nature. After going through the argument on the following pages, we shall return briefly to these quotations from the Rāmāyaṇa and will try to show, that perhaps our feeling that there may be different semantic implications in these quotations was justified.

2. Neytal—Meghadūta

2.0. Apart from the universally understood similes, there are, however, cases in which the semantics of the similes is not immediately obvious to a 'cultural outsider', in fact he may even overlook that there are any special implications in them, and he will not see them as anything else than a purely 'poetic' use of natural description. This seems to be the way in which most of such natural references or descriptions in Indian classical literature are perceived by readers, and this, we must admit, is justified in many cases. But in Old Tamil Caṅkam literature, there is a conventional pattern (in fact several basic patterns with some variations) of using natural references and descriptions with standardised implications for the meaning of the respective poems. This leads us to the consideration whether perhaps some of the conventions and their semantic implications may be similar.

Concerning the possibility of comparison between Sanskrit and Caṅkam poetry, this paper is not the first attempt (cf. e. g. Thani Nayakam 1963, and especially Hart 1975 with further references). Thani Nayakam was probably not much noticed outside the circles

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of specialists in Tamil. In his clear and instructive presentation (1963,121f.) he discussed some of the parallel descriptions of nature between Caṅkam literature and Sanskrit Kāvya, especially Kālidāsa (p. 127f.), more in terms of descriptions of nature ('some of the details of his [i. e. Kālidāsa's] landscape are similar to those of the Tamil poets...', p. 128). Hart, on the other hand, did provoke some discussion (for references cf. the paper of B. Knotková-Čapková in this volume).

Though Hart's work dates almost 25 years back, so far no special method has been evolved for such a comparison (and I wonder whether it can ever be done). This work cannot but take the form of identifying some parallels between the two literary worlds rather than anything else. There is only one preliminary requirement: the parallels should not be deduced forcibly, such an approach would be artificial. As for the findings presented in the following pages, they are actually based on a coincidental identification of some preliminary similarities. That triggered a more systematic search for other possible parallels.[3] The parallels, however, are not always unequivocal and obviously, especially in case of the Meghadūta, there is a number of other features which are not of the *neytal* type.

Now what is *neytal* and what are its features that can be similar with the Meghadūta? For those who do not specialise in Tamil

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3   My interest in these parallel expressions was aroused many years ago, in 1970–1971, when I first prepared the text of the Meghadūta and encountered the text in Meghadūta 3 described below. I realised then that the variant with ketaka- is reminiscent of a similar usage in Old Tamil neytal poems. It was only much later, after reading Hart's work, that I could not but agree that there are parallels between classical Sanskrit and Old Tamil literature. The question of their origin, however, does not appear to be easy to solve, and I do not see any simple, one-way solution.

literature, it is perhaps useful to provide a basic framework of the Old Tamil literary conventions, or at least of some of them. A description of the Tamil literary conventions may be found in Zvelebil 1973, 1974, 1975. Principally, there are five basic literary 'landscapes' (*tiṇai*) with specific subject matters, characterised by specific topics and manners of literary expression of those topics. It is especially in the love poems (*akam*) that these conventions are most often described. Due to the general interest in love poetry, these poems are also very often translated. Every love situation is defined on the background of a 'physiographic' or geographical region with specific social conventions corresponding to the respective situation. The basic tenor is separation of lovers with various concrete manifestations typical of the individual 'regions'. The love situation is not referred to directly, but mostly indirectly by way of literary 'signs' reflecting the natural, social and material background associated with the respective 'regions'. Among the important means of expression are elements of nature referred to in the poems, which represent a concrete manner of specifying the whole context. The 'regions' themselves are designated by the names of plants or flowers, which are specific for them. Neytal is one of the five love situations, which is located at the seashore with a characteristic 'lamentation' accompanying the separation of lovers (for a short description of the neytal type of love poetry cf. Dubianski 1988b). In the following we shall disclose some more specific features, as we compare them with the Meghadūta.

