

THE SONG OF
SHAKUNTALA
FROM THE
ABHIJÑĀNAŚĀKUNTALAM

OF
KĀLIDĀSA
FROM THE UJJAYINI RECENSION
TRANSLATED BY
MAHA-KAVI-SRINGARA-SUBHASITA

POEM BY
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TRANSLATORS FORWAD

The Ujjayini recension is a marvelous example of Kālidāsa's art though there are reminiscences of his work Rtusamharam in his Shakuntala what is remarkable about Shakuntala's song is the vivid contrasts Kālidāsa creates in this song. We have the intense emotional subjectivity of Shakuntala's outpourings contrasted with the stark objectivity of the descriptions of the environment. Also these juxtapositions contrast different styles: one lyric the other almost prose. Now while there are contrasts in the two different styles within Shakuntala's song there is nevertheless harmony and mutual supporting of each style to give a unified picture of Skauntala's emotional state. The bleak heat burnt landscape is a metaphor for Shakuntala's inner state ie heated with passions fires and devastated by her separation The heat destroyed world of pain and misery is a metaphor for Shakuntala's own inner world The whole song is one long conceit contrived and executed with outstanding mastery surpassed only by the great sringara poet Ganjadeen

PREFACE

Separation is sad sorrow

No today

No tomorrow

The present an empty hollow

Only past in which we wallow

The inside becomes the outside

Desolate within desolate the without

The inner world mirrored in the outer

The subjective becomes the objective

In loves longing we waste away

Only sadness never gay

The present an empty hollow

No tomorrow

No today

Separation is sad sorrow

On the bank of the Malini river in blazing
 noonday sun Lady Shakuntala with her friends
 took refuge amongst perfumed bowers and
 twinning vines as vultures speckled the trees like
 myriad leaves¹

Dear friends through my head runs a melodic
 song for King Dushyanta for whom I long
 Oh dear friends listen to my song² to tell me if
 my words are well chosen to express my feeling
 for whom I long

¹ The vultures as mentioned in the Bengali texts used by Kisari Mohan Ganguli translation of “The Mahabharata” were there to protect Shakuntals as a baby left by Menaka on the banks of the Malini Adi Parva section LXX11.p154 The Mahabharata” trans Kisari Mohan Ganguli, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers ,New Delhi India 1997

² This song sequence is the most important difference between the Ujjayini recension and the Bengal (East Indian) recension. In the later Shakuntal’s song is only five lines Shak : act 3. 19

My nights and days are long for the one I long

oh thou heartless one

haunted with love my nights and days are long

oh thou heartless one

my body yearns for thee

for thee the one I do not see

thy heart I do not know

so

my nights and days are long for the one I long

oh thou heartless one

the heated sighs from my lips wither the trees

leaves leaves me forlorn

my heart greaves

breasts heaves

my soul out breathes

the heated sighs from my lips wither the trees

leaves me forlorn

scorches the bodies of lions wild bulls

shrivels the grasses the heat the air fulls

panting in trees thirsty bulbuls

the heated sighs from my lips wither the trees

leaves leaves me forlorn

lakes dry in the sizzling heat

heat hazes shimmer o'er ground round buffaloes

feet

tongues hanging lips frothing animal herds burn

in the heat

oh heartless one raging fires burn due to the

heated desires of my sighs

oh heartless one come to me and save the world

from my sighs

come kiss my lips

kiss my neck

run thy lips along my breasts

thru my hair thy fingers twine

rap thy arms around me like the jasmine vine

crush me to thy chest

absorb my flesh into thine

breathe breath to breath

breathe thy soul with each breath into I

nibble thy teeth along my lips edge

that I may bite thy pink tongue with delight

oh heartless one come clasp me tight

that I may feel the thunder of thy veins

surge thru thy flesh more tempest than monsoon

storm

enveloped in passions fires

our scorching desires
burning us up in flames heated glows
sweeping us up into ecstasies throws
oh thou heartless one
the heated sighs from my lips wither the trees
leaves me forlorn
raging fires ignited by my sighs
driven on by my heated sighs
burns vines bushes as smoke to the sky flies
flames flickering like rose petals
blazes fanned by my sighs
crackles and bursts into flames grasses searing
under my sighs
antelopes boars thirsty foaming crash thru glens
the flames fearing

