

# שאקונטאלה

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## שאקונטאלה

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## Shakuntala

**Hindu** - A moon-goddess. Daughter of Vishvamitra and Menaka. Wife of King Dushyanta. Mother of the Bharatas. She was abandoned by her parents and was reared by the hermit Kanwa. She and her husband separated but, when their son, Bharata, was born, she set out to find his father. The ring by which she would be recognised was lost when she was bathing but was recovered from the belly of a fish and she was then reunited with the king.

<http://www.mythologydictionary.com/shakuntala-mythology.html>

### Hindi Urdu Machine Transliteration System

शकुन्तला      شڪنتلا

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# शकुन्तला      ਸ਼ਕੁੰਤਲਾ

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The term Shakuntala means one who is brought up by birds (Shakun). There are references stating that Shakuntala was found in a forest as a baby being fed by birds, after being left by her mother, Menaka.

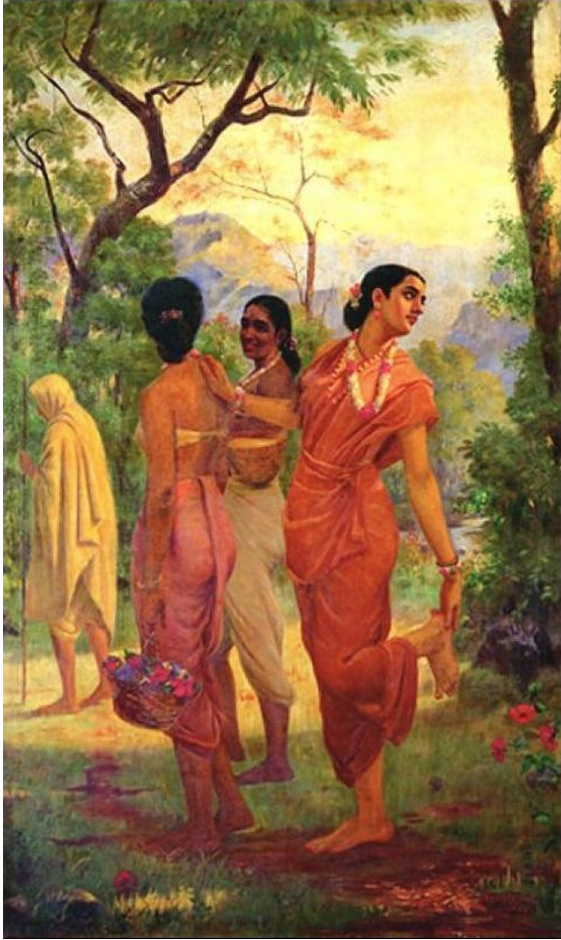
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# Shakuntala

This article is about the mythological character. For the writer, see Shakuntala Devi.

For the films, see Sakuntalai and Shakuntala (film).

In Hinduism **Shakuntala** (Sanskrit: शकुन्तला, Śakun-



"Śakuntalā Looking Back to Glimpse Dushyanta". Scene from Kālidāsa's The Recognition of Śakuntalā as painted by Raja Ravi Varma.

**talā**) is the wife of Dushyanta and the mother of Emperor Bharata. Her story is told in the *Mahabharata* and dramatized by Kalidasa in his play *Abhijñānaśākuntala* (*The Sign of Shakuntala*).

## 1 Etymology

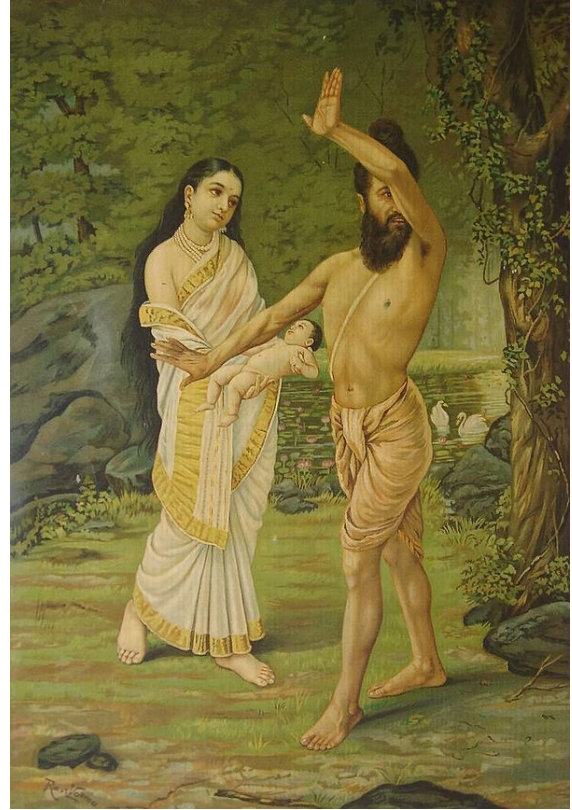
Rishi Kanva found her in forest as a baby surrounded by Shakunta birds (Sanskrit: शकुन्त, śakunta). Therefore he named her *Shakuntala* (Sanskrit: शकुन्तला), meaning

*Shakunta-protected*.<sup>[1][2]</sup>

In the Adi Parva of *Mahabharata*, Kanva says:

She was surrounded in the solitude of the wilderness by śakuntas, therefore, hath she been named by me Shakuntala (Shakunta-protected).

