MYTHOLOGY FROM THE KUMARASAMBHAVAM

Among the works of Kalidasa, *Kumārasambhavam* is the one that is totally mythical, that is, nobody will ever claim that it contains history or that the characters were at all human. Therefore to the student of Indian mythology it affords an authentic display of mythical creativity in action. Through careful study of the poem in the light of Kalidasa's own view of what constituted the mythical tale, we are able to separate the warps and woofs of the literary, poetic, social and mythical contents that make what is outwardly only classical literature. The similarities and contrasts of these varied contents finally give us an insight into the process of formation of myths themselves. The roles of metaphors, ad hoc etymologies, folklores and social mores in the formation of original myths become evident and we are in the end able to decipher the myth on which the original story forming the basis of the poem is itself founded. This is a typical example of the Author's 'SamMaTa' approach to Indian linguistics and mythology.

0. Introduction

Epic mythology has provided the seeds for the luxuriant harvest of classical Sanskrit literature, of the authors of which Kalidasa is the foremost. A perpetual debate continues as to whether the epics constitute history, mythology or both. Kalidasa's works based on the epics naturally become subject to the same. His poem *Kumārasambhavam*, will however, stand out as totally mythical in character. Its hero and heroine are god and goddess; not even incarnations, leave alone human beings whose lives and deeds constitute history as normally understood. Besides, the very narrative of Skanda's birth is described in a totally different manner in the *Mahabharata*, Vanaparva[1], which testifies to its mythical nature.

In expanding a brief narrative to an epic of seventeen cantos, Kalidasa naturally employs all the poetic devices of elaborating a mythical tale into a realistic-sounding saga which should appeal to a lay listener or reader. We must realize that to a greater or lesser extent the same or similar devices have been employed for the core narrative in the original epic also. Therefore a study of Kalidasa's composition in this direction affords us an insight into the creative process that makes a classical poem of a mythical tale and, going backwards, the process that makes a tale based on a myth and a myth of a striking experience impressed on the imaginative mind.

2.The Mythical Tale : *kathā*

Assorted references from Kalidasa's works help us describe the nature of mythical tales and their tellers. The Yaksha in *Meghadūta* describes Avanti to the Cloud as abode of elders versed in the *kathā's* of Udayana[2]. There the informed entertain the newcomers indicating, where Udayana abducted Pradyota's dear daughter, where that king's golden woods stood and where verily the excited elephant Nalgiri uprooted the pillar and strode away[3]. Thus, the mythical tales are passed on by the seniors in a generation, as of their ancestors, having happened at defined places in the locality and made interesting to the stranger by emphasising their truth. Received wisdom (*āptavācah*) is the source of mythical tales[4]. They who know of the past (*purāvidah*) speak of *saptarshi* as the fashioners of the world left off by the Creator and they speak of Pārvatī as *aparṇā* (no-leafer) as she stopped taking even the fallen leaves[5]. That only a thing of the past

becomes fit subject of a tale has been tellingly stated in the lamentations of Rati : she speaks of her departed husband as 'a body turned into a tale' (*kathīkrtam vapuh*)[6].

3.Tales within Tales, Myths within Myths

Though they are based on myths, the mythical tales or *kathā's* are passed on as true stories ('histories', *itihāsa*) on faith, having been passed on for generations. The mythical characters, places and even concepts become real in the minds of the people and the poet's fancy fashions them into ever more complicated situations by mixing up the real, the imaginary and the mythical.

Thus in the Meghaduta, almost the whole plot of the Kumara is related in three-fourths of a verse while the remaining one-fourth enjoins the imaginary cloud-messenger to bathe the real image of the mythical skanda on the standing mount which is typically called *devagiri* or 'god's mount' by the people. If this was not enough of a medley, the next verse carries the myth further by making Parvati adorn herself with a feather of the mythical peacock beloved of the mythical Skanda. The imagined messenger cloud of the real world is to provoke into dancing, the real-world peacock, imagined vehicle of the mythical Skanda[7].

As a poet Kalidasa certainly excels here in bringing together a vast array of associations in so very few words. That the majority of them are related to myths should make us ponder on the source of the power of myths to thus attach themselves to our thoughts and feelings.