We could sum up the situation by saying that in classical Tamil literature, the references to nature are not limited to *single features* but that there are a number of mutually linked *series* of designations, some of them describing nature, which are used paradigmatically for certain *situations* or literary contexts. Such established paradigms were recorded first of all in old Tamil literature and its interpretation by commentators. The classical

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Sanskrit literature, or rather its theory, does not furnish us with any such paradigms.[4] These paradigms in Old Tamil literature are obviously nothing artificial but reflect the general conditions of a certain natural and/or social environment etc.[5] When reading the classical texts both in Tamil and Sanskrit, some of these references (manners of forming patterns or paradigms of referring to nature) appear to be similar.

Neytal type of poems and the Meghadūta seem to share several common features. They concern both the general atmosphere and the form of expression, besides the literary 'device' of a message sent to the beloved. There is, however, a certain hierarchy of significance of the various 'literary signs' or 'qualifiers' of the individual *tiṇais*. We shall consider whether some are more essential for the qualification of a certain genre than others, or if a bundle of more features (including those of a lower degree of relevance) could have a special significance.

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[4] For the means of poetic expression e. g. in the Sanskrit epics, cf. Pathak 1968 (who discusses the upamānas in the broad context of Sanskrit literary theory with accent on *upamānas* referring to the Moon, the Sun, the Cloud, and the literary merits in the Rāmāyaṇa), and R. K. Sharma 1964 (who provides detailed lists of the 'objects' appearing in the similes in the Mahābhārata, from gods up to various objects of nature, material culture etc., while putting less accent on the theoretical background. For the flowers used in Kālidāsa's work, cf. e. g. Banerji 1968, 1980. Apte 1951–52 does not mention the plants appearing in our present analysis.

[5] For more detailed descriptions of the standardised patterns in Old Tamil Caṅkam literature and their reflection in theory cf. e. g. Marr 1985, 14–68; Singaravelu 1966, esp. the Table Classification of *karupporuḷ* ('objects') between pp. 22 and 23; Zvelebil 1973, pp. 85ff., Chart 10, p. 100; Zvelebil 1974, 34ff.; Zvelebil 1975, 98–99.

2.1. General circumstances

The Tamil tradition distinguishes several types of porul-s or subject-matters, of which one is called uri-p porul or appropriate, proper subject matter (also 'proper, specific'), i. e. a distinctive erotic mood typical of the different landscapes, which is mostly implied by the other references made in the poems. Zvelebil (1974, p. 37) calls it 'psychosomatic behaviour-pattern of people'. Various types of separation and resentment are attributed to several of the tiṇais, but they take upon themselves specific shades. Thus if it is simply separation (pirital) in pālai ('arid' landscape), in mullai ('pastoral' landscape) it takes the form of (patient) waiting (iruttal), in marutam ('riverine' landscape) it becomes sulking (ūṭal), and in neytal ('litoral' landscape) it is quite distinctive (viz. lamenting) (Zvelebil 1973, pp. 100–101; Zvelebil 1974, p. 37).

It seems that the Meghadūta shares this general characteristics with the neytal tiṇai. First of all it is the atmosphere of iraṅkal—lamentation—which in Tamil is interpreted variously, as pining, anxiety, separation (Zvelebil, 1973, ibid.).

This is exactly what we find in the Meghadūta, including the changed emotion (3. 2ab)[6] of the Yakṣa who is almost crying (3.1b antar-vāṣpa-). The Sanskrit tradition has also characteristic designations of the situation. As for Meghadūta, Vallabhadeva (on Meghadūta 1) says:

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[6] The respective verse runs as follows:

2a meghāloke bhavati sukino'py anyathāvṛtti cetaḥ

2b kaṇṭhāśleṣapraṇayini jane kiṃ punar dūrasaṃsthe //

2a When seeing the cloud, even the happy one's mind reaches a different mood,

2b How much more with a man who stays far away and desires an embrace.

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pravāsa-vipralambho rasaḥ (rasa of disappointment from dwelling abroad, away from home),

Mallinātha (on Meghadūta 1): *atra raso vipralabhākhyaḥ śṛṅgāraḥ* (here the rasa is love having the aspect of/qualified by disappointment)/ *tatrāpi unmādāvasthā* (there is also a condition of insanity).