frogs into pools leap as the water sizzles and
evaporates in the heat
flaming leaves smothering smoke into the air my
sighs heaves
languid lolling I do lay longing thee I do say
oh heartless one my love consumes like the
raging fires consume the trees
oh that thee will come and say from thy lips
those sweet words to make me gay
thinking of thee sends quivers thru my veins
thinking of thee sends trembles thru my limbs
thinking of thee ignites fires that boils my blood
come oh heartless one sweep me swooning up
into thy arms like a mother with child
transport me insensibly to rapturous bliss

look into my eyes that I can see all the beauty of
the world

look into my eyes that I can see thy
inextinguishable love

I shall breathe o'er thee my love like the wind
sweeps o'er the forest fires

oh thou heartless one

the heated sighs from my lips wither the trees
leaves leaves me forlorn

snakes thirsty in the heated air flicker tongues for
moisture in the air

slithering hissing thy seek shelter under some
rock their lair

elephants in agony from the sizzling sun
swinging trunk throw dust o'er their scorched
flesh

lions heavy breathing panting dry throat to
heated to seek shelter
insects burning on the scorched earth burrow
deep into the parched soil
animals bellow roar screech maddened by thirst
in the heat from my sighs
oh heartless one come join me on this bed of
flowers protected from my sighs
come join me that I hear no more goodbyes
oh heartless one thy image is in my eyes
thy name on all my sighs
my hearts secrets from my lips flies
sleep eludes me
with grief I swoon with the memory of thee
my eyes my mind are forever with thee leaving
me alone

once rounded my breasts droop
my waist grows thinner like sand in an hour glass
oh heartless one I waste away longing for thee
I burn with the fever of separation from thee
Oh heartless one come and to loves deliriums
transport me
oh thou heartless one
the heated sighs from my lips wither the trees
leaves me forlorn
the heat haze covers the earth like a shimmering
shroud
relentless are my sighs driving hot winds
cracks lace river beds like open wounds
burning fires ravage glens and forests
fires roam o'er the earth shimmering like gold in
the heat haze

cruel flames shrivel leaves vines flowers untold
from branch to branch hot winds blow flames
fluttering like scarlet petals
the fires glare out glares the sun above
a furnace below blazes with brilliant yellow glow
fanned my the hot breath of my sighs
oh heartless one only thy loves elixir can cure my
heated sighs
only thy loves elixir can cure the pangs of our
goodbyes
this separation oh heartless one torments me with
distressing pain
listless with anguish lusterless now my pallid skin
without thou oh heartless one the loneliness
burns like flames of fire
while I burn with hot passions desires

my love shall last till the universe expires
come so that at thy feet I shall kiss
look up into thy I eyes oh what bliss
give to me the curve of thy lips
that I may interminably kiss
while I bathe in the rapture of thy eyes
oh thou heartless one
the heated sighs from my lips wither the trees
leaves leaves me forlorn
o'er the land whirlwinds dance
scorching winds throw up dust
like red blood the light a haze hanging o'er all
tender shoots a cinder
tree roots sizzle and spit
in river beds fish dead lie frying

maddened by heat the cobra strikes at gold
glittering mirages
as his crest-jewel glimmers as sunlight flickers off
bouncing off dust flecks skimming o'er the
ground like beams of flaming light surrounding
he
raging winds searing heat flowing from the sighs
of me
oh my love sings to me he has come hearing the
sighs from me
oh slender girl loves fires burn in thee true
but more relentless in me he utterly consumes
oh love while the day covers over the moon
nothing covers the brightness of you
oh my beloved gazes at me with lustrous eyes
shooting loves darts with eyebrow bows

they pierce my heart no more apart
enraptured I clap and dance
laugh with joy swirl and prance
my love has come
his loving smile
his loving glances
his lotus-petal eyes
hugging closely at his feet I clasp
tears up well and drop from my eyes
fall to the ground ending my sighs
moisting the earth rivers do run
dispelling the heat
reborn shoots from withered leaves all is green
under the sun

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