In fact, mythology presents its own world with its own dharma as in the episode of the burning of Eros. Rati on the point of ending her life in her state of grief, is informed by the heaven's voice, why Kama (Eros) suffered this fate. Prajapati, it said, aroused to carnal desire for his own daughter, controlled the passion and cursed Kama for it; and this was the result of the curse[8]. Prajapati's is a mythical story in the Aitareya Brahmana (13.9) in which *dyu* and *uṣas* ('as some others say') are mentioned along with 'his own daughter' as chased by him in the guise of an antelope - damned as an unworthy act by the gods. She went high up, to become Rohini, the constellation Aldebaran. The pioneer historian of Indian Astronomy, S.B. Dikshit proposed that this story should have arisen from the appearance of the constellation *mṛga* following *rohiṇi* and being in turn followed by *vyādha* as they all rise in the east and move toward the west[9]. Thus a simple phenomenon pertaining to a strikingly bright ensemble of stars was at the root of the Prajapati-myth which in turn served as prime cause for events in another mythical story. In both stories the characters are non-human but exhibit human passions and failings.

3. Genius and Myth

The poetic genius of Shakespeare has succinctly put down in 'The Midsummer Night's Dream', the workings of the human mind in giving shape to myths:

The poet's eye in a fine frenzy rolling,
Doth glance from earth to heaven;
And as *imagination bodies forth,*
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen

Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name.

Paraphrased for myth, this reads: the genius of man surveys the universe and imagines forms of unknown things; in verbal expression, the forms turn into shapes and thus even airy nothing parades as a character with a name and guise from the social environment. Thus are even forms of animals seen in stars and they are endowed with the emotions of the humans and in Indian speech they will follow the Indian society's norms.

These creations, the myths, and their doings give rise to the mythical stories, the *kathā's* which appear to the skeptic as 'antique fables' but provide the commoner a vehicle of religious faith and ritual. The poetic genius of Kalidasa gives expression to this aspect in the prologue to Shakuntala: the Lord is said to occur in eight concrete 'shapes' which are 'named' there and given the 'local habitation'; He is prayed to protect the audience[10].

4. The Concrete and the Myth : Himalaya

The very first verse of Kumarasambhava reveals the blend of reality ('In the North, is the king of mountains, Himalaya'), imagination ('spanning the east and west seas'), poetry ('lying as though a measuring rod of the earth'), and myth ('with deities within himself'). The next verse contains a mythical image that could arise only in a pastoral society ('He was posited as the calf for milking Meru of lustrous jewels and healing herbs and plants'). While society gave matter-of-fact importance to snow in naming the mountain, the poet grudges it like the blot on the moon, in contrast to the source of infinite jewels that the mountain is imagined to be as a result of the milking operation. Yet in all this, the mountainness of the Himalaya is accepted as such.

The next fourteen verses also give a poetic description of the mountain and its residents. In the eighteenth verse however Himalaya as a mythical person suddenly enters the scene, wedding Mena, born of the manes' mind. Apart from the nuptial rites, human mores do not find mention here. But the progeny is mixed : the first, a male, is *a mount* true to the myth of Indra having to 'cut off his wings' *in future* ! The second is a female, a goddess fashioned after the humans - in her previous birth incensed at the insult hurled by the father, she had forsaken her body by yogic means and now *approached Mena for rebirth.* She was named Pārvatī signifying her as offspring of the mountain father but the poet's description of her physical beauty and feminine charms corresponds totally to that of a human being, not necessarily a goddess. Himalaya as her father is bound by the customary norm of elite Indian society, that the daughter would be given to a non-proposer[11].

