

**The Meghaduta of Kalidasa**  
A literal translation by McComas Taylor  
(diacritics omitted)

Part I

A certain *yaksha* who had been negligent in the execution of his own duties, on account of a curse from his master which was to be endured for a year and which was onerous as it separated him from his beloved, made his residence among the hermitages of Ramagiri, whose waters were blessed by the bathing of the daughter of Janaka<sup>1</sup> and whose shade trees grew in profusion. (1)

That lover, separated from his beloved, whose gold armband had slipped from his bare forearm, having dwelt on that mountain for some months, on the first day of the month of Asadha, saw a cloud embracing the summit, which resembled a mature elephant playfully butting a bank. (2)

Managing with difficulty to stand up in front of that cloud which was the cause of the renewal of his enthusiasm, that attendant of the king of kings, pondered while holding back his tears. Even the mind of a happy person is excited at the sight of a cloud. How much more so, when the one who longs to cling to his neck is far away? (3)

As the month of Nabhas was close at hand, having as his goal the sustaining of the life of his beloved and wishing to cause the tidings of his own welfare to be carried by the cloud, the delighted being spoke kind words of welcome to the cloud to which offerings of fresh *kutaja* flowers had been made. (4)

Owing to his impatience, not considering the incompatibility between a cloud consisting of vapour, light, water and wind and the contents of his message best delivered by a person of normal faculties, the *yaksha* made this request to the cloud, for among sentient and non-sentient things, those afflicted by desire are naturally miserable: (5)

I know that you, born in the world-renowned clan of Pushkara and Avartakas, are a minister of Indra, and are able to change shape at will. For this reason, I, whose spouse is far away by force of a command, make this request to you. Better a request made in vain to one of superior qualities than wishes satisfied by one who is inferior. (6)

You are the refuge of those tormented by heat. Therefore, O giver of water, take this message from me, separated from my beloved by the anger of the lord of wealth.<sup>2</sup> Go to the residence of the kings of *yakshas*, Alaka by name, whose palaces are bathed by the light of the moon at the head of Shiva who dwells in the outer garden. (7)

The wives of travellers, holding back the tips of their locks of hair, taking courage from their confidence (in their husbands' return), will look up at you raised on to the path of the wind. When you are about to discharge (your showers), who, other than a person like me whose actions are subject to another's will, would neglect a wife made miserable by separation, (8)

Without doubt, your path unimpeded, you will see your brother's wife,<sup>3</sup> intent on counting the days, faithful and living on. The bond of hope generally sustains the quickly sinking hearts of women who are alone, and which wilt like flowers. (9)

Just as the favourable wind drives you slowly onward, this *cataka* cuckoo, your kinsman, calls sweetly on the left. Knowing the season for fertilisation, cranes, like threaded garlands in the sky, lovely to the eye, will serve you. (10)

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<sup>1</sup> Sita.

<sup>2</sup> His master Kubera.

<sup>3</sup> i.e. the *yaksha*'s wife.

Having heard your thunder, pleasing to the ear and which causes the earth to abound with mushrooms and to be fruitful, the royal geese, yearning for Lake Manas, bearing pieces of lotus root as victuals for the journey, will fly together as your companions in the sky as far as Mt Kailasa. (11)

Having embraced your dear friend, that lofty mountain, marked on its flanks by the feet of the lord of Raghu<sup>4</sup> which are worshipped by men, take your leave. Year after year, having come for union with it, there is a display of affection on your part—you who release hot tears born of long separation. (12)

Now attend to me as I describe the route that befits your journey. After that, O cloud, you will hear my message that your ears will imbibe. You will proceed on that route, resting your feet on mountain peaks whenever you are wearied, and enjoying the water of the rivers whenever you are exhausted and have grown excessively light. (13)

Your steady passage observed by charming female siddhas who in trepidation wonder ‘Has the summit been carried off the mountain by the wind?’, you who are heading north, fly up into the sky from this place where the nicula trees flourish, avoiding on the way the blows of the trunks of the elephants of the four quarters of the sky. (14)

This rainbow, resembling the intermingled sparkling of jewels, appears before Mt Valmikagra, on account of which your dark body takes on a particular loveliness, as did the body of Vishnu dressed as a cowherd with the peacock’s feather of glistening lustre. (15)