As for the *message*, we find it quite often in the poems of the neytal type (cf. below). It was already Thani Nayakam (1963) who mentioned the question of messages sent through 'inanimate objects' in the Meghadūta and in Caṅkam (p. 129–130), but he could also see the difference, stressing that the addresses to inanimate objects in Caṅkam are 'brief and to the point such as lovers might exclaim in agony' (p. 130). I agree that the message taken alone would hardly represent a relevant basis for comparison. Meghadūta refers to the message directly in verse 7:

1a .... *priyāyāḥ*
1b *saṃdeśaṃ me hara .....*
2a *gantavyā te vasatir alakā nāma ....*

Carry my message (1b) to the beloved (1a)... you should go to the dwelling place called Alakā (2a)...

The message in the Meghadūta is explained by Mallinātha as inspired by Rāma's message to Sītā sent through Hanumān (*sītāṃ prati rāmasya haunumatsaṃdeśaṃ manasi nidhāya meghasaṃdeśaṃ kaviḥ kṛtavān ity āhuḥ*). This seems to be a logical explanation also in the general context of the first stanza specifying that 'the Yakṣa stayed in the āśramas of Rāmagiri which have waters made sacred by the bathing of Sītā [*janakatanayā*] and trees providing soothing shadow':

2a *yakṣaś cakre janakatanayā-snāna-puṇyodakeṣu*
2b *snigdha-cchāyā-taruṣu vasatiṃ rāmagiry-āśrameṣu*

Concerning the message theme as a parallel between *neytal* and the Meghadūta, it was put on record by Hart (1975, 244–5), who further (p. 246) mentioned other examples of messages, e. g. from the Kum. 4.16 (Rati lamenting the destruction of her husband Kāma and 'instructing the kokila in the words of love messages') and a few more examples from Subh. (monsoon wind). More examples of messages may be quoted from the Sangam literature.

2.2. Specific symbolical circumstances and references

2.0. The symbolical function of descriptive references to various aspects of the external world is well systemised in the Old Tamil literary tradition. All these references could perhaps also be called by the term 'symbolical circumstances'. As for the symbolical circumstances specifying the *neytal* type of poem, they include description of the natural surroundings (*karu-p poruḷ*, 'things born' or 'native') represented by names of certain typical plants (and also animals), and by the reference to the space and time, in which the described event occurs (*mutal poruḷ*, 'first, basic things'). Some of them are also found in the Meghadūta, though they are not necessarily equally important for the comparison. I think that particularly the references of the former type (*karu*) are especially important, because they make a very strong pattern characterising the individual *tiṇais*. Among the parallels, we will especially quote Ta. *kaitai, tāḻai*/Skt. *ketaka-* (Meghadūta 4, 23), which formed the core of the original comparison. But they may also include the crow, Ta. *kākkai*/Skt. *gṛhabalibhuj-* and with some reservations, perhaps also the *neytal* lotus (see further below).

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2.1. References to *mutal*

The Tamil literary tradition also specifies the time and space (space-time continuum according to Zvelebil 1973, 94) of each type of the five tiṇais, viz. the season, the time of the day, the location (traditionally called *mutal poruḷ*). As for time specification, the *neytal* type of poetry is allotted to all seasons and the sunrise, while the place is mostly the seashore.

None of this seems to occur in the Meghadūta, while on the other hand, the rainy season and the surroundings of the forested places of Rāmagiri āśramas (*snigdhacchāyātaruṣu*, Meghadūta 1) would rather invoke the *mullai* type of poems. Only the reference to 'waters made sacred by the bathing of Sītā' (*janakatanayā-snāna-puṇyodakeṣu*, Meghadūta I.2a) could with some reservation be a reference of to the neytal type of situation. Though the majority of *neytal* poems refer to the seaside or to the sea, occasionally another reference may be found, e. g. Kuṟu. 399 refers to a *kēṇi* (small tank, pond) instead of the sea. On the other hand, it is not the most typical *mutal poruḷ* of *neytal* and therefore this parallel may be considered as a rather coincidental parallel which only vaguely refers to the same atmosphere as neytal, while the reference to Sītā is of importance for the specific context of Sanskrit literature (however, there is also a hidden implication of separation of lovers in mentioning Sītā here).[7]

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7 Similarly, the clouds (*maṅkul*) and watery spray, drizzle (*tuvalai*) mentioned e. g. in Kuṟu. 55,2, a neytal poem, should be considered as rather coincidental, not making a regular part of the pattern; cf. below.