Yet the human 'shape' in which Himalaya is made to play the role, is made to possess the qualities of the mountain 'form' on which it is built. After Shiva had turned away from her, 'the mountain (*adrih*) took the pitiable daughter with both arms'[12] When the seven sages came to him as negotiators, 'From some distance, bringing the offerings, the mountain (*giri*) approached them, pressing the earth with his weighty footsteps'[13]. Not content with calling him *giri*, even if walking like a living being, the poet is more explicit in the next verse : For, he was the Himalaya, coppery-lipped with precious metals, long-armed with the Deodar trees, rocky-chested in physique and snowy- looking in appearance'[14].The reader acquiesces in this sudden shift from the mythical to the physical phenomenon, unknowingly,

The mythically created person not only walks but also talks and profoundly as described in the following verses. In one of them the cave-mouth metaphor is meant to tell that 'through the echo from the cave-mouths, Himalaya as if conveyed the same meaning twice.' While the intertwining of the mythical and phenomenal characters is easily discerned, it is more worthwhile to observe that the cave-mouth metaphor is reversible.

This means that the attributes and functions of the cave in the phenomenal mountain could have been ascribed to the mythical Himalaya's mouth - which may not have taxed the readers' credulity very much.

This applies to other obvious as well as concealed metaphors occurring above and also elsewhere. In fact such reversible metaphors enable us to fathom the phenomena at the bottom of the mythical story and the myth, even when they are not so obviously brought together as in the case of Himalaya. Thus, the mention of 'weighty footsteps, coppery-lips, rocky chest, cave-mouth' and not least the name 'pārvatī' of the comely daughter would enable us to guess at a mountain being the subject of 'strange but not true' events in the story.

5. Stars as Sages

No guess is needed to establish the seven sages of Indian mythology are mythical representations of the seven stars circling round the Pole star and Arundhati the chaste wife of one an inconspicuous stella by the side of a bright star. They are accepted as such, by the people and the poet alike. In the sixth canto of Kumara they play the important role of intermediaries in settling the marriage of Shiva and Parvati in traditional Indian fashion.

In this their terrestrial and celestial embodiments are mingled so that the transitions are not earmarked at all. Shiva summons them through remembrance. They, rich with penance enlighten the sky with their lustrous haloes[15]. They do not alight straightaway on the earth. They have to float over the celestial Ganga, which is physically a pale irregular band in the sky, called elsewhere variously as Milky Way, Ashen Path and so on. This Ganga then becomes a reflection of the earthly one, with *mandāra* trees on the banks and the rut of elephants of eight corners mixing with her waters[16]. These sages of myth are respected by the sun with his mythical horses knelt and the banner bent. Among them shone Arundhati, fruit incarnate of their penance - yet the dutiful Indian wife had her sight fixed on the husband's feet[17]. Shiva asked them to proceed to the herbs-town of Himalaya and to return to Mahakoshi falls- the former a made-up name and the latter meant to relate to reality. They just flew into the sky and with a speed like the mind's, reached the herbs-town, where elephants were not afraid of lions, horses lived in holes, *yaksha's* and *kinnara's* were citizens and forest-fairies the females: all mythical entities brought on earth[18].

With a known myth we can see the separate strands of reality (physical and social), myth and imagination woven into the poem's fabric. Where the myths are not obvious, all we can do is to remember this phenomenon of literary craft and work backward from the hints thrown in the mythical part of the composition. We should not be led away by place-names on the earth or descriptions of social behavior, which all have to be there to claim credence from the reader.

6. Humanisation of the Gods

In Kumarasambhava (as in all mythical literature) the gods behave like the humans in their mutual dealings. Even having won over the one 'that is the soul of the universe' Parvati the bride-to-be sends message to him through her companion, to 'seek approval from the Chief of Mounts who is the one to give me in marriage'.[19] Shiva dispatching the sages on this errand avers, 'I need not advise you how and what he should be told to get the damsel over! Noble Arundhati should also play a part in this, for women are well versed in this kind of mission.'[20] When they arrived at his place, Himalaya requested them to occupy cane-seats (!) and then spoke with folded hands - model of a marriageable Indian girl's humble father[21].

In the gods' court also, the norms are no different from those in a medieval durbar. Madana (Eros) who had approached Indra as per orders was shown a place on the floor and told to sit there. Later, Indra moved his foot from the other lap to the foot-rest below and spoke to Madana of the work he had in mind[3.11]. Agni who returned badly bruised from a prying mission, had similarly to sit down respectfully on the seat pointed out to him[22]. In their own turn, the gods led by Indra bowed to Shiva, with folded hands at their heads[23].

