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The Birth of Kumára

by Kali·dasa



Translated by
DAVID SMITH

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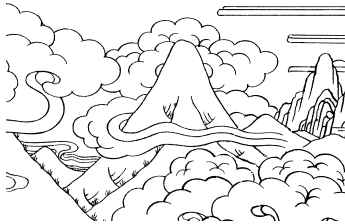
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Artwork by Robert Beer.
Cover design by Isabelle Onians.
Layout & typesetting by Somadeva Vasudeva.
Typeset in Adobe Garamond at 10.25 : 12.3+pt.
Printed and Bound in Great Britain by
TJ International, Cornwall on acid free paper

THE BIRTH OF
KUMĀRA

BY KĀLIDĀSA

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JJC FOUNDATION

2005

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First Edition 2005

ISBN 978-0-8147-4008-8

The Clay Sanskrit Library is co-published by
New York University Press
and the JJC Foundation.

Further information about this volume
and the rest of the Clay Sanskrit Library
is available on the following websites:

www.claysanskritlibrary.org

www.nyupress.org

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Kālidāsa.

[Kumārasambhava. English & Sanskrit]

The birth of Kumara / by Kalidasa ;

translated by David Smith.

p. cm. – (The Clay Sanskrit library)

In English and Sanskrit; includes translation from Sanskrit.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-8147-4008-8

1. Sanskrit poetry.

2. Tales—India—Early works to 1800.

I. Smith, David (David James), 1944–

II. Title. III. Series.

PK3796.K7S58 2005

89I'.21—dc22 2004025441

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A *sandhi* grid is printed on the inside of the back cover

CANTO 4
LOVE'S WIFE'S LAMENT

Atha moha|parāyaṇā satī
vivaśā Kāma|vadhūr vibodhitā
Vidhinā pratipādayiṣyatā
nava|vaidhavyam a|sahya|vedanam.

Avadhāna|pare cakāra sā
pralay'ānt'ōnmiṣite vilocane
na viveda tayor a|tr̥ptayoḥ
priyam atyanta|vilupta|darśanam.

« Ayi jīvita|nātha jīvas' ity? »
abhidhāy' ōtthitayā tayā puraḥ
dadṛṣe puruṣ'ākṛti kṣitau
Hara|kop'ānala|bhasma kevalam.

Atha sā punar eva vihvalā
vasudh"ālīṅgana|dhūsara|stanī
vilalāpa vikīrṇa|mūrdhajā
sama|duḥkhām iva kurvatī sthalīm.

S UCCUMBING TO A SWOON,
Kama's wife, good and true,
but helpless, was then brought
back to consciousness
by Fate, determined
to make her undergo
her new widowhood,
with its unbearable suffering.

At the end of her swoon
she brought herself to open her eyes
and looked intently around.

She was not aware
the sight of her beloved
was utterly cut off from her eyes,
which could never
have enough of him

"*Ayi*, lord of my life, are you alive?"

she said as she got up.
She saw in front of her
on the ground only the ashes
of the fire of the Destroyer's anger—
ashes in the outline of a man.

Then, once more distraught,
her breasts dirty
from embracing the earth,
she wailed,
dishevelling her hair,
seeming to make the ground
feel her pain.

4.5 «Upamānam abhūd vilāsināṃ
karaṇaṃ yat tava kāntimattayā
tad idaṃ gatam īdr̥ṣīm daśāṃ
na vidīrye kaṭhināḥ khalu striyaḥ!

Kva nu māṃ tvad|adhīna|jīvitāṃ
vinikīrya kṣaṇa|bhinna|sauhr̥daḥ
nalinīm kṣata|setu|bandhano
jala|saṃghāta iv' āsi vidrutaḥ?

Kṛtavān asi vipriyaṃ na me
pratikūlaṃ na ca te mayā kṛtam
kim a|kāraṇam eva darśanaṃ
vilapantyai Rataye na dīyate?