While being imbibed by the eyes of the country women who are ignorant of the play of the eyebrows, who are tender in their affection, and who are thinking ‘The result of the harvest depends on you’, having ascended to a region whose fields are fragrant from recent ploughing, you should proceed a little to the west. Your pace is swift. Go north once more. (16)

Mt Amrakuta will carefully bear you upon its head—you whose showers extinguished its forest fires and who are overcome by fatigue of the road. Even a lowly being, remembering an earlier kind deed, does not turn its back on a friend who has come for refuge; how much less, then, one so lofty? (17)

When you, remembling a glossy braid of hair, have ascended its summit, the mountain whose slopes are covered with forest mangoes, glowing with ripe fruit, takes on the appearance of a breast of the earth, dark at the centre, the rest pale, worthy to be beheld by a divine couple. (18)

Having rested for a moment at a bower enjoyed by the forest-dwelling women, then travelling more swiftly when your waters have been discharged, the next stage thence is crossed. You will see the river Reva spread at the foot of Mt Vandhya, made rough with rocks and resembling the pattern formed by the broken wrinkles on the body of an elephant. (19)

Your showers shed, having partaken of her waters that are scented with the fragrant exudation of forest elephants and whose flow is impeded by thickets of rose-apples, you should proceed. Filled with water, the wind will be unable to lift you, O cloud, for all this is empty is light, while fullness results in heaviness. (20)

Seeing the yellow-brown *nipa* with their stamens half erect, eating the *kankali* flowers whose first buds have appeared on every bank, and smelling the highly fragrant scent of the forest earth, the deer will indicate the way to the cloud. (21)

I perceive in an instant, friend, your delays on mountain after mountain scented with *kakubha* flowers—you who should desire to proceed for the sake of my beloved. Welcomed by peacocks with teary eyes who have turned their cries into words of welcome, you should somehow resolve to proceed at once. (22)

Watching the *cataka* cuckoos that are skilled in catching raindrops, and watching the herons flying in skeins as they count them, the siddhas will hold you in high regard at the moment of your thundering, having received the trembling, agitated embraced of their beloved female companions! (23)

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<sup>4</sup> Rama

When you reach it, the land of the Dasharna will prove to have garden-hedges made white with *ketaka* flowers split open at the tip, village trees filled with the nest-building of birds which feed off domestic offerings, and forest borders whose rose-apples are darkened by ripe fruit, where the geese may tarry for a day or two. (24)

Reaching their capital by the name of Vidisha, renowned in all quarters, and having won at once complete satisfaction of your desires, you will drink the sweet, rippling water from the Vetravati River which roars pleasantly at the edge of her banks, rippling as if her face bore a frown. (25)

There, for the sake of rest, you should occupy the mountain known as Nicaih which seems to thrill at your touch with its full-blown *kadamba* flowers, and whose grottoes make known the unbridled youthful deeds of the townsmen by emitting the scent of intercourse with bought women. (26)

After resting, move on while watering with fresh raindrops the clusters of jasmine buds that grow in gardens on the banks of the forest rivers—you who have made a momentary acquaintance with the flower-picking girls by lending shade to their faces, the lotuses at whose ears are withered and broken as they wipe away the perspiration from their cheeks. (27)

Even though the route would be circuitous for one who, like you, is northward-bound, do not turn your back on the love on the palace roofs in Ujjayini. If you do not enjoy the eyes with flickering eyelids of the women startled by bolts of lightning there, then you have been deceived! (28)

On the way, after you have ascended to the Nirvandhya River, whose girdles are flocks of birds calling on account of the turbulence of her waves, whose gliding motion is rendered delightful with stumbling steps, and whose exposed navel is her eddies, fill yourself with water, for amorous distraction is a woman's first expression of love for their beloved. (29)

When you have passed that, you should duly adopt the means by which the Sindhu River may cast off her emaciation—she whose waters have become like a single braid of hair, whose complexion is made pale by the old leaves falling from the trees on her banks, and who shows you goodwill because she has been separated from you, O fortunate one. (30)

Having reached Avanti where the village elders are well-versed in the legend of Udayana, make your way to the aforementioned city of Vishala, filled with splendour, like a beautiful piece of heaven carried there by means of the remaining merit of gods who had fallen to earth when the fruits of the good actions had nearly expired; (31)