2.2. References to *karu*

Now let us examine the contexts concerning the reference to the things of nature. The term *karu* includes several other means of reference (gods, tribes, arts, instruments etc.), but the botanical references (flowers and trees) and also zoological references (animals, insects) seem to be especially important. In the Megha-dūta, as we have already said, there are two references to *ketaka-*, which we will compare with some of the Caṅkam poems. We shall not be able to go through all the contexts in Caṅkam. For our purpose it will be sufficient to mention just a few examples representing the two typical Old Tamil words (*kaitai, tāḷai*) and perhaps to sum up the number of occurences.[8] It may be interesting to compare also the occurrences in the the Rāmāyaṇa as the 'Ādikāvya', which were summed up above and which then will be better understood in the light of the present evidence. Not all of such references, it will be noted, are of the same order and refer to the same type of circumstances, as defined by the Old Tamil *neytal*.[9]

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[8] Interestingly enough, the term kaitai appears only about 8 times (Akanāṉūru 3 times, Naṟṟiṇai 3 times, Kuṟiñci and Kalittokai have 1 each). The term tāḷai appears almost 40 times, the majority being in Akanāṉūru (9), Naṟṟiṇai (10), Kuṟuntokai (7), and Kalittokai (5). Several other texts have just one, or mostly two occurrences (Puṟam). No occurrences are found in Aiṅkuṟunūṟu. Cf. Lehmann, Malten 1992.

[9] The comparison may, of course also be extended to other texts in both Old Tamil and Sanskrit or Prakrit literature. E. g. Hāla's Sattasaī has a reference to keaï-gaṃdha- (Weber 716, ketakī-gandha-) and keaï-vana- (Weber 985, ketakī-vana-). They do not appear to me to be relevant for the present context.

A: Skt. *ketaka-/ketakī-*, screw-pine, Pandanus odoratissimus

According to Renate Syed's summary of literary sources, (1990, pp. 230ff.) *ketaka* is either a *lata* or a tree, has tasty fruits (alternative: has no fruits), has thorns and smells sweetly. The flowers appear at the rainy season and are white and have a form of the crescent moon. They grow on the shore, their pollen is scattered by wind. They also form hedges around gardens.[10]

Meghadūta 3

Ia *tasya sthitvā katham api puraḥ ketakādhānahetoḥ*[11]
Ib *antar-vāṣpaś ciram anucaro rājarājasya dadhyau* /

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[10] Botanical description (A. S. Rao, 1974, passim) adds that Pandanus grows near streams, and is often used for food (e. g. in the Nicobars, large orange-coloured fruit, of the size of jackfruit). It is boiled and its pulp is taken out to be eaten (P. Lal, 1974, p. 310). In a village (Pulo-Babi) of 129.5 ha, 15.6% is grown with Pandanus, 25% is grown with coconut, the rest is under homestead, bush and forest growth. The village has 38 people, Pandanus can feed permanently 25, coconut 20(!) (ibid., p. 311).
    Some more mythological references to Pandanus are offered by Shakti M. Gupta, 1991, 73–75. Beside that she also mentions a quality which may be interesting in the context of the properties of *neytal* mentioned below, though perhaps in a contradictory way: 'The plant with strong roots and its trunk studded with short prickles is aphrodisiac and induces sleep.' (p. 74). The other statement, however, would again support the symbolical meaning of *neytal*, viz. 'Its seeds are said to cure would of the heart, perhaps symbolic of heartaches.' (ibid.).