Smarasi Smara mekhalā|guṇair
uta gotra|skhaliteṣu bandhanam
cyuta|kesara|dūṣit' |ēkṣaṇāny
avataṃs' |ōtpala|tāḍanāni vā?

“Your body was
the standard of comparison
for ladies’ men
on account of its beauty.
That it has come to this condition
and I’m not tearing myself apart!
Truly women are hard-hearted!

Where have you run to,
casting me aside,
whose life depends on you,
breaking up our love in a moment,
as a torrent of water,
breaking through
a restraining causeway,
casts aside a lotus?

You did not do anything to displease me,
nor have I done anything
against your wishes.
Why for no reason
is sight of you not given to Rati
when she laments you?

O Love, do you remember
me tying you up
with the strings of my girdle
when you got my name wrong,
or the beatings with the lotuses
that were my ear ornaments,
paining your eyes with
their falling filaments?

«Hṛdaye vasas' íti» mat|priyaṃ
yad avocas tad avaimi kaitavam
upacāra|padaṃ na ced idaṃ
tvam an|aṅgaḥ katham akṣatā Ratiḥ?

4.10 Para|loka|nava|pravāsiṇaḥ
pratipatsye padavīm ahaṃ tava.
Vidhinā jana eṣa vañcitas
tvad|adhīnaṃ khalu dehināṃ sukham.

Rajanī|timir'âvaguṇṭhite
pura|māрге ghana|śabda|viklavāḥ
vasatiṃ priya! kāmīnāṃ priyās
tvad|ṛte prāpayituṃ ka īsvaraḥ?

Nayanāny aruṇāni ghūrṇayan
vacanāni skhalayan pade pade
asati tvayi vāruṇī|madaḥ
pramadānām adhunā viḍambanā.

You used to say
‘You dwell in my heart,’
words dear to me.
I realize they’re false.
If they were not a polite phrase,
how is it that when you have no body
Rati is unharmed?

You’ve just started
on your journey to the next world,
and I will follow your path.
Fate’s cheated us all:
the happiness of embodied beings
depended on you!

4.10

Who but you, my beloved,
could empower beloved women
to reach their lovers’ houses
when the city streets are veiled
in the darkness of night
and they’re frightened
by the sound of thunder?

Rolling their red eyes,
slurring every word—
for women
getting drunk on wine
is just a sham
now that you’re no more.

Avagamyā kathī|kṛtaṃ vapuḥ
priya|bandhos tava niṣphal'ôdayaḥ
bahule 'pi gate niśā|karas
tanutāṃ duḥkham An|aṅga! mokṣyati.

Harit'âruṇa|cāru|bandhanaḥ
kala|pumaṃs|kokila|śabda|sūcitaḥ
vada samprati kasya bāṇatāṃ
nava|cūta|prasavo gamiṣyati?

4.15 Ali|pañktir an|ekaśas tvayā
guṇa|kṛtye dhanuṣo niyojitā
vitataiḥ karuṇa|svarair iyaṃ
guru|śokām anurodit' îva mām.

Pratipadya mano|haraṃ vapuḥ
punar apy ādiśa tāvad utthitaḥ
rati|dūti|padeṣu kokilāṃ
madhur'ālāpa|nisarga|paṇḍitām.

O bodiless Love,
 the rising of the moon
 is pointless now,
 and when the moon
 learns your body's
 become just a story,
 you who were his dear friend,
 only with difficulty will he
 lose his slenderness
 when it's time for him to become full.

Tell me, who now will use
 the fresh mango shoot as an arrow
 with its beautiful red and green stem
 proclaimed by the male *kokil's* melodious call?

This row of bees used so often
 for your bowstring,
 with its drawn out hum—
 the notes of pity—
 seems to mourn with me
 in my great sorrow.

4.15

Taking on your charming body
 and rising up,
 appoint once again the *kokil's* mate
 as messenger for the pleasures of love,
 she so naturally clever in sweet talk.

