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How Úrvashi Was Won

by Kali·dasa



Translated by
VELCHERU NARAYANA RAO
& DAVID SHULMAN

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ACT TWO

tataḥ praviśaty utkaṅṭhito RĀJĀ VIDŪŚAKAŚ *ca*.

RĀJĀ:

ā darśanāt praviṣṭā
sā me sura|loka|sundarī hṛdayam
bāṇena Makaraketoḥ
kṛta|mārgam a|vandhya|pātena. [2]

VIDŪŚAKAḤ (*ātma|gatam*): ॠ sampīḍidā khu dāva tavassiṇī
Kāsi|rāa|puttī.

RĀJĀ: api rakṣyate bhavatā rahasya|nikṣepaḥ?

2.25 VIDŪŚAKAḤ (*sa|viśādam, ātma|gatam*): ॠ adisaṃdhido mhi
dāsīe. aṅṅadhā ṇa vaasso evvaṃ pucchadi.

RĀJĀ: kiṃ bhavāṃs tūṣṇīm āste?

VIDŪŚAKAḤ: ॠ evvaṃ mae ṇiantidā jihā, jaṃ bhavado vi sa-
hasā paḍivaanaṃ ṇa demi.

RĀJĀ: yuktaṃ. atha kv' êdānīm ātmānaṃ vinodayeyaṃ?

VIDŪŚAKAḤ: ॠ mahāṅasaṃ gacchamha.

2.30 RĀJĀ: kiṃ tatra.

VIDŪŚAKAḤ: ॠ tahiṃ pañca|vihassa abbhavahārassa uvaṇada|
saṃbhārassa joaṇaṃ pekkhamāṇehiṃ sakkam ukkaṅṭhā
viṇodeduṃ.

Now the KING enters, full of longing, together with the CLOWN.

KING:

That beauty from heaven...
she entered my heart
at first sight, through the path
Love made with his arrow
that never fails.

CLOWN (*to himself*): I can see why the poor queen is suffering.

KING: I hope you've kept my secret.

CLOWN (*to himself, grieving*): That damned girl tricked me. 2.25
Otherwise, I wouldn't have had this question from my friend.

KING: Why don't you answer?

CLOWN: I've sealed my mouth so tightly that I can't even answer you.

KING: How nice. So: what shall we do now for fun?

CLOWN: Let's go to the kitchen.

KING: What's happening there? 2.30

CLOWN: We can watch how they put together the five kinds of food.* It will take our minds off her.

RĀJĀ: tatr' ēpsita|samñidhānād bhavān raṃsyate. mayā kha-
lu dur|labha|prārthanāḥ katham ātmā vinodayitavyaḥ?

VIDŪṢAKAḤ: Ṛṇaṃ bhavaṃ tattha|bhodī Uvvasīe daṃsaṇa|
pahaṃ gado?

RĀJĀ: tataḥ kiṃ?

2.35 VIDŪṢAKAḤ: Ṛṇa kkhu sā dull|laha, tti samatthemī,

RĀJĀ: pakṣa|pāto 'yam avadhāryatāṃ.

VIDŪṢAKAḤ: Ṛ evvaṃ vaḍḍhadi me kodūhalaṃ. kiṃ tattha|
bhodī Uvvasī a|dudīā rūveṇa, ahaṃ via virūvadāe?

RĀJĀ: Māṇavaka, praty|avayavam a|śakya|varṇanāṃ tām
avehi. samāsataḥ śrūyatāṃ.

VIDŪṢAKAḤ: Ṛ avahido mhi,

RĀJĀ:

2.40 ābharaṇasy' ābharaṇaṃ,
prasādhana|vidheḥ prasādhāna|viśeṣaḥ,
upamānasy' āpi, sakhe,
pratyupamānaṃ vapus tasyāḥ. [3]

VIDŪṢAKAḤ: Ṛ ado kkhu bhavadā divva|ras'|āhilāsiṇā cādaa|
vvaḍaṃ gahidaṃ,

RĀJĀ: vayasya, viviktād ṛte n' ānyad utsukasya manasaḥ
śaraṇam asti. tad bhavān pramada|vana|mārgam ādeśa-
yatu.