## 2 Birth and childhood



*Birth of Shakuntalā - Vishwamitra rejects the child, Painting by Raja Ravi Varma.*

Shakuntalā was born of the sage Vishwamitra and the Apsara Menaka. Menakā had come at the behest of the King of the Heaven, Indra, to distract the sage Vishwāmītra from his deep meditations. She succeeded, and bore a child by him. Vishwāmītra, angered by the loss of the virtue gained through his many hard years of strict ascetism, distanced himself from the child and mother to return to his work. Realizing that she could not leave the child with him, and having to return to the heavenly



realms, Menakā left the newborn Shakuntalā in the forest. It was here that the new born child was found by Kanva Rishi surrounded by Shakunta birds . He thus named her Shakuntalā. Kanva Rishi took the child to his ashram, on the banks of the Mālīni River which rises in the Shivālik hills of Himālayas and lies about 10 km from the town of Kotdwāra in the state of Uttarākhand, India. This is corroborated by Kālidāsa in his play *Abhijñānaśākuntalam* in which he has described the ashram of the Kanva Rishi on the banks of river Mālīni.

King Dushyanta first encountered Shakuntala while travelling through the forest with his army. He was pursuing a male deer wounded by his weapon. Shakuntala and Dushyanta fell in love with each other and got married as per Gandharva marriage system. Dushyanta, offered his personal royal ring to the girl as a token of his love, and left for his kingdom, promising to come back soon and take Shakuntala with him.

Shakuntala spent much time dreaming of her new husband and was often distracted by her daydreams. One day, a powerful rishi, Durvasa, came to the ashrama but, lost in her thoughts about Dushyanta, Shakuntala failed to greet him properly. Incensed by this slight, the rishi cursed Shakuntala, saying that the person she was dreaming of would forget about her altogether. As he departed in a rage, one of Shakuntala's friends quickly explained to him the reason for her friend's distraction. The rishi, realizing that his extreme wrath was not warranted, modified his curse saying that the person who had forgotten Shakuntala would remember everything again if she showed him a personal token that had been given to her.

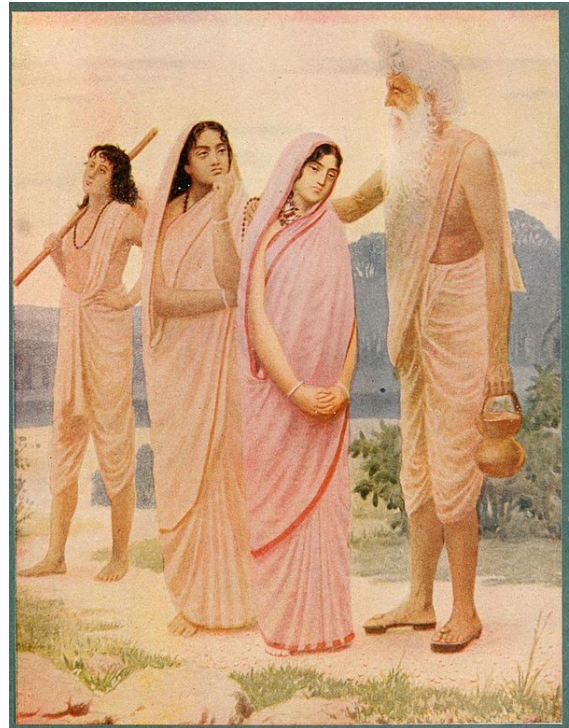
Time passed, and Shakuntala, wondering why Dushyanta did not return for her, finally set out for the capital city with her foster father and some of her companions. On the way, they had to cross a river by a canoe ferry and, seduced by the deep blue waters of the river, Shakuntala ran her fingers through the water. Her ring (Dushyanta's ring) slipped off her finger without her realizing it.

Arriving at Dushyanta's court, Shakuntala was hurt and surprised when her husband did not recognize her, nor recollected anything about her. She tried to remind him that she was his wife but without the ring, Dushyanta did not recognize her. Humiliated, she returned to the forests and, collecting her son, settled in a wild part of the forest by herself. Here she spent her days while Bharata, her son, grew older. Surrounded only by wild animals, Bharata grew to be a strong youth and made a sport of opening the mouths of tigers and lions and counting their teeth.