Where, at daybreak, the breeze from the Shipra River, carrying abroad the sweet, clear, impassioned cries of the geese, fragrant from contact with the scent of full-blown lotuses and pleasing to the body, carries off the lassitude of the women after their love-play, like a lover making entreaties for further enjoyment. (32)

And having seen by the tens of millions the strings of pearls with shining gems as their central stones, conches, pearl-shells, emeralds as green as fresh grass with radiating brilliance and pieces of coral displayed in the market there, the oceans appear to contain nothing but water; (33)

And where the knowledgeable populace regale visiting relatives thus: 'Here the king of the Vatsa brought the precious daughter of Pradyota. Here was the golden grove of *tala*-trees of that same monarch. Here, they say, roamed Nalagiri (the elephant), having pulled out his tie-post in fury.' (34)

Your bulk increased by the incense that is used for perfuming the hair that issues from the lattices, and honoured with gifts of dance by the domestic peacocks out of their love for their friend, lay aside the weariness of the travel while admiring the splendour of its palaces which are scented with flowers and marked by the hennaed feet of the lovely women. (35)

Observed respectfully by divine retinuees who are reminded of the colour of their master's throat,<sup>5</sup> you should proceed to the holy abode of the lord of the three worlds, husband of Chandi,<sup>6</sup> whose gardens are caressed by the winds from the Gandhavati River, scented with the pollen of the blue lotuses and perfumed by the bath-oils used by young women who delight in water-play. (36)

Even if you arrive at Mahakala at some other time, O cloud, you should wait until the sun passes from the range of the eye. Playing the honourable role of drum at the evening offering to Shiva, you will receive the full reward for your deep thunder. (37)

There, their girdles jingling to their footsteps, and their hands tired from the pretty waving of fly-whisks whose handles are brilliant with the sparkle of jewels, having received from you raindrops at the onset of the rainy season that soothe the scratches made by fingernails, the courtesans cast you lingering sidelong glances that resemble rows of honey-bees. (38)

Then, settled above the forests whose trees are like uplifted arms, being round in shape, producing an evening light, red as a fresh China-rose, at the start of Shiva's dance, remove his desire for a fresh elephant skin—you whose devotion is beheld by Parvati, her agitation stilled and her gaze transfixed.<sup>7</sup> (39)

Reveal the ground with a bolt of lightning that shines like a streak of gold on a touchstone to the young women in that vicinity going by night to the homes of their lovers along the royal highroad which has been robbed of light by a darkness that could be pricked with a needle. Withhold your showers of rain and rumbling thunder: they would be frightened! (40)

Passing that night above the roof-top of a certain house where pigeons sleep, you, whose consort the lightning is tired by prolonged sport, should complete the rest of your journey when the sun reappears. Indeed, those who have promised to accomplish a task for a friend do not tarry. (41)

At that time, the tears of the wronged wives are to be soothed away by their husbands. Therefore abandon at once the path of the sun. He too has returned to remove the tears of dew from the lotus-faces of the lilies. If you obstruct his rays, he may become greatly incensed. (42)

Your naturally beautiful reflection will gain entry into the clear waters of the Gambhira River, as into a clear mind. Therefore it is not fitting that you, out of obstinacy, should render futile her glances which are the darting leaps of little fish, as white as night-lotus flowers. (43)

Removing her blue garment which is her water, exposing her hips which are her banks, it is clutched by cane-branches as if grasped by her hands. Departure will inevitably be difficult for you who tarries, O friend. Who, having experienced enjoyment, is able to forsake another whose loins are laid bare? (44)

A cool breeze, grown pleasant through contact with the scent of the earth refreshed by your showers, which is inhaled by elephants with a pleasing sound at their nostrils, and which is the ripener of wild figs in the forest, gently fans you who desire to proceed to Devagiri. (45)

There, you, taking the form of a cloud of flowers, should bathe Skanda, who always resides there, with a shower of flowers, wet with the water of the heavenly Ganges. For he is the energy surpassing the sun, that was born into the mouth of the fire by the bearer of the crescent moon<sup>8</sup> for the purpose of protecting the forces of the sons of Indra. (46)

Then, with claps of thunder, magnified by their own echoes, you should cause to dance the peacock of the son of Agni,<sup>9</sup> the corners of whose eyes are bathed by the light of the crescent moon at the head of

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<sup>5</sup> Shiva's neck is said to be dark blue or black.