Śirasā praṇipatyā yācitāny
upagūḍhāni sa|vepathūni ca
su|ratāni ca tāni tāni te
Smara saṃsmṛtya na śāntir asti me.

Racitaṃ rati|paṇḍita tvayā
svayam aṅgeṣu mam' édam ārtavam
dhriyate kusuma|prasādhanam
tava tac cāru vapur na dṛśyate.

Vibudhair asi yasya dāruṇair
a|samāpte pratikarmaṇi smṛtaḥ
tam imaṃ kuru dakṣiṇ' |étaraṃ
caraṇam nirmita|rāgam ehi me.

4.20 Aham etya pataṅga|vartmanā
punar anka' |āśrayiṇī bhavāmi te
caturaiḥ sura|kāminī|janaiḥ
priya yāvan na vilobhyase divi.

CANTO 4 – LOVE'S WIFE'S LAMENT

There is no peace for me,
remembering, O Love,
the trembling embraces
you requested by bowing your head
and those delights of love
and those.

O master of sexual delights,
I'm still wearing on my limbs
this decoration of spring flowers
you fashioned for me,
but that beautiful body of yours
is not to be seen.

You were called to mind
and called away
by the cruel gods
before you completed
the adornment of my left foot.
Come, finish painting it.

Coming by the path of the moth
that enters a flame,
I will again sit in your lap
my beloved,
before you're seduced in heaven
by the skilful women of the gods.

4.20

«Madanena vinā|kṛtā Ratih
kṣaṇa|mātraṃ kila jīvit” êti» me
vacanīyam idaṃ vyavasthitaṃ
ramaṇa! tvām anuyāmi yady api.

Kriyatām katham antya|maṇḍanaṃ
para|lok’|āntaritasya te mayā?
samam eva gato ’sy a|tarkitām
gatim aṅgena ca jīvitena ca.

ṛjutām nayataḥ smarāmi te
śaram utsaṅga|niṣaṅṅa|dhanvanaḥ
Madhunā saha sasmitām kathām
nayan’|ôpānta|vilokitaṃ ca tat.

Kva nu te hṛdayaṃ|gamaḥ sakhā
kusum’|āyojita|kārmuko Madhuḥ?
na khal’ ūgra|ruṣā Pinākinā
gamitaḥ so ’pi suhṛd|gatām gatim?»

That it should be said
'Rati deprived of Kama
lived even a moment'
is to my shame,
follow after you though I will,
my darling.

How can I adorn you
for your last rites
when you've disappeared
into the next world?
Your departure's
beyond comprehension,
for both body and life
have gone simultaneously.

I remember you straightening an arrow,
the bow lying across your lap
while you talked and laughed with Spring,
and looked at me
out of the corner of your eye.

Where now is your charming friend,
Spring, who supplied your bow
with his flowers?
Has he not been sent
on the same path as his friend
by Bow-bearing Shiva in his fierce rage?"

4.25 Atha taiḥ paridevit'ākṣarair
hṛdaye digdha|phalair iv ârditaḥ
Ratim abhyupapattum āturāṃ
Madhur ātmānam adarśayat puraḥ.

Tam avekṣya ruroda sâ bhṛśaṃ
stana|saṃbâdham uro jaghâna ca
sva|janasya hi duḥkham agrato
vivṛta|dvāram iv' ôpajāyate.

Iti c' âinam uvāca duḥkhitâ
«suhṛdaḥ paśya Vasanta kiṃ sthitam
yad idaṃ kaṇaśaḥ prakīryate
pavanair bhasma kapota|karburam.

Ayi saṃprati dehi darśanam
Smara! paryutsuka eṣa Mâdhavaḥ.
dayitâsv an|avasthitaṃ nṛṇāṃ
na khalu prema calaṃ suhṛ|jjane.

