

THE UNFOLDING OF KALIDASA'S *KUMARSAMBHAVAM*: A QUEST FOR PSYCHO-SOCIAL IDENTITY

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Abstract

The present paper endeavors to manifest the heterogeneous dynamics of the concept of Psycho-social Identity with reference to Kalidasa's classic narrative poetry- Kumarsambhavam. The purpose of the present research is to define the correlation between the religious literature, the formation of psycho-social identity, and subsequently the creation of "conscience" of an Individual and the Society at large. The concept of identity is fluid in itself, and thus, it can be evolved, changed, and unfolded through phenomenological as well as elaborated study (based on critical theories) of the present text. The keen and sensible examination of Indian culture and literary traditions, particularly the critical reading of Sanskrit religious literature initiated the present research which was followed by a series of literature reviews and hypothetical analyses. The illustrative comparison between the cosmic principles of Hinduism, supreme divinity and the gushing passion for love and sexual union forge a distinctive dimension of the present paper.

Keywords: *A Quest, Psycho-Social Identity, The Conscience, A Phenomenological Study, Indian Culture, Sanskrit Literary Tradition, Religious Literature,*

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A Quest

Literary Terms expounds the concept of A Quest, as a journey that someone takes in order to achieve a goal or complete an important task. It has been further stated that, the word originated from the Latin *questa*, which means "to search" and most importantly, A Quest is the foremost element of Epic. (Literary Terms)

Here, the present paper itself performs the persuasive role of a Quest by journeying through and, unfolding the bits and pieces of the saga, known as *Kumarsambhavam*. A Quest stimulates the possibility of finding 'New Knowledge', which is yet, unknown to the world. The historical as well as the social context of Sanskrit Literary Tradition provide the opportunity to the researcher to explore the distinctive realms of Psycho-Social Identity of a particular culture and society.

Sanskrit Literary Culture from Inside Out

The History of Sanskrit Literary Tradition is 'as old as one can think'. It has been traced back in the *Literary Cultures in History: Reconstructions from South Asia* edited by Sheldon Phollock that, from time immemorial Sanskrit and India have been treated as synonyms. The conceptual framework of Sanskrit Literature had been designed in India, which consciously helped in the creation of certain ideologies, beliefs and, attitudes:

"Is there something we have not fully appreciated that might bring us closer to understanding its cultural life, something we can perhaps capture by exploring how Sanskrit has understood? (S. Phollock 40)

The Nature of Sanskrit *kavya* poetic tradition can be unfurled by making attempts to pursue its conception and origin. The initiators of such theoretical basis can be named as Bhamaha's *Kavyalankara*, and Dandin's *Kavyadarsa*. The Treaties on Dramatic art, better known as *Natyasastra*, further contributes to enrich the elaborative criticism of Sanskrit Literary Tradition.

Such systematic critical compositions indeed embodied the inimitable identity of Indian criticism. Such critical theories can be regarded as the historical origins of the literary culture. Another important aspect in this advancing direction is the thematic construction of poetic narratives. As Sheldon Phollock explains,

'The descriptive concerns the natural order (such as sunrise, sunset, seasons) and the social order (festive gatherings, water sports, love making), whereas the narrative concerns the political order (councils of state, embassies, military expeditions) (S. Phollock 45).

Subsequently, all these thematic approaches help in developing the exploration of nature and human language, and culture which provide a typology of psycho-social identity.

The Sanskrit critical tradition bears the idea that poetry or *kavya* is nothing but the composition of 'word' and 'meaning'. The 'word' represents the physical structure and existence of human body, whereas the 'meaning' symbolizes the 'identity', which further can be classified and modified into various categories.

The Phenomenological Conscience and The Formation of Psycho-Social Identity

The abstract idea of 'Conscience' is largely based on various principles and particularly the behavioral patterns. It is an individual choice to design it, and giving it a shape:

'conscience has what might be called an 'identity problem'- that it possesses no fixed or inherited content of its own...' (Strohm 120)

One of the most crucial dimensions of the previously mentioned argument is that, conscience is subjective and it can be learnt through psychological as well as social conditioning. The creation and learning of 'Conscience' assures the existence of 'self-knowledge' and 'self-esteem'. Though, acquisition of Knowledge dominates the formation of 'conscience', it does not become the sole motif of it. It can be expanded toward the human behavior and building character.

The Second Sarga Kalidasa's *Kumarsambhavam* is entitled *Brahmasaksatkarah-* The Manifestation of Brahma in the versions provided by Mallinatha. This Sarga particularly depicts Brahma- Who Exists of His Own Will, he reveals himself to the gods who have come to him to ask for Knowledge. Brahma, here is the symbol of idea- The

Knowledge, whereas the gods are the seekers of this 'Ultimate Knowledge'. The revelation of Brahma serves as a creation of 'Conscience', and therefore it leads the way of gods toward the Self-realization, the solution, and the stratification of 'good' and 'evil':

'Having spoken this way to the Wise Ones,
the Origin of All Things vanished,
and thinking intently of what they had
to do, the gods went to their heaven.' (Kalidasa 53; Sarga 2)

A Phenomenological approach in research is largely based on the analysis of human experience, subjectivity, and individual knowledge. The study of the conception of 'conscience' requires the Phenomenological understanding as it deals with the individual's personality and being. It helps to substantiate individual situations and its impact on the society at large. The Phenomenological method in the present research helps to surface the deep concern of 'Conscience' and to voice its existence.

