



Sakuntala: Texts, Readings, Histories

Romila Thapar

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The figure of Sakuntala appears in many forms throughout South Asian literature, most famously in the *Mahabharata* and in Kalidasa's fourth century Sanskrit play, *Sakuntala and the Ring of Recollection*. In these two texts, Sakuntala undergoes a critical transformation, relinquishing her assertiveness and autonomy to become the quintessentially submissive woman, revealing much about the performance of Hindu femininity that came to dominate South Asian culture. Through a careful analysis of sections from *Sakuntala* and their various iterations in different contexts, Romila Thapar explores the interaction between literature and history, culture and gender, that frame the development of this canonical figure and a distinct conception of female identity.

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