The moral is that highly realistic pen-pictures of kings' courts are no guarantee that the kings or courts existed in history, for imagined courts are not described in any different way by the poets.

7. Nuptial Ceremonies of the Gods

It is wellknown that the ceremonies conducted at various stages in men's lives are symbolically related to the higher world of gods and motivated by the desire for prosperity and well being. The greatest of poets goes by the same human stereotype model to describe the marriage of Shiva and Parvati and to minute detail.

The sages profoundly proposed to Himalaya, 'like meaning with speech, to marry Shiva with Parvati', hearing which, the coy maid behind her father, face downcast, counted the leaves of toy lotuses,[24] Arundhati in the matron's role, seated her on her lap when the marriage was settled, and also consoled the tearful mother in her pangs from the love of her daughter[25].

The marriage ceremony was fixed for a day of waxing moon and of the benevolent planets in the seventh house - for the god that carries the moon on his head and controls the universe including the planets. The town was so decorated for the event that it looked like heaven transferred down[26].

The bride's makeup was accomplished by closely related ladies with husbands and sons living, They also led her to the open square within and had her bathed to the beating of trumpets, To embellish her eyes was applied black collyrium that is considered auspicious[27].

Menā the dutiful mother made her touch the feet of elderly women. The couple went to the well-prepared *vedi* and on the golden seat they received application of moist paddy grains 'so desirable by common custom' - *laukika*, of *this world* !

Even the unholy distinctions of this world are foisted on this divine couple: the goddess of speech herself felicitated the couple with double diction, the groom with the refined and the bride with the easily understood composition.[28]
Most of these customs of marriage are followed by the Indian rural elite, even today. Slightly lower down the social scale conventional observances like the '*gondhal*' in Maharashtra have their parallels in *Kumara*: After the blessings by Sarasvati the couple watched an exquisite performance by the nymphs for a while and then the couple was led to the nuptial bed[29].

The physical union of the couple is described totally as of human bodies, the only mythical touch being that a hundred years passed away as one night[30]. The great poet has in fact been blamed for this 'downfall'.

When Parvati had procured the infant son from the reed forest, Shiva, like any Indian householder, ordered his attendants to make celebrations. Auspicious songs were sung by para-human beauties. The Mothers came up to the babe, with trays carrying auspicious presents. They laid *dūrvā* and paddy grains on the baby's head and took him into their *lap* in age-old Indian custom. Popular belief in the sixth-day mother bestowing wisdom, is given expression in the form of an event when a verse states that Kumara was endowed on the sixth day with superior intellect and prime youth[31].

8. *upamā kālidāsasya* and Myth

Reference was made above to inverted reversible metaphors leading to formation of myths. We find many examples of this process if we consider the upama's (similes) of which Kalidasa is the supreme master**.** As averred by the great Savant Mirashi, upamā comprehends all those figures based on comparison, viz, *rūpaka*, *utprekṣā*, *atishayokti dṛṣṭānta* and *arthāntaranyāsa*. While pointing out Kalidasa's greatness in this respect, Mirashi gives an example of unhappy *upamā* from Shishupalvadha that compares Krishna and Balarama to mounts of kohl and snow. His comment: 'Where on one hand is the size of mountains and where on the other the size of human beings!'[32] Kalidasa in Kumara, makes the mountain himself a person with so many of the mountain's attributes. This personisation is the soul of myth-making and the mythical story. Accordingly, by imagining the addition of personisation in the following examples of upamā we get an idea of the myths that are or could be reigning in society.

In the spring that descended on the hermit Shiva's forest, trees received embracing arms from 'creeper-brides' 'with bosoms formed of bountiful blossom-clusters'[33]. Fourteen verses later, Parvati waiting on Shiva is described as 'slightly bent with bosoms, wearing apparel with colour of the rising sun', 'verily, an *ambling* leafy creeper slightly bent with bountiful blossom-clusters'. 'An ambling creeper does not exist in reality but can exist in myth and the character-person could possess sumptuous breasts with even the shades and smells of flowers. The south direction imagined as female is in fact stated to have sort of exhaled fragrant breeze[34]. The sweet singing of the male cuckoo itself became the speech of mythical Madana.