<sup>6</sup> Shiva

<sup>7</sup> 'The cloud on account of its resemblance to an elephant's skin, is asked to remove Shiva's desire for the elephant's hide at the time of his evening dance.' Kale, p.70.

<sup>8</sup> Shiva

<sup>9</sup> Skanda

Shiva and whose discarded tail-feather, ringed by rays of light, Parvati placed behind her ear, next to the petal of the blue lotus, out of her love for her son. (47)

Having worshipped that god born in a reedbed,<sup>10</sup> after you have travelled further, your route abandoned by siddha-couples carrying lutes because they fear rain-drops, you should descend while paying homage to the glory of Randideva, born from the slaughter of the daughter of Surabhi,<sup>11</sup> and who arose on earth in the form of a river. (48)

When you, the robber of the complexion of bearer of the bow Sharnga,<sup>12</sup> stoop to drink the water of that river, which is broad but appears narrow from a distance, those who range the skies, when they look down, will certainly see that the stream resembles a single string of pearls on the earth, enlarged at its centre with a sapphire. (49)

Having crossed the river, go on, making yourself into a form worthy of the curiosity of the eyes of the women of Dashapura, adept in the amorous play of their tendril-like eyebrows, whose dark and variageted brilliance flashes up at the fluttering of their eyelashes, and whose splendour has been stolen from the bees attendant on tossing *kunda* flowers. (50)

Then, entering the district of Brahmavarta, accompanied by your shadow, you should proceed to the plain of the Kurus, evocative of the battle of the warriors, where the one whose bow is Gandiva<sup>13</sup> brought down showers of hundreds of sharp arrows, just as you bring down showers of rain on the faces of the lotuses. (51)

Having partaken of the waters of the Sarasvati which were enjoyed by the bearer of the plough<sup>14</sup> who was averse to war on account of his love for his kinsfolk, after he had forsaken the wine of agreeable flavour which was marked by the reflection of Revati's eyes, you, friend, will be purified within: only your colour will be black. (52)

From there you should go to the daughter of Jahnu<sup>15</sup> above the Kanakhula mountains, where she emerges from the Himalaya, who provided a flight of steps to heaven for the sons of Sagara, and who laughing with her foam at the frown on the face of Gauri, made a grab at the hair of Shambhu<sup>16</sup> and clasped his crescent moon with her wave-hands. (53)

If you, like an elephant of the gods, your front partly inclining down from the sky to drink her waters which are pure as crystal, in an instant, because of your reflection on her gliding current, she would become very lovely, as if united with the Yamuna in second location. (54)

Having reached the mountain which is the source of that very river, whose crags are made fragrant with the scent of the musk of the deer that recline there, white with snow, reposing on the summit which dispells the fatigue of travel, you will take on the splendour like that of the white soil cast up by the bull of the three-eyed one.<sup>17</sup> (55)

If, when the wind is blowing, a forest fire were to afflict the mountain, ignited by the friction of branches of the *sarala* trees, burning with its flames the tail-hairs of the yaks, it would befit you to extinguish it completely with thousands of torrents of water, for the resources of the great have as their fruit the alleviation of those who suffer misfortune. (56)

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<sup>10</sup> Skanda

<sup>11</sup> i.e. cows

<sup>12</sup> Vishnu

<sup>13</sup> Arjuna

<sup>14</sup> Balarama

<sup>15</sup> The Ganges

<sup>16</sup> Shiva

<sup>17</sup> Shiva

The *sharabha*<sup>18</sup> there, intent on springing in anger at you who departs from their path, would lunge at you, only to break their own limbs. You should cover them with a tumultuous storm of hail and rain. Who, intent upon a fruitless endeavour, would not be the object of contempt? (57)

There, with your body bowed in devotion, you should circumambulate the foot-print of the one wears the half-moon diadem,<sup>19</sup> which is continually heaped with offerings from ascetics, and at the sight of which, at their departure from the bodies, cleansed of their misdeeds, the faithful are able to achieve the immutable state of membership of Shiva's following. (58)

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inÿaRdl te murj #v cet! kNdre;u Xvin> Syat! s¼ltawaeR nnu pzupteStÇ -avl smç>. 59.

