



## An Ascetic Goddess: Debates about Pārvatī in the *Kumārasaṃbhava*

In Kālidāsa's Sanskrit courtly poem, *Kumārasaṃbhava*, the Mountain-deity Himālaya commands his daughter Pārvatī to serve the God Śiva and make him her husband. At first, Pārvatī fails. Śiva, an ascetic yogī with matted hair and superhuman mental discipline refuses to break his concentration. Pārvatī, firm in her resolve to marry Śiva, chooses an unprecedented path to marriage: enduring harsh mental and bodily penance, she becomes an ascetic and captures Śiva's attention.

Reading Kālidāsa's courtly literary text, the *Kumārasaṃbhava*, this course examines rules, regulations, and expectations for women through the lens of late medieval and early modern Sanskrit commentators who reacted to the events in this text.

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