ACT TWO

KING: I'm sure there are things you'd enjoy there. But my mind is stuck on the impossible. It's not so easy to relax.

CLOWN: But Úrvashi saw you, didn't she?

KING: So what?

CLOWN: In that case, she's not so impossible to get. 2.35

KING: You're flattering me.

CLOWN: Now I'm curious. Is Úrvashi as beautiful as I'm ugly?

KING: Mánavaka, each and every part of her is beyond description. I'll have to summarize.

CLOWN: I'm all ears.

KING:

Jewels shine 2.40
because she wears them.
She beautifies beauty
and out-compares
all comparison.

CLOWN: You remind me of those birds who only drink water from the sky.

KING: My friend, when a person is in love, he needs to be alone. Lead me to the garden.

VIDŪŠAKAḤ (*ātma|gatam*): ʿkā gadi? (prākāśam) ʿido ido bhavaṃ, (parīkramya) ʿedena pamada|vaṇa|codideṇa via paccuggado bhavaṃ āantuo dakkhiṇa|mārudena,

RĀJĀ (*vilokya*): upapannaṃ viśeṣaṇam asya vāyoḥ. ayaṃ hi

2.45 niṣiñcan mādhavīm etāṃ
latāṃ, kaundīm ca nartayan,
sneha|dākṣiṇyayor yogāt
kām” īva pratibhāti me. [4]

VIDŪŠAKAḤ: ʿīdiso evva de ahiṇiveso, (parīkrāmitakena)
ʿedaṃ pamada|vaṇa|duvāraṃ. pavisadu bhavaṃ,

RĀJĀ: praviś’ āgrataḥ.

ubhau praviśataḥ.

RĀJĀ (*agrato vilokya*): vayasya, na mayā sādhu samarthitam,
āpat|pratīkāraḥ kila pramada|van’|ōdyāna|praveśa iti.

2.50 vivikṣur yad ahaṃ tūrṇaṃ udyānaṃ tāpa|śāntaye,
sroto|jav’|ōhyamānasya pratīpa|taraṇaṃ hi tat. [5]

VIDŪŠAKAḤ: ʿkahaṃ via?

RĀJĀ:

idam a|su|labha|vastu|prārthanā|dur|nivāraṃ
prathamam api mano me Pañcabāṇaḥ kṣiṇoti,
kim uta Malaya|vāt’|ōnmūlit’|āpāṇḍu|patrair
upavana|sahakārair darśiteṣv ankuṛeṣu. [6]

ACT TWO

CLOWN (*to himself*): What can I do? (*aloud*) This way, sir.
(*walking around*). The garden itself has sent a soothing
breeze from the south to receive you.

KING (*looking*): That's a nice way to describe the wind. For
soaking the vine of spring, 2.45
dancing with the winter jasmine
with passion and empathy in turn,
the wind plays the role
of a real lover.*

CLOWN: Just like what you'd like to be. (*walking around*)
Here is the gateway to the garden. Enter, sir.

KING: You go first.

They both enter.

KING (*looking straight ahead*): I was wrong. The garden of-
fers no solace when you're in trouble.

Why did I want to come here? 2.50
To calm the pain of love?
The flood is sweeping me away,
and I want to swim upstream.

CLOWN: How's that?

KING:

My mind just won't stop
seeking the impossible.
Love is torturing me
with his five arrows, and now, what is worse,
the south wind has blown away the yellowed leaves,
and the mango trees brandish

VIDŪSAKAḤ: ॠ alaṃ paridevidēṇa. a|ireṇa icchida|saṃpādaī-
tṭao Aṇaṅgo evva de saḥāo bhavissadi.

RĀJĀ: pratigrhītaṃ brāhmaṇa|vacanaṃ.