The bamboo canes filled with the wind sound sweetly. Victory over the three cities is celebrated in song by the Kinnari demi-gods. If your rumbling like a *muraja* drum resounds in the caves, the theme of a concert for Shiva will be complete. (59)

Having passed various features on the flanks of the Himalayas, proceed thence north to Krauncarandhra, gateway for wild geese, which was the route to glory for Bhrgupati—you whose beautiful form is flat and long, like the dark blue foot of Vishnu uplifted for the suppression of Bali. (60)

And having gone further, become the guest of Mt Kailasa, the seams of whose peaks were rent by the arms of the Ten-faced one<sup>20</sup> and which is a mirror for the consorts of the Thirty Gods, and which, extending with lofty peaks like white lotuses, stands in the sky like the loud laughter of the three-eyed one<sup>21</sup> accumulated day by day. (61)

I foresee that when you, resembling glossy powdered kohl, reach the foot of that mountain as white as a freshly cut piece of ivory, the imminent beauty will be fit to be gazed upon with an unerring eye, like the dark blue garment placed on the shoulder of the Plough-carrier.<sup>22</sup> (62)

And if Gauri<sup>23</sup> should take a walk on the foot of that pleasure-hill, lent a hand by Shiva who has set aside his serpent-bracelet, your shape transformed into a flight of steps, your torrents of water withheld within yourself, become a stairway rising in front of her for the ascent of the jewel-slopes. (63)

There the young women of the gods will use you as a shower—you whose waters are brought forth by the striking together of the diamonds in their bracelets. If, friend, you were unable to release yourself from them, being encountered in the hot season, startle them who are intent on playing with you, with claps of thunder, harsh to the ear. (64)

Partaking of the waters of Manasa which bring forth golden lotuses, bringing at pleasure momentary delight like a cloth upon the face of Airavata, shaking with your winds the sprouts of wish-fulfilling trees like garments, enjoy the king of mountains with various playful actions, O cloud. (65)

Once you, who wander at will, have seen Alaka seated in the lap of the mountain like a lover, with the Ganges like a garment that has slipped, you will not fail to recognise her again with her lofty palaces and bearing hosts of clouds with showers of rain at the time of year when you are present, resembling a woman whose tresses are interwoven with strings of pearls; (66)

## Part II

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<sup>18</sup> A fierce mythical beast with eight legs.

<sup>19</sup> Shiva.

<sup>20</sup> Ravana.

<sup>21</sup> Shiva.

<sup>22</sup> Balarama.

<sup>23</sup> Shiva's consort.

Where the palaces are worthy of comparison to you in these various aspects: you possess lightning, they have lovely women; you have a rainbow, they are furnished with pictures; they have music provided by resounding drums, you produce deep, gentle rumbling; you have water within, they have floors made of gemstones; you are lofty, their rooftops touch the sky; (1)

Where there are decorative lotuses in the hands of the young wives; fresh jasmine woven into their hair; where the beauty of their faces is made whiter by the pollen of *lodhra* flowers; in the thick locks on their crowns are fresh *kurubaka* flowers; on their ears charming *shirisa* flowers; and on the parting of their hair, *nipa* flowers that bloom on your arrival; (2)

Where the trees, humming with intoxicated bees, are always in flower; the lily pools, having rows of wild geese as waistbands, always produce lotuses; where the tails of the tame peacocks, their necks upstretched to cry out, are always resplendent; and where the evenings are perpetually moonlit and pleasant, and darkness has been banished; (3)

Where the tears of the lords of wealth are of utmost joy, having no other cause, there being no suffering other than that caused by the flower-arrowed god<sup>24</sup> which is to be assuaged by union with the desired one; where there is separation other than that arising from lovers' quarrels; and where there is indeed no age other than youth; (4)

Where yakshas, having assembled on the upper terraces of the palace, made of crystal, with reflected stars as floral arrangements, accompanied by their excellent womenfolk, enjoy *ratiphalam* wine produced by a wish-fulfilling tree, while drums whose sound resembles your deep thunder are beaten softly; (5)

Where the girls, desired by the immortals, fanned by breezes cooled by the waters of the Mandakini river, the heat dispelled by the shade of the *mandara* trees that grow on its banks, play with jewels hidden by burying them with clenched fists in the golden sands and which are to be searched for; (6)