The varying aspects of nature in different seasons give rise, in the *Rtusamhāra*, to phenomena which when personised in their mythical form, have given us extensive narratives. For example, the clouds arriving with lightning and thunder arrive as kings haughty with lustre, raising

banners and making sounds. The same thunder and lightning are compared to Indra's bow with vibrating spring. The autumn night is compared to a maiden growing every day; the moon (hare-spotted - another myth) as her face is free from the veil of clouds, she is bedecked with ornaments of the Stars and clothed in Moonlight's silks[35].

Short of explaining the formation of myths, Mirashi expresses the process of personisation thus : "Elsewhere he speaks of trees and creepers, not merely as habitations of inanimate beings, but as beings themselves." The mythical story is born when the being is made into a character and a narrative which may be an allegory on the life of the tree or creeper in a shroud.

9. Classical and Primitive

The individual genius of Kalidasa is so fertile as to bring forth a multitude of *upamā's* in a single poem. The collective genius of even a primitive society is capable of similar creativity, if on a lower scale of magnitude in assorted pieces. Subjecting herself to strict rules, Parvati as if handed over for safekeeping, two attributes - refined bearing in movements to slim creepers and rolling pupils to roe's females. The concept of lending of qualities of parts of the physique obtaining here occurs in a song of an Adivasi tribe in Maharashtra. 'The peacock is dancing. He has eyes on the whole body. Why then are the feet dark? For they were taken by the mynah. who was going to attend Rama's marriage ! Now when the time of dance comes, tear flows down the eye - the feet are gone for ever !'[37]

And the celestial marriage in the classical poem has its own parallel in the spoken Adivasi traditions, about a marriage in the animal kingdom. "The lapwings are married, the frog croaks in music, the hare is officer and the fox the police, mongoose holds the torch and the crow caws from door to door inviting all. Mouse makes the marriage party, the cat accompanies and the rat is groom's mother - friends, the dog is chowrie-bearer. The she-goat is the groom's sister tying floral bands. Monkey rides the horse as best-man, seat the goat and crab ahead- what fun oh! Music-band of asses in front of the groom's procession. Chameleon, eagle grind somehow the grains. The dinner party to take place at aunt buffalo's. The peacock dances, the bear reels and the cuckoo sings."[38]

At the mention of marriage, the whole paraphernalia springs up to suit the scenario. The parts played by the members are sometimes natural to them (peacock-dance) sometimes extended by imagination (the she-goat with her pendent lobes being suitable for tying the hanging floral bands) some funny and others fantastic. All are however persons, parallel to humans - one step lower than mythical persons, for they will not invoke faith or devotion in the listener.

10. Compound Myth of Kumara's Birth

The birth of Kumara, for which the poem has been written, is a rather complicated event of which the narrative contains stories of two or three different myths. First is the clandestine entry in the form of a dove, of Agni, into the couple's bedroom. The interception of their union by the intruder enrages Parvati to curse Agni 'to become an omnivorous, leprous, smoky wretch'. This amounts to an origin myth in which the obvious attributes of a thing are said to have been result of some past deed. Agni had to accept the highly inflaming semen of Shiva which he had to take

to the celestial Ganga, the watery form of Shiva himself. She called her with her wave-hands (an *upamā* with mythical overtones). Ganga herself did not conceive. The mothers, wives of the sages, who came to bathe in the Ganga (the physical river-form) received the semen and conceived. Then out of fear and shame (by the rules of the poet's society) they disposed off the newborn into *sharavaṇa,* (the reed grove). This has to do with rituals related to Kumara so explained ahead. The infant was noticed by Parvati when the couple was going through the sky (Shades of a common folktale motif). She instantly felt drawn towards him through maternal love and brought him home after Shiva had convinced her that he was her own son. This, though she never conceived him and though he was suckled by the six mothers and not by her. The six mothers were the *kṛttikā's* (the constellation Pleiades) of the skies (the wellknown and ancient myth). Thus Kumara was son of Shiva-Parvati, Agni and Kṛttika's, which obviously means that three different myths had to be somehow reconciled, whatever the difficulties and complexities!

