

Thapar's Reading of Sakuntala's story: An Outline

<i>Version/</i>	<i>date</i>	<i>Characteristics of Shakuntala</i>	<i>historical context</i>
MBH	400-600BCE	strong woman in a patriarchal world, fights for rights of her son, abuses Duhsanta when refuse acknowledge. Celestial intervention, lives happily after	patriarchal clan society, monarchy not well estab, consent of the assembly important,
Kalidasa	3–400CE	Much less outspoken, prays to Mother Earth when Dusyanta rejects her. Does not abuse, or fight for her rights. No possibility of King being wrong. The entire “problem” is one of divine intervention, a curse, not Dusyanta’s fault. S is now wife, and hence PATIVRATA. Better a servant in her husbands home than free elsewhere. Etc She becomes child of nature, shy modest, retiring, SUBMISSIVE, and HER OWN FAULT IN A PREVIOUS BIRTH	Monarchy well established. The King did not need legitimacy from the clan. Brahmins are important and their rules etc regarding marriage, place of wife etc. are the law. Brahmins support kings and in return get tax free land.
Puranas/ katha	later	doesn't tell us much about the story, except that puranas kept story alive etc.	
Braj	1716	The story went into the POPULAR domain, where S as character appears to regain some of her independence, more down to earth (14) something in between the epic and the play.	End of Mughals. Brahmin dominance low. Popular domain still left relatively free of overwhelming Brahmanical influences.
Urdu	1806	Remains popular, racy, though more in Persianized dastan style	Persian influence, but popular domain ...still not captured by Brahmanical or other elite influences

<p>Latin English by William Jones</p>	<p>1789</p>	<p>Erotic content a concern, Thapar does not tell us much about the changes in the play itself or in representation of S, so presume that it follows the KALIDASA version</p>	<p>Colonialism and Orientalism, increasingly the British are setting terms, often derived from a different cultural system, for evaluation of character. But this is still early colonialism, so for Jones, this is example of how advanced India was compared to Britain IN A PAST AGE, and implicitly that it was Britain's responsibility to RENEW this classical age</p>
<p>European Romantic</p>	<p>1800s</p>	<p>child of nature... ideal Indian woman, basically follow Kalidasa play in script, but emphasis different.</p>	<p>Romantics dissatisfied with the rationality of modernity, want to offer an alternative, by celebrating the non-modern. Orientalism, that is contrast the mechanical, routinized lives against the exotic of the orient, against the "noble savage". Of course none of this was "true" – that is neither were the non westerners overly noble, nor were they savages!! But it helped Orientalists define themselves, and in this sense, the celebration of the orient was only an excuse a context for their own purposes. Die out by late 19th C</p>

Monier-Williams	1898	<p>S = “rustic maiden” problems with the immorality of the play</p> <p>erotic passages deleted,</p> <p>The moral issue is now not a question of Dusyanta’s actions, as in epic, but in the erotic verses</p>	<p>Victorian ... High noon of colonialism, scientific racism, child of nature now = only primitive, nothing noble about them at all,</p> <p>Anti Orientalist view prevailed, Sanskrit literature = backward, decadent, gandharva marriage = curse</p> <p>But also KNOW India to rule it, so some interest, and to TEACH INDIANS THEIR OWN CULTURE</p>
Tagore	1907	<p>Tagore described it as “fall” of Sakuntala, a “fallen woman”</p> <p>story becomes allegory of movement from coarse to finer understanding, from concern with matter to spirit etc.</p> <p>So S in this allegorical interpretation moves from being a passionate (and also fallen) woman who succumbed to ‘base’ passion, to sexuality, but then became a devoted wife with the qualities seen in play</p> <p>Grief remorse penance of separation necessary for achieving that transformation</p>	<p>Nationalism, but socially conservative, partly defending tradition from colonial attacks</p> <p>Woman began to be regarded as emblems of nation, and hence had to be modest, chaste, patient, devoted, self sacrificing.</p>