A Confluence of Three – *Triveni Sungum* – as the Architecture of Kalidasa’s *Shakuntala*

Abstract (A Draft)

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When, in the last act (Act VII) of *Shakuntala*, Maricha -- also named as Kashyapa in some editions of the play -- calls the full family of Dushyanta as a confluence of Faith, Wealth and Ritual, that metaphor of the triad can be seen to represent and illustrate the design of the play. In the prior couplet, too, the ascetic calls attention to the significance of the union of this three-member family by likening it to a celestial family – Indra (the king of the gods), Paulomi/Indraani (his queen) and Jayant, their son. As far as the plot goes, the recognition of both Bharata and Shakuntala occurs almost simultaneously and is crucial to the denouement, to the completion of a harmonious family of three, and to the “reintegration and wholeness” of the play’s universe. The Prince is vital for a peaceful succession to the throne and the continuation of the King’s dynasty. On the level of ethos, the three members of the family characterize opportunism (in Dushyanta), impulsiveness (in Shakuntala) and a happy medium of composure and even self-control (in Bharata), as the name given him by Maricha – *Sarvadamana*, meaning “one who controls all” – suggests. Similarly, on the thematic level, Kalidasa emphasizes two dualities – Nurture versus Nature and Town or Court versus Country or Hermitage, both mediated by Bharata. Born and brought up as a little boy in an ashram and later raised in a palace to become a king (*chakravartin*), Bharata reconciles and unites in him the dualities of his parents. On all the three levels of the play -- plot, character and theme -- the trinity, the confluence of three, thus reigns supreme as the structural principle of the play.