11. The War

The gods were oppressed by *tārakāsura* (the star-demon) whence they approached Shiva by the sky-way to ask for his son to lead them in the war with the demon. As Shiva's abode was the mountain on the earth, he asked them typically. 'You residents of heaven, leaving the home of gods, reduced to commonness of man, for what reason are you walking on the earth?' While the ability of gods to tread all three worlds is taken for granted, the lowly nature of treading on the earth is also emphasised here. With Kumara allowed to go with them, they soon crossed the region of the stars and reached their own world[40].

With their assumed superior powers, the gods can move in any sort of vehicle : for the war, Indra rode *Airavata*, the elephant; Agni the conceited ram, Varuna the crocodile (*makara*), Marut the deer and so on. We need not be surprised with earthly animals carrying gods in heaven, if we note that they are rather the celestial 'animals' of the zodiac : Aries the ram, capricornus the *makara,* orion the deer etc.

Since mythical stories have to be superhuman and human at the same time, for impression and understanding respectively, the authors do not mind a medley which in other compositions would be termed as inconsistency. Thus the fourteenth canto describing the advance of the gods' forces, is literally replete with dust. 'The sky became full with the heaps of dust raised by the armies; the flags caught dust rising out of the golden mount; with the metallic dusts the sky was reduced to *gandharvapura* effortlessly; the dust settled on the flags, elephants, chariots and horses in a moment; the sky-place was store for the dust raised by armies; covered by layers of dust, when the great distance from earth to skies appeared little, people asked whether the dust was going from down up or from up downwards[41]. If we see these earthy descriptions as picturing a phenomenon in the sky as part of a myth, they become intelligible. The poet does give us an inkling of the type of myth that could further be built up, in describing *diśah* (directions: females) as *rajasvalāh* (full of dust: in menses) *and dhvastāmbarāh* (of ruined skies : of ruined clothes)[42].

12. The Fighting

The fighting of the gods and demons is also modelled on that of men's armies in the middle ages in almost all details. 'The bards recited the names of warriors; the swords were anointed or smeared with blood; arrows with flaming and fire tips'. The modes of fighting and the high marks of valour and loyalty, all have a familiar ring. 'Though the valiant warriors' heads fell down, they ran towards foes with teeth cutting into lips in anger. Some fought hair-to-hair and arm-to-arm. The tearful horse, though free of reins, did not leave the rider lying on the *ground*, dead of wounds!' The climax is reached in : 'Chariot rider fighters chopping each others' heads with half-moon arrowheads reached heaven, from where they saw their torsos dancing on the *ground*'. The actions, myths and beliefs of the humans are imposed on the superhumans. In the context of mythology, we realise that the classical Sanskrit saga is almost a translation of a folklore ballad in indigenous speech of a preliterate social group. The theater of war could have been a *kurukṣhetra* on earth, without making any difference to the narration.

13. Forced Etymologies

Folklore often contains folk etymologies which are usually frowned upon by linguistic experts, who however appreciate similar exercises in Kalidasa's works in words such as : 'As regards other names which have long been in vogue, Kalidasa gives a witty or poetic explanation which fits in with the context far more than grammatical etymology.' [44] Examples of these from *Kumara*. are discussed below.

Pārvatī was the elite name by which the near ones called her. Later when she was dissuaded from penance by the mother, with the words '*u mā*'(o! don't) she got the appellation '*umā*!. Whether witty or otherwise, this etymology does not fit with the context either. The context would have been better related to her 'being born of *parvata* – mountain'. If the poet really meant to preordain a later event, consistency demanded that, at least in the poet's own narration of the dissuasion, the words '*u mā*' occur, which is *not* the case. Nor was *Pārvatī* dissuaded; she started and reached greater heights of penance, to receive another name: 'They who know of the past, talk of her as 'no-leaf' (*aparṇā*), for she gave up subsistence on fallen tree-leaves which itself was a limit of penance'. A clear instance of a place-name giving rise to a mythical story is that of Gaurīshikhara : it is said that, happy at the proper insistence, the noble elder allowed *Pārvatī* to undertake penance and later among the laity that peak inhabited by peacocks came to be known by *her* name (Gaurī).