Where the handfuls of powder flung by those red-lipped women bewildered by shame when their lovers passionately pull away their linen garments, the ties of which have been loosened and undone by restless hands, although they reach the long-rayed jewel-lamps, they fail to extinguish them; (7)

Ragged clouds, like yourself, brought to the upper stories of the palaces of Alaka by the leader of the wind, having committed the misdeed of shedding raindrops on a painting, cleverly imitating puffs of smoke, flee immediately by way of the lattices as if filled with dread; (8)

Where at night the moonstones, hanging from a web of threads and shedding full drops of water under the influence of moonbeams bright since the removal of your obstruction, dispel the physical langour after sexual enjoyment on the part of the women who are freed from the embraces of their lovers' arms; (9)

Where lovers, with inexhaustible treasure their residences, together with the kinnaras who sing with sweet voices of the glory of the lord of wealth, accompanied by celestial courtesans, engage in conversation and enjoy everyday the outer grove known as Vaibhrajā; (10)

Where at sunrise the route taken by women in love the previous night is indicated by mandara flowers with torn petals that were shaken from their hair by the movement of their walking, by the golden lotuses that slipped from behind their ears, and by necklaces of strings of pearls the threads of which broke upon their breasts; (11)

Where a single wish-fulfilling tree produces every adornment for women: coloured garments, wine which is capable of inducing an amorous playfulness to the eyes, flowers together with buds which are distinctive among ornaments, and red henna dye suitable for application to their lotus-like feet; (12)

Where horses, as dark as leaves, rival the steeds of the sun; where elephants, as tall as mountains, pour forth showers, like you, from the pores of their temples; and where the foremost warriors stood in battle

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<sup>24</sup> The god of love.

against the Ten-faced one,<sup>25</sup> the splendour of their ornaments surpassed by the scars of the wounds from Candrasaha; (13)

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sæU-¼àihntynE> kaimlúye:vmae"E> tSyaM-íturvintaivæmErev isi>. 14.

Where the god of love does not generally carry his bow strung with bees, out of fear, knowing that the god who is the friend of the lord of wealth<sup>26</sup> dwells there in person: his task is accomplished by the amorous play of talented women whose glances are cast by means of curved eyebrows and which are not in vain among the objects of their desire. (14)

There, to the north of the residence of the lord of wealth, our home is to be recognised from afar by an arched portal as lovely as a rainbow, near which a young *mandara* tree, caused to bow down by bunches of flowers that may be touched by the hand, is cherished by my beloved like an adopted son. (15)

And within is a pool the steps of which are studded with emerald stone, filled with flowering golden lotuses whose stalks are of smooth chrysoberyl. On its waters the geese that have taken up residence there do not think of Lake Manas close at hand, and are free from sorrow, having seen you. (16)

On its bank there is a pleasure hill whose summit is studded with fine sapphires, beautiful to behold with a hedge of golden plantain trees. Having seen you, O friend, with flashing lightning, near at hand, I recall that mountain with a despondent mind, thinking, 'It is enjoyed by my spouse'. (17)

Here is a red *ashoka* with trembling buds and a charming *kesara* near a hedge of *kurubaka* and a bower of *madhavi*. One desires (as I do) the touch of your friend's left foot.<sup>27</sup> The other longs for a mouthful of wine from her, having as its pretext a craving. (18)

And between these is a golden perch with a crystal base, studded at its foot with gems that shine like half-grown bamboo, on which rests your friend the blue-necked one,<sup>28</sup> who, at the day's end, is caused to dance by my beloved with claps of her hands, made pleasant by the jingling of her bracelets. (19)

Having seen the figures of Shanka and Padma painted near the door,<sup>29</sup> by these signs preserved in your heart, O noble one, you may distinguish the residence, now reduced in beauty because of my absence. Indeed, at the setting of the sun, even the lotus does not display its own splendour. (20)

Having shrunk at once to the size of a small elephant for the sake of a swift descent, resting on the pleasure mountain with lovely peaks that I have mentioned, please cast your gaze in the form of a flickering bolt of faint lightning upon the interior of the house, like the glow of a swarm of fire-flies. (21)

The slender young woman who is there would be the premier creation by the Creator in the sphere of women, with fine teeth, lips like a ripe *bimba* fruit, a slim waist, eyes like a startled doe's, a deep navel, a gait slow on account of the weight of her hips, and who is slightly stooped by the weight of her breasts. (22)

You should know that she whose words are few, my second life, is like a solitary female *cakravaka* duck when I, her mate, am far away. While these weary days are passing, I think the girl whose longing is deep has taken on an altered appearance, like a lotus blighted by frost. (23)

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<sup>25</sup> Ravana

<sup>26</sup> i.e. Shiva

<sup>27</sup> Kale: 'The *asoka* is said to put forth flowers when kicked with her left foot by a beautiful woman'. '*Kesara* also is poetically described as putting forth blossoms when sprinkled over with mouthfuls of wine by young ladies'.