[11] The variant *kautuka*—desire is found in Mallinātha's commented text. But note that in his edition A. Scharpé 1958, p. 143, places *ketaka-* in the first

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Ia standing somehow (hardly) in front of him who is the cause
of the origination of *ketaka* (var. *kautuka* / desire)
Ib withholding tears for a long time, the servant of the king
of kings thought:

B: Skt. *ketaka-/ketakī-*, screw-pine, Pandanus odoratissimus
     gṛhabalibhuj- crow (Hultzsch, s.v.), enjoying the domestic
oblations[12]

Meghadūta 23

    Ia *pāṇḍucchāyopavanavṛtayaḥ k e t a k a i ḥ sūcibhinnair*
    Ib *nīḍārambhair g ṛ h a b a l i b h u j ā m ākula-grāma-caityāḥ /*

    2a *tvayy āsanne phala-pariṇati-śyāma- j a m b ū -vanāntāḥ*
    2b *saṃpatsyante katipaya-dinasthāyi-haṃsā daśārṇāḥ //*

    2b The (country of) D. where wild geese will remain a few days
(lit. which will become as follows)

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place as represented by more sources. Though general context would allow
kautuka-, there is hardly any reason against *ketaka-* appearing in this verse. The
fact that *ketaka-* appears once again in the text, cannot be used as an argument.
It is because several other names of plants appear twice and some even more
than twice in the Meghadūta (cf. e. g. the lists prepared by Banerji 1968,
1980).

[12] But note that Monier-Williams' dictionary gives the meaning of *gṛhabalibhuj-*
as 'the crane Ardea nivea' in the Meghadūta. If this meaning was clearly
established, it would also represent a parallel with the neytal type of
poems—Ta. *kokku*—crane, which appears in the neytal poems. But at this
moment we cannot decide which of the meanings is the correct one, though
both would point to neytal.

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1a it will be fenced by white-coloured (shaded) groves with
k e t a k a s split with needles (pistil, Hultsch)
1b it will have village sanctuaries full of c r o w s starting
building their nests
2a in your presence it will have forest regions of black
r o s e - a p p l e   t r e e s with hanging/ripening fruit

In the verse 2a, I suspect another parallel in the rose-apple tree,
though slightly veiled by the alternative English renderings, which
one obtains from both Monier-Williams and Hultzsch on the one
hand, and the English translation of the respective Tamil word
nāval—jamoon plum—while both the Sanskrit and Tamil words
are glossed by the same Latin term:

Skt. *jambū*—rose-apple, *Eugenia jambolana*
Ta. *nāval* jamoon plum, *Eugenia jambolana*
navval, nalaval, nampu, nākai jamoon plum (DEDR 2914)
The designation *nāval* appears e. g. in Naṟ. 35,2 (neytal) and in
Aka. 380,4 (neytal).

C: Ta. *kaitai* fragrant screw-pine, Pandanus odoratissimus
Ta. *kākkai* crow

Tamil has two words designating Pandanus odoratissimus. One
is *kaitai* (DEDR 2026), which is obviously etymologically related
with Skt. *ketaka-*, either Sanskrit has borrowed it from Dravidian,
or both have a common source elsewhere.[13] The other term is *tālai*
(DEDR 3183).[14]

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13 Mayrhofer, KEWA, s. v. says: wohl dravidisch, referring to Burrow TPS
1946, 16, and Emeneau, PAPS 98, 288a f.
14 Note that both terms are recorded, according to the DEDR, only in Tamil,

Akanāṉūṟu 170 (neytal)[15]

    9 *k a i t a i - y am paṭu ciṉai-y evvam-oṭ- acāaṉ*
    10 *kaṭaṟ ciṟu kākkai kāmar peṭai-y-oṭu*

    10 a small sea c r o w with its beautiful hen
    9 dropping (languishing) with distress on a beautiful low
    twig of a fragrant s c r e w - p i n e

This is a *neytal* poem containing also a *lamentation* and a *message*
to be sent through a crab.

D. Ta. *tāḻai*

Kuṟuntokai 163 (neytal)

    1 *yār aṉaṅk- uṟṟaṉai kaṭal-ē pūḻi-y-ar*
    2 *ciṟu talai veḷḷai-t tōṭu parant- aṉṉa*
    3 *mīṉ ār kuruk-iṉ kāṉal am perun tuṟai*
    4 *veḷ vī-t tāḻai tirai-y alai*
    5 *nal-ḷ eṉ kaṅkul-uṅ kēṭku niṉ kural-ē*

    1 Whose afiction did you receive, oh sea!
    5 Your voice is heard even at the (very) dark night
    4 when w a v e s d a s h a g a i n s t t h e s c r e w p i n e s
    w i t h w h i t e f l o w e r s
    3 on the beautiful big shore with a grove of (with) the fish

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eating cranes
2 which are like (as if)
1 the Pūḻiyar's
2 herd of small-headed sheep dispersed.