These etymologies may not be stricly grammatical but grammar does not withold sanction to them either. There is a great tradition of such etymologies based on the splitting of words into *varṇa's*, imposing meanings on them or rearranging them to form a new word so that in a given context the original word yields the intended meaning. It is wellknown that the reference to *umā* in the Kenopanishad has been so made to apply to *om* by rearrangement into a-u-m. If we recollect the earlier *latā-pārvatī upamā* it is conceivable that 'no-leaf' *latā* is imagined to be in penance and by reversion the name is given to *Pārvatī* in similar state. A Himalayan peak could be named after the whiteness of snow or after Gaurī as Shiva's consort if the peak is adjacent to another taller peak with stark rocky features exposed due to slippage of the snows. The name Gaurishikhara does not in any case contain reference to her penance. We can see that all these are forced etymologies, like most others in mythical compositions. Therefore derivations like the

name *bhārata* from the name of a king *bharata* have no historical value even if the very first *sūtra* of Panini provides them grammatical sanction.

14.The Parallel Folk-Myth

As we saw before, the elite society held that even in the heavens the refined (*samskārita*) Sanskrit speech was reserved for gods and the folk-speech for goddesses. So, even if it sounds blasphemous, it is possible to imagine that a story similar to that of Kumara Skanda's was current among other folks and since the folk traditions are handed over only orally in folk-speech, we may come across a parallel folk-myth in some living dialect(s). One from among the Dhangar community in Maharashtra sung in Marathi is alluded briefly below.

The sacred place is *kāmbaleshvara* (God of the coarse rug). The *Nīrā* river has a wide expanse of rock and a deep pool. *Ujanī mankāḷ* (perhaps the *mahākāl* of *Ujjain*) came to this pool and jumped in as child. *Bhivāyā* (fear-fairy mothers), the seven sisters in the pool called him brother. *Ujanī mankāḷ* as a child got himself found in the ashes or *dust* of the *holī* (the bonfire) near childless Kamalu Shinde's house. Lahubai, his childless wife felt a gush of milk in her breasts on seeing the child whom she picked up and they named him *dhuḷobā* (dust-god). Dhulob*ā* wanted a bride of the weight of a flower.

Vāghamoḍe pāṭil made penance for a child. The hot porridge served to him by a woman caused a boil on his finger. The boil (*phūla*) on the verge being pricked, spoke, 'save my sinciput'. Thus was the child born of the boil. It was like the balancing tiny measure, of the boil, whence was named *mitābāi* (*mitā* = measure). Her waist was as delicate as that of the black ant. Many were the episodes that occurred before settling the marriage of Dhuloba and Mitabai. In one, Dhuloba used his powers to let loose a swarm of black-bees, some of whom found their way into the pants of the enemy's soldiers. And their caps got stuck into thorny trees. As the marriage ceremony was on, a missive arrived from the great god seeking Dhuloba's help to destroy the demon that had grown insolent. Leaving the bride just when they had changed sides, Dhuloba rode a fine horse to the battlefield. On the way he came to Kambaleshvar pool, in which the *Bhivāyā* were bathing in the nude. To avoid embarassment, Dhuloba turned his horse away through the rock, reached to the scene of war, fought bravely and won victory for the gods.

