

Shakuntala: 530

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Summary:

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Shakuntala was the daughter of a nymph and a sage who abandoned her in the woods. Sage Kanva brought her up. King Dushyanta on a visit to the hermitage was struck with Shakuntala's beauty and they got married in a non-traditional ceremony. The king eventually returned back, leaving with Shakuntala a ring that carried his seal. After a when she came to live with the king, he did not remember anything about her and asked for proof of their being together. Shakuntala had lost the ring and could not produce any proof. So rejected by the king, she was carried away by her mother. The ring was one day found by a fisherman and produced before the king, this brought back his memory of Shakuntala and he longed to meet her. One day, on the way back from a great battle victory Dushyanta visited the sage Maricha's hermitage where Shakuntala and her son Bharata were living. Many were the signs by which the king recognized Bharata as his son. He asked Shakuntala for forgiveness and took both of them with him. Later, Bharata became an illustrious king and it is said that India's name "Bhaarata" is formed to mean 'the land of Bharata'. This story from Mahabharata provided the plot for a renowned play by the great Sanskrit poet Kalidasa of the 5th century. The play was translated into English by William Jones at the end of the 18th century. It won praise from the German poet Goethe then and has been widely translated and read worldwide.

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