2.55 *iti parikrāmataḥ.*

VIDŪSAKAḤ: ॠ pekkhadu bhavaṃ vasanda|ôdāra|sūaam ahirā-
mattaṇaṃ pamada|vaṇassa.

RĀJĀ: nanu prati|pādapam ev' ālokayāmi. atra hi

agre strī|nakha|pāṭalaṃ kurabakaṃ

śyāmaṃ dvayor bhāgayor;

bāl' |âsokam upoḍha|rāga|subhagaṃ

bhed' |ônmukhaṃ tiṣṭhati;

iṣad|baddha|rajah|kaṇ' |âgra|kapiśā

cūte navā mañjarī.

mugdhatvasya ca yauvanasya ca, sakhe,

madhye madhu|śrīḥ sthitā. [7]

VIDŪSAKAḤ: ॠ eso maṇi |silā |paṭṭa |saṇāho adimutta |ladā |
maṇḍavo bhamara |saṃghaṭṭa |paḍidehiṃ kusumehiṃ
saam via kid' |ôvaāro bhavantaṃ paḍicchadi. tā aṇugeṇ-
hīadu dāva eso.

2.60 RĀJĀ: yathā bhavate rocate.

ity upaviśataḥ.

ACT TWO

their sharp, fresh buds.

CLOWN: Stop whining. Very soon that same Love God will come to your aid and bring you happiness.

KING: A brahmin's blessing received with thanks.

They walk around.

2.55

CLOWN: Look at the beauty of the garden, ready to invite spring in.

KING: Don't I see it in tree after tree?

Look at the *kúrabaka*, dark on both sides but
light red
on top, like the fingernails of a woman.
The young *ashóka* is blood-red and ready
to explode. Fresh clusters of mango blossoms
are dusted with gold in the middle where the pollen
has slightly hardened. Spring unfolds
like a woman poised between innocence
and fullness.

CLOWN: This pavilion made of vines hanging over a slab of jeweled stone is waiting to welcome you with flowers that have fallen under the weight of the bees. Honor it by taking a seat.

KING: As you please.

2.60

They both sit down.

VIDŪṢAKAḤ: 'ṛha suh' |āsīṇo bhavaṃ lalida |ladā |vilohīamāṇa |
naṇo Uvvasī |gadaṃ ukkaṅṭhaṃ viṇodedu,]

RĀJĀ (*nihśvasya*):

mama kusumitāsv api, sakhe,
n' ōpavana |latāsu namra |viṭapāsu
cakṣur badhnāti dhṛtiṃ
tad |rūp' |āloka |dur |lalitaṃ. [8]

2.65 tad upāyaś cintyatām yathā sa |phala |prārthano bhaveyaṃ

VIDŪṢAKAḤ (*vihasya*): 'bho, Ahallā |kāmuassa Mahindassa
vajjo, Uvvasī |pajjucchuassa bhavado ahaṃ, duve vi ettha
ummattaā,]

RĀJĀ: ati |snehaḥ khalu kārya |darśī.

VIDŪṢAKAḤ: 'eso cintemi. mā uṇa paridevideṇa samādhim
bhindhi,]

cintām rūpayati.

2.70 RĀJĀ (*nimittaṃ sūcayitvā, ātma |gatam*):

na su |labhā sakal' |ēndu |mukhī ca sā,
kim api c' ēdam Anaṅga |viceṣṭitam
abhimukhīṣv iva kāṅkṣita |siddhiṣu
vrajati nirvṛtim eka |pade manaḥ. [9]

*jāt' |āsas tiṣṭhati. tataḥ praviśaty ākāśa |yānen' ŌRVAŚĪ CITRA-
LEKHĀ ca.*

CLOWN: Now that you're sitting in comfort, you can let the vines enchant your eyes and perhaps forget about her.

KING (*sighing*):

Vines rich with flowers
 grace the curving branches,
 but my eyes don't rest there.
 They want to see nothing
 but her.