Erik Erikson in his Psycho-Social theory of development classifies the layers of individual development into eight stages: trust v/s mistrust; autonomy v/s shame; initiative v/s guilt; industry v/s inferiority; ego identity v/s role confusion; intimacy v/s isolation; generativity v/s stagnation; ego integrity v/s despair. According to the present Psychological theory in each stage of development an individual gets to learn and acquire a 'virtue' i.e. hope, will, purpose, competency, fidelity, love, care, and wisdom, respectively. The concept is very similar to Freud's concept of Psycho-Sexual Development of an individual. Unlike, Freud's theory Erickson seems to be giving much importance to the social components in the development of 'Human-Personality' and the 'Sense of Self', which lead towards the creation of 'social identity' and 'conscience'. (McLeod 'Erik Erikson')

The present text, *Kumarsambhavam* consists of the 'Authenticated' Eight sargas as per the versions provided by Mallinatha: *Umotpattih-* The Birth of Uma; *Brahmasaksatkarah-* The Manifestation of Brahma; *Madanadahanah-* The Burning of the God of Love; *Rativilap-* Rati's Lament; *Tapaphalodayah-* Achieving the Fruit of Tapas; *Umapradanah-* Uma Is Given to Be Married; *Umaparinayah-* The Marriage of Uma; *Umasuratavarnanah-* The Description of Uma's Pleasure. Each of these Sargas witness the consequential inception of various aspects which have influenced and shaped the Indian or rather Hindu Psycho-Social identity i.e. the creation; acquisition of

Knowledge; the burning of the Pride; the fidelity of a wife; the greatness of sacrifice; marriage; and pleasure or *Kama*.

***Kama* and The Supreme Divinity**

The concept of *Kama* is one of the fundamental pillars of Hindu Philosophy. It has been stated in the *Hindupedia* that *Kama* refers to various religious and cultural phenomena such as, pleasure, fulfillment of desire, prosperity, passion, soul or *aatma*, Sun, Vishnu, *bhakti*, etc. *Rigveda* unravels the concept of *Kama* as the accomplishment of pleasure and desire, whereas *Atharvaveda* provides rituals to the culture to help the individuals to fulfill the desire for husband and wife, these desire have both base and supreme or divine meanings. They can be further classified into the pleasure of the body, and the pleasure of the soul. The concept of *Kama* in *Tantra* is very unique, as it deals with the recognition of the divine beauty within the world. It appears as art, music, aroma, meditation, etc. The *Puranas* depicts the notion of *Kama* as the desire for consciousness, truth and Knowledge.

The abstraction of *Kama* has been well-depicted in the present text- *Kumarsambhavam*. The *Kama* has been literally personified as *Kamadeva*, who dares to evoke desire in Shiva in order to fulfill the 'divine purpose'. The *Kama* remains the dominant theme in the entire narrative saga of Shiva and Parvati. The laments of Rati and the 'Divine Union' of Shiva and Parvati consistently reveal the interplay between the passion and spirituality, the desire and the higher cosmic principles of Hindu Philosophy.

The Denouement

Every Nation and its peculiar identity can only be delineated through the careful analysis of its culture, Literature, and languages. 'The Religious Literature' is a term which has been alluded to very often in the present research. It has been evidently mentioned here, to refer to the kind of Literature which inculcates within itself the images of Gods and Goddesses, the spiritual elements, the way of life, etc. From time immemorial, this genre of Literature has been used as an apparatus to create, shape and manipulate the identity of any human culture. In the present text, *Prakriti (Parvati)* and *Purusha (Shiva)* perform as eternal forces, which engender, synchronize, and effectuate the ingenious as well as creative thought processes in the mortal world. The narrative which has been rendered by *Kalidasa* with such beauty and eroticism reflect the purest soul of Indian culture, as well as its roots, and origin. The distinctive individual identity

of this society is not enveloped or sheathed into darkness and ignorance, but it manifests through the Knowledge of aestheticism and sexuality. The *Prakriti (Parvati)* and *Purusha (Shiva)* also signify the body and the soul. They are the abstractions of femininity and masculinity, which further help in the creation of the awareness regarding the experience of pleasure and the function of body parts in order to achieve it. And, as a result the acquisition of liberation from the mortal world, which is better known as *moksha*. The knot which has been tied between *Prakriti (Parvati)* and *Purusha (Shiva)* consequently re-establish and restore the morality and the ideal ways of living.

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