This brief narrative is sufficient to bring out some of the mythical motifs that are common to the elite and the folk narratives. The story centers round places which are sacred to the community. The effort is to prove that the places became sacred because of the exploits of the godly characters. The births of gods have to be immaculate and they are related in their mode to the folk-etymologies of the names, more fitting to the context than the forced etymologies in classical literature. The seven sisters or fairies bathing in a pool occur in other folklore like that of Mhatoba. That these represent the *kṛttikā* has been shown before and in this Dhangars' folklore too, occurs, the allusion leading to it : *mantra's* recited with the name of Bhivāyā, deflect hailstorms (which are harmful to sheep). They become protector sisters to Dhulobā who like Kumara goes to help the gods at the instance of Mahadeva. The preponderance of Dust in the battle of Kumara with Tārakāsura and the name Dust-god (Dhulobā) in the Dhangars'

folklore should be having some connection to some third phenomenon in the general manner of myths.[46,47]

15.The Myths and the Phenomena

The *Kumāra* does provide us a clue to this phenomenon. The Milky way though likened to ashes elsewhere, is the river Ganga to the Indians. Duststorms are far near the earth to qualify for demonness.
When the gods approached Brahma for salvation, they described their plight in these words :
"The mighty demon by the name of *Tārakāsura*, insolent by the boon received from you, is aloft for affliction of the people, like the *dhūmaketu* (comet)".
From what we have seen before, the inversion of metaphor here would tell us that the comet, dreaded all over the world as a demonic portent, is the demon among stars of the Kumara story. The vast tail of the comet appearing like a cloud of dust is the scene resulting from the battle of the gods and the demon.

Pārvatī is related to mountain and hence the earth bhauma (born of the earth) or the planet Mars (*mangala*) is next to the earth and hence *Kumāra*. Let us not forget that *skanda* in the Mahabharata is a *graha*, a planet and a 'seizer' of children while the seven *mātṛkā's* are their saviours. Dikshit has proposed that the relationship of Mars with *kṛttikā's* may have been conceived similarly to that of *bṛhaspati* with *puṣhya*[48]. On account of its visible redness, Mars is mythically connected to Agni, in *Kumāra*'s birth history. And Mars is martial, in most cultures, probably on account of his red aspect; he is the commander of the gods' forces against the evil demon among stars, the comet.

Shiva is *nīlakaṇṭha*, one with the blue neck, the blue dome of the sky personified. No wonder, the celestial Ganga arises from his head and with the large-as-conceivable horizon embracing the earth, he is consort to Parvati. Theirs is the Vedic marriage of *dyau* and *prthvī*, heaven and earth, of which *Kumāra* is born.

16.Word-roots of the Myth

Pārvatī was the *abhi jana nāma* (elite name). In the duality of elite and folk-speech so well brought out in the citation of the goddess of speech herself, *Pārvatī* would have a name in common parlance as well. As the present Indian tongues preserve a large measure of the ancient folk-speech, *pārī, pāru, pāro* could very well be the non-elite forms of the name *Pārvatī*. In the SI languages the word *pār* means 'earth'; *pārai* is rock - of which a changed form is available in Marathi *pār* -the stony mass raised around a tree like the bunyan (*āl*). Therefore the non-elite name *pāru*, meaning earth converted to elite was personised into the original myth's heroine. The meaning 'born of mountain' given to it is a latter-day explanation as ALL etymology is.

We thus arrive at the word-root of the myth connecting the earth and her goddess-form, (This cannot be the only or exclusive myth of the phenomenon that is the earth.) In similar manner, we can reach to the word roots of the myths in the mythical story of the Kumarasambhava. These are noted below, briefly and without explanations like those for *Pārvatī.*

Umā should be simply 'mother' < *umi* to suck. *Gauri* akin to *kavari* a woman with fine hair. *Skanda* is the elite form of *kanda* meaning boy or youth (*kantha* husband or groom in Marathi), hence *Kumāra*. The gods-in-soul (*devatātmā*) nature of Himalaya is from the belief that the gods 'do not wink' - *imā* or *imaiyā* and *ālam* meaning breadth (cf *āl* : bunyan). [49]

17. Conclusion

The study of Kumarasmbhava as classical poetry based on a mythical story enables us to have a glimpse of the mind of a genius composing the elite or laity's mythical story. By recession we understand the process by which the sensitive human mind formed myths on the basis of phenomena in the universe. For Indian myths, we are able to reach the pre-Sanskrit stage by extending the field of linguistic observation to all Indian languages irrespective of their so-called families and preceding to folk-speech out of which the literary language emerged even in the ancient times.

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