

Table of Contents

[The Myth of Girika](#)

[The Myth of Adrika](#)

[The myth of the name 'Uparichara'](#)

[Worship of Indra in Chedi](#)

[Was Vasu an Emperor?](#)

[Vasu and the Gandharva connection](#)

Uparichara Vasu was a king in the race of Puru. He invaded the [Chedi](#) kingdom and later became famous as the king of Chedi. He had two wives named [Girika](#) and [Adrika](#) both belonging to two different non-Vedic tribes. Girika was a mountain dweller, where as Adrika was a fisher-women.

The Myth of Girika

The myth-makers didn't spare Vasu's wife Girika. She is mentioned as born of a union of a mountain and a river! The myth goes like this. Flowing through the capital of Chedi was a river named [Suktimati](#). There was a mountain named [Kolahala](#) from which the river flowed down. Once the mountain was filled with lust and embraced the river. King Vasu then struck the mountain with his foot and freed the river from the embrace of the mountain. However from the union of the mountain and the river two babies were born as twins, a male and a female. The male child became commander in chief of Vasu and the female became his wife.

What is the reality behind this myth? It seems that Vasu constructed a dam in the mountain Kolahala across the river Suktimati for the benefit of the citizens of his capital. His engineers were capable of releasing and blocking water from the dam as and when it is needed. At some point of time the dam failed to work and citizens complained of water shortage in the city. Vasu might have interfered in the matter and rectified the dam, releasing the waters of river Suktimati from the mountain Kolahala. This explains the release of Suktimati from the embrace of Kolahala. Who were Girika and his brother? The name Girika means *the one who belongs to the mountains*. They seems to be inhabitants on the mountain Kolahala. Girika's brother probably helped the king in repairing the dam. He was later installed by the king as his generalissimo. Girika herself became queen.

The Myth of Adrika

One day Vasu left his beautiful wife Girika unwillingly and went to forest for hunting. In the forest, while thinking about his wife, his vital seed dropped. He asked a hawk to carry it and give it to his wife. While the hawk was carrying it, another hawk attacked it and the semen fell into a river, which was then swallowed by a fish by the name [Adrika](#). After ten months when the fishermen caught the fish and killed it, they saw two babies, male and female inside the fish. They gave the babies rightfully to their king Vasu himself! The male child became the famous [Matsya](#) king. The female child was none other than Satyawati! As for their fish-mother Adrika, she was an [Apsara](#), who was cursed to become a fish by a [Brahmana](#) and she became freed of curse as she delivered the babies and got killed by the fishermen!

This was the strangest myths I could find in Mahabharata. It reveals how imaginative these people were and how they entwine ignorance and imagination into such deadly cocktail. At least some of the ancient people believed that babies are born with the sole contribution from men. They considered women as mere vessels to carry the babies of men. It was unknown to them that to develop an embryo contribution from both man and woman are needed. A fish after swallowing semen delivering babies! Below is a plausible reconstruction of what might have happened. Adrika was a maiden belonging to the Matsya (fishermen) tribe and Vasu beget two children in her, probably when he was away from his wife Girika. Adrika was described as an Apsara, due to her beauty. Apsaras were mentioned as extremely beautiful. The word 'Apsara' can be divided into 'Apa' (water) and Sara (lakes). They were often described as women seen in the vicinity of water-bodies like lakes and rivers. A Matsya lady (fisher-women) too lives close to water-bodies like seas, lakes and rivers. There are also myths about fairies called Matsya-Kanyakas (fish-women / fisher-women) who were half fish and half women. Such tales were also similar to the tales of Apsaras. Thus Matsya Kanyakas and Apsaras seems to be same. Both these terms later assumed the meaning of *fairies living close to water bodies*, and Apsaras in particular was formerly their tribal name. Fisher-women were the Apsaras and the Apsaras were the fisher-women.

Adrika probably died while delivering the twin babies. Death of women after delivering babies, especially twins, were quite common in those days. The fishermen after learning about the affair between Adrika and the king might have taken the babies to the palace. King after knowing that he was the father of the twins could have raised them in his palace. The male among them later became the famous Matsya king. It is probable that this Matsya king was the forefather of king Virata. Similarly the female among them was probably the ancestor of Satyawati whom king Santanu wished to marry. The territory of the Matsya chief, who was the father of Satyawati was on the banks of river Yamuna where as the territory of king Virata was south-west to Yamuna in Rajastan comprising the districts of Alwar and Bharatpur.