Amunâ nanu pārśva|vartinâ
jagad âjñāṃ sa|sur'âsurāṃ tava
bisa|tantu|guṇasya kâritaṃ
dhanuṣaḥ pelava|puṣpa|pattriṇaḥ.

Then, pained in the heart
by her words of woe,
as if by poisoned barbs,
Spring showed himself
before the desolate Rati
to console her.

On seeing him she cried the more,
and beat her full-breasted chest,
for unhappiness becomes visible
in the presence of one's own people,
as through an open door.

And grief-stricken she said to him,
“See, Spring, what remains of your friend:
these particles of ash, dove-gray,
blown about in the wind.

Ayi, Kama, show yourself now!
Here is Spring, eager to see you.
For the women they love
men's affection may not endure,
but for their friends
it does not waver.

Surely with this one at your side,
the world with its gods and demons
was put under the command of your bow,
strung with lotus fiber
with delicate flowers as its arrows.

4.30 Gata eva na te nivartate
sa sakhā dīpa iv' ānil'āhataḥ.
aham asya daś" ēva. paśya mām
a|viśahya|vyasana|pradhūmitām.

Vidhinā kṛtam ardha|vaiśasaṃ
nanu māṃ Kāma|vadhe vimuñcatā.
an|agh" āpi hi saṃśraya|drume
gaja|bhagne patanāya vallarī.

Tad idaṃ kriyatām anantaraṃ
bhavatā bandhu|jana|prayojanam.
vidhurāṃ jvalan'ātisarjanān
nanu māṃ prāpaya bhartur antikam.

Śaśinā saha yāti kaumudī
saha meghena taḍit praliyate
pramadāḥ pati|vartma|gā iti
pratipannaṃ hi vicetanair api.

He's gone, that friend of yours,
and he will not return,
like a lamp struck by the wind.
I am his wick.
Look at me,
smoke-blackened by unbearable misery.

By sparing me
in the killing of Kama,
Fate has left the butchery
half undone.
The creeper has to fall,
though innocent,
when the tree that was its support
is broken by an elephant.

Therefore please perform
this service without delay
for your friend's wife.
Consign me,
widow that I am,
into the fire
and send me to the presence
of my husband.

Moonlight departs with the moon,
lightning disappears with the cloud,
for even inanimate things
acknowledge
that women
follow their husband's path.

Amun” āiva kaṣāyita|stanī
su|bhagena priya|gātra|bhasmanā
nava|pallava|saṃstare yathā
racayiṣyāmi tanuṃ vibhā|vasau.

4.35 Kusum’āstarāṇe sahāyatāṃ
bahuśaḥ saumya! gatas tvam āvayoḥ
kuru saṃprati tāvad āśu me
praṇipāt’āñjali|yācitas’ citām.

Tad|anu jvalanaṃ mad|arpitaṃ
tvarayer dakṣiṇa|vāta|vījanaiḥ
viditaṃ khalu te yathā Smaraḥ
kṣaṇam apy utsahate na mām vinā.

Iti c’ āpi vidhāya dīyatāṃ
salilasy’ āñjalir eka eva nau
a|vibhajya paratra yaṃ mayā
sahitaḥ pāsyati te sa bāndhavaḥ.

Smearing my breasts
with these blessed ashes
of my beloved's body,
I'll lay myself on the fire
as if it were a bed of fresh shoots.

Many a time, kind friend,
you helped the two of us
make our bed of flowers.
So now I beg you,
folding my hands and bowing,
be quick
and make a pyre for me.

4:35

After that, speed up the fire
on which I'm laid,
with the fanning of your south wind,
for surely you know that Kama
can't suffer even a moment
without me.

And when you've done this,
give us both
just the one offering of water
from your cupped hands.
Don't divide it.
Your friend will drink it
with me
in the next world.

Para|loka|vidhau ca Mādhava!
Smaram uddiśya vilola|pallavāḥ
nivapeḥ sahakāra|mañjarīḥ
priya|cūta|prasavo hi te sakhā.»