Now it may be clear that the parallel use especially of Pandanus odoratissimus, disregarding the two terms in Tamil, is obvious from the above compared texts. It is perhaps time to turn once again to the Rāmāyaṇa examples (the only occurrences of *ketaka-* in the Rāmāyaṇa) and ask whether in all the cases the use of Pandanus can be taken as a symbolical expression or a 'literary sign'. Summing up, we can say that the examples marked A, C, F, G, H appear to have little significance beyond the descriptive function mostly in a list of other trees and plants ('summary descriptions of nature'). But the examples B, D and E certainly portray something more than just the countryside they describe. Even if in the context of B, *ketaka-* appears in a list of other trees, the atmosphere is similar to *neytal*. We would perhaps have to ask whether the other trees are similarly 'loaded' or whether possibly the Rāmāyaṇa reflects here a more rudimentary case, a simpler form of expression before a more specialised usage got established. There is certainly an erotic mood in both D and E, in the context of description of the rainy season, though it may not necessarily be the same as that of neytal (note, however, that there is an indication of grief in v. 7). Hardly anything more definite can be said, but the examples appear to be relevant.

From all this we could perhaps make a preliminary tentative conclusion, that the respective descriptions in the Rāmāyaṇa reflect a relatively natural way of describing nature without any discernible specific convention. But there are indications that in a few cases the above described function of *ketaka-* may be implied, though perhaps not always in a context fully compatible with the later Kāvya or

Tamil usage indicated above. Could we say that the descriptions in the Rāmāyaṇa are therefore more archaic, the conventions not being established as yet, but indicated or suggested? It is so particularly in the few instances in which the context implies separation etc. and which may be a reflection of a similar mood we find in *neytal* or in the Meghadūta. This of course does not imply that we are looking for a model in the Rāmāyaṇa—it is just another literary parallel reflecting perhaps a more rudimentary literary usage, either historically preceding or possibly also parallel to a more sophisticated manner of expression in the Kāvya proper or in Caṅkam.

E. *neytal*- white Indian water lily, Nymphaea lotus alba[16]

Ta. *neytal* both as a designation of a plant and as a symbolic name for a literary 'region' has a possible parallel in Skt. *kumuda*-Nymphaea esculantea (white, opening at night)
(also *kaivara*-mentioned together with *kumuda*-, no special Latin term)
There are a few other terms for lotuses:
kumuda- is used in Meghadūta 40
utpala- Meghadūta 26, Nymphaea stellata (blue)
besides
kamala- Nelumbium speciosum Meghadūta 39
nalinī Nelumbium speciosum Meghadūta 39 (dunkel blau oder golden)

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16 The Tamil Lexicon gives also further meanings, viz. blue nelumbo, tuber of red Indian water-lily. Cāmi 1967, p. 58 gives the Latin equivalent as Nymphaea Stellata. It is obvious that the Indian names of lotuses are one candidate for being thoroughly researched so that the proper meanings of the individual terms are established unequivocally.

The imagery of these verses varies and I will not go into details concerning these lotuses. But it might be of interest to see the individual texts and compare them with the Tamil imagery in future.

A very special usage, however, is found in Meghadūta 12, which I should like to mention in the end as one more example possibly relevant for the comparison.

Meghadūta 12

... b i s a - k i s a l a y a -ccheda-patheyavantaḥ[17]
.... rājahaṃsāḥ sahāyāḥ

... having l o t u s   s t a l k s   a n d   s p r o u t s as a provision for the journey
.... the swans (will be your) company.