<sup>28</sup> i.e. a peacock.

<sup>29</sup> Two auspicious signs.

Surely the face of my beloved, her eyes swollen from violent weeping, the colour of her lower lip changed by the heat of her sighs, resting upon her hand, partially hidden by the hanging locks of her hair, bears the miserable appearance of the moon with its brightness obscured when pursued by you. (24)

She will come at once into your sight, either engaged in pouring oblations, or drawing from memory my portrait, but grown thin on account of separation, or asking the sweet-voiced *sarika* bird in its cage, 'I hope you remember the master, O elegant one, for you are his favourite'; (25)

Or having placed a lute on a dirty cloth on her lap, friend, wanting to sing a song whose words are contrived to contain my name, and somehow plucking the strings wet with tears, again and again she forgets the melody, even though she composed it herself; (26)

Or engaged in counting the remaining months set from the day of our separation until the end by placing flowers on the ground at the threshold, or enjoying acts of union that are preserved in her mind. These generally are the diversions of women when separated from their husbands. (27)

During the day, when she has distractions, separation will not torment her so much. I fear that your friend will have greater suffering at night without distraction. You who carry my message, positioned above the palace roof-top, see the good woman at midnight, lying on the ground, sleepless, and cheer her thoroughly. (28)

Grown thin with anxiety, lying on one side on a bed of separation, resembling the body of the moon on the eastern horizon when only one sixteenth part remains, shedding hot tears, passing that night, lengthened by separation, which spent in desired enjoyments in company with me would have passed in an instant. (29)

Covering with eyelashes heavy with tears on account of her sorrow, her eyes which were raised to face the rays of the moon, which were cool with nectar and which entered by way of the lattice, fall again on account of her previous love, like a bed of land-lotuses on an overcast day, neither open nor closed. (30)

She whose sighs that trouble her bud-like lower lip will surely be scattering the locks of her hair hanging at her cheek, dishevelled after a simple bath, thinking how enjoyment with me might arise even if only in a dream, yearning for sleep, the opportunity for which is prevented by the affliction of tears; (31)

She who is repeatedly pushing from the curve of her cheek with her hand whose nails are unkempt, the single braid, plaited by me, stripped of its garland, on the first day of our separation, which will be loosened by me when I am free from sorrow at the expiry of the curse, and which is rough to the touch, stiff and hard. (32)

That frail woman, supporting her tender body which he has laid repeatedly in great suffering on a couch, will certainly cause even you to shed tears in the form of fresh rain. Generally all tender-hearted beings have a compassionate disposition. (33)

I know that the mind of your friend is filled with accumulated love for me. On account of that I imagine her condition thus at our first separation. Even the thought of my good fortune does not make me feel like talking. All that I have said, brother, will be before your eyes before long. (34)

I think of the eyes of that deer-eyed one, the sideways movements of which are concealed by her hair, which are devoid of the glistening of collyrium, which have forgotten the play of their eyebrows on account of abstinence from sweet liquor, and whose upper eyelids tremble when you are near: these eyes take on the semblance of the beauty of a blue lotus that is trembling with the movement of a fish. (35)

And her lovely thigh will tremble, being without the impressions of my fingernails, caused to abandon its long-accustomed string of pearls by the course of fate, used to the caresses of my hand at the end of our enjoyment, and as pale as the stem of a beautiful plantain palm. (36)

At that time, O cloud, if she is enjoying the sleep she has found, remaining behind her, your thunder restrained, wait during the night-watch. Let not the knot of her creeper-like arms in close embrace with me her beloved, somehow found in a dream, fall from my neck at once. (37)

Having woken her with a breeze cooled by your own water droplets, she will be refreshed like the fresh clusters of buds of the *malati*. Your lightning held within, being firm, begin to address her with words of thunder; she, the proud on whose eyes are fixed on the window occupied by you: (38)