Think of some way to make my wish bear fruit. 2.65

CLOWN (*laughing*): I'm out of my depth in this matter. The thunderbolt couldn't help Indra when he was in love with Ahálya, and I'm not much use to you with Úrvashi.

KING: If you're a good friend, you'll find a way.

CLOWN: Be quiet, I'm thinking. Don't ruin my concentration with your whining.

Mimes thinking.

KING (*to himself, indicating a good omen*): 2.70

She's not easy to reach,
 that woman radiant as the full moon.
 Still, the Love God is giving me a sign.
 When what you most want
 is about to happen, a sudden happiness
 floods your heart.

He waits, hopeful. ÚRVASHI enters through the sky together with CHITRA·LEKHA.

CITRALEKHĀ: 「halā, kaḥiṃ a|ṇiddiṭṭha|kāraṇaṃ gacchīadi?»

URVAŚĪ: 「sahi, tadā Hemaūḍa|sihare ladā|viḍaveṇa khaṇa|vigghid'āāsa|gamaṇaṃ maṃ ohasia kiṃ dāṇiṃ pucchasi?»

2.75 CITRALEKHĀ: 「kiṃ tassa rā'êsiṇo Purūravassa saāsaṃ patthidā si?»

URVAŚĪ: 「aaṃ me avahatthida|lajjo vavasāo.»

CITRALEKHĀ: 「ko uṇa sahīe paḍhamam pesido?»

URVAŚĪ: 「hiaam.»

CITRALEKHĀ: 「ado avaram ṇ' atthi me uttaram.»

2.80 URVAŚĪ: 「teṇa hi ādisadu me sahī maggaṃ, jeṇa gacchantīe ṇa antar|āo bhava.»

CITRALEKHĀ: 「sahi, vīsaddhā hohi. ṇaṃ bhaavadā deva|guruṇā Avarāidaṃ ṇāma sihā|bandhaṇa|vijjaṃ uvadisanteṇa ti|dasa|paḍivakkhassa a|laṅghaṇīā kada mha?»

URVAŚĪ: 「sahi, savvaṃ sumaremi.»

siddha|mārgam āsādyā.

CITRALEKHĀ: 「edaṃ bhaavadīe Bhāīrahīe Jamuṇā|saṃgama|pāvaṇesu salilesu oloantassa via attāṇaṃ Paīṭṭhāṇassa sih'ābharaṇa|bhūdaṃ rā'êsiṇo bhavaṇaṃ uvagada mha.»

CHITRA·LEKHA: Hey, where are you going without telling me?

ÚRVASHI: Now you're asking me? You laughed at me when for a moment I was caught on a branch on the Golden Peak.

CHITRA·LEKHA: Are you on your way to see Puru·ravas, that noble king? 2.75

ÚRVASHI: That's exactly what I intend, and I'm not ashamed of it.

CHITRA·LEKHA: Who did you send ahead as your messenger?

ÚRVASHI: My heart.

CHITRA·LEKHA: Then there's nothing more to say.

ÚRVASHI: In that case, show me the best way, one without any obstacles. 2.80

CHITRA·LEKHA: Don't worry. Hasn't Brihas·pati, the guru of the gods, taught us the magic art of tying our hair in the Aparájita knot, which makes us invisible to anyone but the gods?*

ÚRVASHI: My friend, I remember everything.

*They follow the siddha path.**

CHITRA·LEKHA: We're close to the palace of that noble king, the jewel in the crown of Pratishtána,* which seems to be admiring its own beauty as reflected in the purifying waters of the Yámuna and the Ganga, where they meet.



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How ÚRVASHI WAS WON is a play that celebrates human love, enacting, with penetrating insight and lyrical precision, the early stages of ecstasy and fulfillment. But Kali-dasa's greatness is in showing the ambiguity of the love relation, including the separation and madness that are part of the ecstasy; he is able to touch the ultimately tragic side of love.

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