At first sight there is hardly anything else in the text beyond the provision taken for the journey. Here it is perhaps possible to make an assumption that there is a hidden meaning in using lotuses and their parts in this general context of abstinence. It appears (Syed, p. 613) that the Nymphaes (and especially the Nymphaea alba) are used as a means of calming or damping in medicine. The active substances are contained in the roots and they affect the sexual urge and are also used as a pain-relieving means, besides a treatment of skin inflammation, burns, ulcers and tumours (in particular yellow and

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[17] The meaning of the two first words is given as follows:
bisa- fibrous stalk of the lotus
kisalaya- a sprout or a shoot

white varieties). Of course we are not quite sure what type of lotus is meant in the verse of Meghadūta 12, and we cannot say that the stalks are those with the calming effect. So we are left with an open question. But the Tamil term *neytal*, both as a designation of the plant appearing in the texts and as a designation of a whole literary genre, represents quite probably at least in some of its applications the white variety of Nymphaea.

This may or may not be absolutely important in the interpretation of the context of separation of lovers, both in Tamil and Sanskrit, but the pharmaceutical property of Nymphaea represents a matter-of-fact information, which may have been on the minds of those who utilised this term[18] undoubtedly as a symbolic designation of the literary context describing separation connected with pining etc. It is unlikely that the designation should have been unmotivated. Its known property as a drug was probably the motivation for the use, besides, obviously a coincidence of its regular occurrence in a specific 'physiographic' region. The aesthetic form of the plants, their external appearance, especially in case of the *ketaka-*, may

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18 Similarly as with some of the other terms; cf. Dubianski 1998a, about the symbolical meaning of *kuṟiñci* and its flowering once in 12 years, as a symbol of a girl's maturity with further (partly also erotic) implications. The 12 year period of flowering is also confirmed by Cāmi 1967, p.34: *kuṟiñci* flowered in 1910, 1922, 1934, 1946 etc. But note that the above mentioned drug qualities of *neytal* are partly contradicted by the quality of Pandanus mentioned by Shakti M. Gupta, cf. Note 10. above. We would rather expect that in the general quality as a drug (if indeed it has such a quality), Pandanus should agree with *neytal*, which it does only to some extent (cf. Note 10). This is another interesting but open question for a further specialised inquiry.

of course also have played some role for the authors, but that should be left to the Indians themselves to decide.[19]

3. Conclusion

There are two things which could be stressed in the end. One concerns the above mentioned parallels and their interpretation, or rather assessment of their significance, the other is more general and has implication for the broader setting of this type of investigation.

There are obviously various types of references expressed directly and indirectly in a text, with a varying degree of significance for the classification of a genre. The general atmosphere (lamentation, sending a message) or *any other feature taken alone* may not be sufficiently relevant to declare that there is a parallel of any significance between the Old Tamil love poem of the *neytal* type and the Meghadūta. But if these features appear in *a paradigm*, or at least as a 'bundle of features', they seem to make a *stronger argument* for the proposal *that the principal mood of the Meghadūta stands very close to that of the neytal type of love poetry* and that the respective stanzas, because of the combinations of references to nature, strongly resemble the *neytal* type. On the other hand, there are many more references to nature in the

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19 When years back I asked an Indian colleague about the context of *ketaka-* in Meghadūta 3, referring also to the specific erotic context of the Tamil usage, he was slightly surprised that a European should be able to notice such a thing. And he added: "Of course, when I was young, I also used to write poems about ketaka!". I should just add that he was from North India and an expert on Sanskrit grammar.

whole text of the Meghadūta and thus the *neytal* strand was certainly accompanied by other types of moods. But perhaps it may have been even the principle mood in the Meghadūta, given the circumstances of the Yakṣa etc.[20]

We have to underline, however, that we do not imply that Kālidāsa copied his ideas from the ancient Tamils. We would rather expect that there were certain established patterns of expression—manners of combination of certain linguistic and semiotic features, reflecting nature and some aspects of life, which were probably organised in paradigms and which were applied paradigmatically in texts—and the word paradigm may be of importance—as models for presenting a situation, a feeling, an atmosphere, natural and social circumstances and the type of behaviour belonging to those circumstances in a somewhat standardised, conventionalised, or generally accepted manner. In that usage, these 'signs' could have been applied as 'literary artefacts', which were endowed with a specific literary symbolic value and not felt to be just reflections of nature any more. In that they did not have to be connected with only one linguistic medium, but rather with a broader culture (as it was also described