Iti deha|vimuktaye sthitāṃ
Ratim ākāśa|bhavā sarasvatī
śapharīṃ hrada|śoṣa|vihvalāṃ
prathamā vṛṣṭir iv' ānvakampata.

4.40 «Kusum'āyudha|patni! durlabhas
tava bhartā na cirād bhaviṣyati.
śṛṇu yena sa karmaṇā gataḥ
śalabhatvaṃ Hara|locan'ārciṣi.

Abhilāṣam udīrit'êndriyaḥ
sva|sutāyām akarot Prajā|patiḥ.
atha tena nigṛhya vikriyām
abhiśaptaḥ phalam etad anvabhūt.

And, Spring, in the funeral for Kama,
 you should offer mango flowers,
 with tremulous shoots,
 for the mango blossom
 was dear to your friend.”

To Rati standing ready
 to abandon her body,
 a voice from the sky
 offered comfort,
 as the first rain does
 a *sháphari* fish distressed
 by its pond drying up.

“Wife of flower-weaponed Love,
 you won’t long
 be deprived of your husband.
 Hear through what deed
 he became a moth in the fire
 of Shiva the Destroyer’s eye.

4.40

Brahma, Lord of Creation,
 his senses stirred,
 lusted for his own daughter.
 Then he suppressed the disturbance
 and cursed Kama—
 who has suffered
 this fruit of his action.

«Pariṇeṣyati Pārvatīm yadā
tapasā tat|pravaṇī|kṛto Haraḥ
upalabdha|sukhas tadā Smaraṃ
vapuṣā svena niyojayiṣyati.»

Iti c' āha sa dharmā|yācitaḥ
Smara|śāp'ānta|śívāṃ sarasvatīm.
aśaner amṛtasya c' ōbhayor
vaśinaś c' āmbu|dharāś ca yonayaḥ.

Tad idaṃ parirakṣa śobhane!
bhavitavya|priya|saṃgamam vapuḥ
ravi|pīta|jalā tap'ātyaye
punar oghena hi yujyate nadī.»

4.45 Itthaṃ Rateḥ kim api bhūtam a|dṛśya|rūpaṃ
mandī|cakāra maraṇa|vyavasāya|buddhim
tat|pratrayāc ca Kusum'āyudha|bandhur enām
āśvāsayat sucarit'ārtha|padair vacobhiḥ.

‘When Shiva the Destroyer,
brought to favor Párvati
by her penance,
marries her,
then in his joy
he will rejoin Kama
with his body.’

And Brahma, at Dharma’s entreaty,
uttered this speech, auspicious
in setting a limit to Kama’s curse:
self-controlled sages and rain clouds
are the source of both fire and nectar.

O beautiful woman!
look after this body of yours,
which will be united with your beloved,
for the river whose waters
have been drunk by the sun
is joined again with the flood
at the end of the hot season.”

Thus some wonderful being,
form unseen,
weakened Rati’s resolve to die
and because he trusted in it
Kama’s friend encouraged her
with optimistic words.

4.45

THE BIRTH OF KUMÁRA

Atha Madana|vadhūr upaplav'ântaṃ
vyasana|kṛśā paripālayāṃ babhūva
śāśina iva divātanasya lekhā
kiraṇa|parikṣaya|dhūsarā pradoṣam.

CANTO 4 – LOVE'S WIFE'S LAMENT

Then Kama's wife,
gaunt in her grief,
waited for the end
of her misfortune,
as the crescent moon
in the daytime,
gray with the failure of its rays,
waits for the evening.

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The greatest long poem in classical Sanskrit, by the greatest poet of the language, Kali-dasa's THE BIRTH OF KUMÁRA is not exactly a love story but a paradigm of inevitable union between male and female, played out on the immense scale of supreme divinity.

क्रे

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY PRESS
Washington Square
New York, NY 10003
www.nyupress.org