Meanwhile, a fisherman was surprised to find a royal ring in the belly of a fish he had caught. Recognizing the royal seal, he took the ring to the palace and, upon seeing his ring, Dushyanta's memories of his lovely bride came rushing back to him. He immediately set out to find her and, arriving at her father's ashram, discovered that she was no longer there. He continued deeper into the forest to find



*Dushyant and Shakuntala*



*Crying of Shakuntala*

his wife and came upon a surprising scene in the forest: a young boy had pried open the mouth of a lion and was

busy counting its teeth. The king greeted the boy, amazed by his boldness and strength, and asked his name. He was surprised when the boy answered that he was Bharata, the son of King Dushyanta. The boy took him to Shakuntala, and thus the family was reunited.

An alternate narrative is that after Dushyanta failed to recognize Shakuntala, her mother Menaka took Shakuntala to Heaven where she gave birth to Bharata. Dushyanta was required to fight with the devas, from which he emerged victorious; his reward was to be reunited with his wife and son. He had a vision in which he saw a young boy counting the teeth of a lion. His *kavach* (arm band/armour) had fallen off his arm. Dushyanta was informed by the devas that only Bharata's mother or father could tie it back on his arm. Dushyanta successfully tied it on his arm. The confused Bharata took the king to his mother Shakuntala and told her that this man claimed to be his father. Upon which Shakuntala told Bharata that the king was indeed his father. Thus the family was reunited in Heaven, and they returned to earth to rule for many years before the birth of the Pandava.

### 3 Films and TV shows

The earliest adaptation into a film was when Bhupen Hazarika made the Assamese film *Shakuntala* in 1961. It won the President's Silver Medal and was critically acclaimed. Shakuntala was also made into a Malayalam movie by the same name in 1965. It starred K. R. Vijaya and Prem Nazeer as Shakuntala and Dushyanta respectively. Rajyam Pictures of C. Lakshmi Rajyam and K. Sridhar Rao produced a Shakuntala film in 1966 starring N. T. Rama Rao as Dushyanta and B. Saroja Devi as Shakuntala. It is directed by Kamalakara Kameswara Rao.<sup>[3]</sup> V. Shantaram also made a Hindi film titled 'STREE' on this story. On Marathi stage there was a musical drama titled 'Shakuntal' on the same story.

### 4 Musical adaptations

- Ernest Reyer (1823–1909) composed a ballet *Sacountala* on an argument by Théophile Gautier in 1838.
- Károly Goldmark, the Hungarian composer (1830–1915) wrote the *Sakuntala Overture Op.13* in (1865)
- Italian Franco Alfano composed an opera named *La leggenda di Sakuntala (The legend of Shakuntala)* in its first version (1921) and simply *Sakuntala* in its second version (1952).
- The Norwegian musician, Amethystium, wrote a song called "Garden of Sakuntala" and it can be found in the CD Aphelion.

- The Soviet composer Sergey Balasanyan composed a ballet named Shakuntala.
- Franz Schubert: Sakontala: Opera in two acts, D701 (c. 1820, incomplete); completed by Fritz Racek; first performance in Vienna, June 12, 1971, by the Rumanian Staatsoper Timisoara, conducted by Cornelia Voina
- Franz Schubert: Sakontala: Opera in two acts, D701 (c. 1820, incomplete); completed by Karl Aage Rasmussen by commission of Antti Sairanen, published by Edition Wilhelm Hansen, Copenhagen (recorded live, October 4, 2006) (CARUS 83218)
- Franz Schubert: Sakontala: Opera in two acts, D701 (c. 1820, incomplete); completed by Karl Aage Rasmussen by commission of Antti Sairanen, published by Edition Wilhelm Hansen, Copenhagen; scenic world premiere in Saarbrücken Opera (Saarländisches Staatstheater) March 27, 2010

### 5 Other adaptations

- Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar created a novel in Sadhu Bhasha, Bengali. It was among the first translations from Bengali and is a bit difficult to understand now-a-days. Abanindra Nath Tagore later wrote in the Chalit Bhasa (which is a simpler literary variation of Bengali) mainly for children and preteens.

### 6 See also

- *The Recognition of Sakuntala*: Sanskrit play written by Kalidasa.
- Kuntala: a waterfall associated with Sakuntala
- French poet Guillaume Apollinaire mentions Shakuntala (Sacountale) in his poem "La Chanson du mal-aimé", as a model of fidelity
- Camille Claudel created a sculpture *Shakuntala*

### 7 Notes

- [1] Mahabharata, Adi Parva, Sambhava Parva
- [2] Mahabharata, Adi Parva, Sambhava Parva (in Sanskrit)
- [3] <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0263986/>

### 8 References

- Mahabharata Adiparva (62-69)

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### 9.1 Text

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A poem which was written by Ravindra nath Tagore. 11, Girl, add to favourite.

Shakuntala | शकुंतला. Brought up by birds. 9, Girl, add to favourite. Shakuntala | शकुंतला.

Brought up by birds. 8, Girl, add to favourite. Shiva Priya | शिवप्रिया. Liked by Shiva,

Goddess Durga. 11, Girl, add to favourite. Shivapriya |. Liked by Shiva ...