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[20] Could the Meghadūta also be regarded as a series of verses (e. g. like the Ṛtusaṃhāra) with 'changing poetic moods', or a collection of 'pearls' of poetic expression only conventionally connected by the figure of the Yakṣa? Then it would be perfectly possible to assume that each of the stanzas can carry a slightly different mood. This, however, would have to be shown by an analysis of the other occurrences of names of flowers in the text (to establish whether a more systematic reflection of the specific conventions followed in Caṅkam could also have had a representation in Sanskrit literature, as suggested by Hart). However, such a comparison could also be useless, because literary creation does not necessarily have to obey any selected pattern.

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by Hart). They probably lived their own 'literary life', which could also explain another aspect of the Tamil Caṅkam tradition, viz. mixing of features. This should be stressed from the outset—there were not only consistently 'natural' paradigms, more or less reflecting the respective natural settings (to be called primary conventional paradigms?), but also variations of such paradigms, occasional combinations of certain features, which normally belonged to different natural settings.[21] Whether more such paradigmatic 'literary usages' may be established also in Kāvya literature remains an open question. We might also be knocking at the wrong door, and we should not try to enter by force.

However, let me stress again that looking for the similarities did not come as anything artificial. It was actually provoked by the primary identical 'signals', properly speaking 'signs', which, as we have realised, are found in the parallel texts. When it comes to regularities, especially 'bundles of signs', there is, of course, the problem of their origin—are these modes of expression originally Dravidian, pre-Dravidian or do they come from the idiom of a mixed Dravidian/Aryan society of the Dakkhin? Or were they originally just independent reflexes of nature? Several of the possibilities were discussed by Hart in his book quite some time back, but this question is difficult to solve. What can be done with some degree of certainty is just pointing out the various parallels (if they appear in bundles, they cannot be easily dismissed as coincidental), rather than looking for their origin, which may be

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21 Could the latter be called secondary paradigms, which were not necessarily conventional? Or perhaps they represented no paradigms at all? In the Tamil literary tradition, this concept is expressed by the term *tiṇai mayakkam* or 'blend of settings', cf. Zvelebil 1974, p. 27.

veiled in the past and for which a number of alternative explanations could be proposed.

In the end we are left with more questions than answers, and perhaps in some cases the questions themselves are rather hazy and must be specified in the course of time. What we need is an easy access to indexes of texts and reliable interpretations of the names of plants, which in some cases are rather conflicting (cf. e. g. the TL).

There are some questions to be asked in the end:
— what other types of paradigms may be found in the Meghadūta?
— are paradigms of any kind available in other Sanskrit texts?
— would perhaps the Ṛtusaṃhāra[22] (or perhaps some other texts?) be more specifically analysable in terms of the various paradigms or patterns?
— what are the exact parallels between the plants used in Caṅkam and those appearing in the Sanskrit Kāvya (as individual occurrences as well as 'paradigms')?[23]

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[22] Ṛtusaṃhāra was mentioned by Thani Nayagam (1963, p. 127f.) as containing some parallels with the Caṅkam style, e. g. the description of summer 'may be compared with the Tamil poems on the *pālai* region' (ibid. p. 128). He can also see similarities in the description of 'rains' (ibid. p. 129). On the other hand the description of Spring cannot be compared ('But the resurrection of Nature and the newness of life that Kalidasa describes in his canto on Spring are not applicable to the Southern country.' ibid. p. 128). Thani Nayagam seems to be inclined to an explanation that the parallels are primarily based on the similarities of the natural environment rather than being literary conventions.

[23] A basis for this investigation should be prepared in the form of a concordance. It is obviously a task for computers to be pursued jointly by more specialists in the field.

do we need the knowledge of the chemical and physiological properties of the respective plants to understand their symbolic meaning, or are the above mentioned properties of some of the plants only coincidental?

etc.

And a 'meta-question' in the end: what other questions are to be asked, or are we entitled to ask similar questions at all, when it comes to creative writing?

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