‘O you who are not a widow, know me to be a cloud who is a dear friend of your husband. With messages stored in my heart I have arrived at your side, and with slow and friendly rumblings I urge along the road a multitude of weary travellers who are eager to loosen the braids of their womenfolk.’ (39)

When this has been said, like Sita looking up at Hanuman, having beheld you with her heart swollen with longing and having honoured you, she will listen attentively to you further, O friend. For women, news of their beloved that brought by a friend is little short of union. (40)

O long-lived one, following my instructions and to bring credit to yourself, address her thus: ‘Your partner who resides at the ashram on Ramagiri, who is still alive though separated from you, inquires after your news, madam. This is the very thing that is first asked by beings who may easily fall into misfortune. (41)

He whose path is blocked by an invidious command and is at a distance, by means of these intentions, unites his body with yours, the emaciated with the emaciated, the afflicted with the even more deeply afflicted, that which is wet with tears with that which is tearful, that whose longing is ceaseless with that which is longed for, that whose sighs are hot with that whose sighs are even more numerous. (42)

He who has become eager to say what is to be said in words in your ear, in the presence of your female friends, with a desire to touch your face, he who is beyond the range of your ears, unseen by your eyes, addresses these words composed on account of his desire, through the agency of my mouth: (43)

‘I perceive your body in the priyangu vines, your glances in the eyes of the startled deer, the beauty of your face in the moon, your hair in the peacock’s feathers and the play of your eyebrows in the delicate ripples on the river, but alas, your whole likeness is not to be found in a single thing, O passionate one. (44)

Having painted your likeness, with mineral colours on a rock, appearing angry because of love, as soon as I wish to paint myself fallen at your feet, my vision is clouded again and again with copious tears. Cruel fate does not permit our union, even in this picture. (45)

Watching me with my arms stretched up into the air for an ardent embrace when you have somehow been found by me in a vision or in a dream, the local deities repeatedly shed teardrops as big as pearls on the buds of the trees. (46)

Those winds from the snowy mountains which having broken open the sepals of the buds of the *devadaru* trees become fragrant with their milky sap and which blow southwards—they are embraced by me, O virtuous one, with the thought that your body might previously have been touched by them. (47)

How can the night with its long watches be compressed into a moment? How may a day become cooler in every season? Thus my mind, whose desires are difficult to satisfy, is rendered without refuge by the deep and burning pangs of separation from you, O one of trembling eyes. (48)

Indeed, ever brooding, I maintain myself by means of myself alone. Therefore, O beautiful one, you also should not fear. Whose happiness is endless or whose suffering is complete? The condition of life rises and falls like the felly of a wheel. (49)

The the holder of the bow called Sharnga<sup>30</sup> rises from his serpent bed, the curse will end for me. Having closed your eyes, endure the remaining four months. After that, we two will indulge our own various desires, increased by separation, on nights lit by the full autumn moon.” (50)

And he said further, “In the past you embraced my neck as we lay on our bed, you called out something in your sleep and woke up. When I asked over and over, you said to me with an inward smile, ‘I saw you in my dream enjoying another girl, you cheat!’ (51)

Having ascertained from the telling of this account that I am well, do not be suspicious of me on account of any rumour, O dark-eyed one. They say that love somehow perishes during separation, but because there is no fulfilment, the love for that which is desired with increasing desire, becomes a even more ardent.” ’ (52)

Having comforted her thus, your friens whose sorrow is great in her first separation, return at once from the mountain whose peaks were cast up by the bull of three-eyed one.<sup>31</sup> Then you should prop up my life which flags like *kunda* flowers in the morning with her words about her welfare, and an account of her. (53)

I hope, friend, that you are firmly resolved upon this friendly service for me. I certainly do not regard your silences as indicating refusal. When requested you also apportion rain to the *cataka* cuckoos in silence, for the response of the virtuous to those who make a request is the performance of that which is desired. (54)

Having undertaken this favour for me who bears this request that is unworthy of you, with thoughts of compassion for me, either out of friendship or because you think that I am alone, proceed to your desired destination, O cloud, your splendour enhanced by rainy season, and may you never be separated like this even for a moment from your spouse, the lightning. (55)

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<sup>30</sup> Vishnu.

<sup>31</sup> Shiva.