The myth of the name 'Uparichara'

The king Vasu had an interesting title in his name. He was always mentioned as 'Uparichara' Vasu. The meaning of Upari-Chara is Upari: -Upward, Chara: - Going, thus Upari-Chara means the upward-going one. The myth makers try to explain this strange title by the following myth: - Vasu was gifted with an airplane (Vimana) by his friend Indra, the king of the gods (Devas). Vasu traveled in the airplane and was thus called Uparichara Vasu. One possibility is that he indeed possessed a vehicle or a device that could lift people upward. Was this some sort of hydrogen balloon type device? We are not sure. The reference of Vimana is plenty in Mahabharata, Ramayana and the Puranas. Not all of them can be dismissed as pure imagination. Indeed man's fascination to fly like birds is very ancient. People, even before many thousands of years, had attempted to fly and had tried to construct vehicles or devices that can make them fly or at least lift them upwards. Among the people mentioned as possessing Vimana (flying vehicles) were Vaisravana Kuvera the king of the Yakshas (Tibet) (which was later taken away by Ravana, the king of the Rakshasas in Lanka), Indra the king of the Devas (Tibet). Both the tribes of Yakshas and the Devas lived in Tibet. So this seems to be an ancient Tibetan technology. It is not sure if this vehicle or device was capable of travelling far distances as explained by the epics and the Puranas. Even if this device provide lift

to take people upwards, it will be a useful device especially in hilly regions where people can be lifted to mountain tops where chariots or even horses cannot climb. Such devices which could lift people and heavy objects upwards were within the capability of technology existed in those periods. Arjuna is mentioned as taken in such a vehicle by Matali, the charioteer of Indra, which rose from ground taking Arjuna from the southern foothills of the Himalayas up above the mountains and finally into the territory of Indra in Tibet, on the northern side of the Himalayas.

Indra or somebody belonging to the Deva tribe in Tibet seems to have gifted Vasu with such a device or vehicle. This enabled Vasu to go up into the top of mountains in Chedi which is modern day Bundhelkhand. It could be some other unknown mechanism like a rope-wheel system that enabled Vasu and his engineers to go up quickly to mountain tops, lift heavy materials upward so that they can quickly build dams and other constructions on the top of mountains. This ability to 'go upward' with ease gave Vasu the title 'Uparichara'.

There is also another verse in Mahabharata that says: - (Mbh.2.24) The car (chariot) upon which Krishna rode had been obtained by king Vasu from Vasava (another name of Indra) , and from Vasu by Vrihadratha, and from the latter in due course by king Jarasandha. Thus we also see that what Vasu got from Indra was probably not a flying vehicle but a chariot. Some historians believe that every reference of Vimana (flying vehicles) were actually references to a fast moving chariot. The speed of a chariot was invoked a sense of astonishment to those who did not possess a chariot or seen it before. This led to the myth of flying-vehicles or Vimanas. If we follow this theory then we need to again explain why then Vasu was titled Uparichara.

Worship of Indra in Chedi

Vasu is mentioned as invading Chedi under the instruction from Indra. Vasu also is mentioned as a Paurava meaning the one who belonged to the race of Puru. Thus it seems that Vasu's former kingdom was the kingdom of the Purus, that lied north to the Chedikingdom. The Kingdom of Kuru and Panchala both belonged to the Purus and they followed the orthodox Vedic religion. Indra worship was a common trait among the followers of orthodox Vedic religion since Indra was the foremost of all the Vedic gods. If we examine Mahabharata carefully we see that Chedi was always ruled by Yadusa.k.a Yadavas. The Yadus and the Purus were two sibling branches who competed for dominance in ancient India. Yadu was the eldest son of Aila king Yayati and Puru was the youngest. The Purus grew in power especially in the Gangatic plane while the Yadus were pushed to the central and western India. Chedi was ruled by the Yadus. The religion of the Yadavas was not strictly Vedic and they did not give much importance to Indra. They worshiped mountains, rivers and cows. Their main occupation was rearing cattle and at least some of the branches of the Yadus had a pastoral life style. This nomadic life enabled them to spread their settlements from Mathura in the north (Uttarpradesh) to as far as Dwaraka in the west (Gujarat).

Invasion of Chedi by Vasu is thus an example of the expansion of Pauravas into the territories of the Yadavas. After becoming the ruler of Chedi, Vasu seems to establish the Vedic religion in Chedi and introduced the festival of bamboo. The myth says that: - *Indra gifted Vasu with a bamboo pole for protecting the honest and peaceful. After the expiry of a year, the king planted it in the ground for worshipping Indra.*

Since then, all kings, following Vasu's example, began to plant a pole for the celebration of Indra's worship. Bamboo is an important product from Tibet and is widely used to construct suspension bridges and multi story buildings in ancient China. Probably bamboo was also used in the device or vehicle that Vasu used to lift things upwards. Bamboo has an important role in ancient Tibetan culture. Its influence can still be seen in Chinese and East Asian cultures.

The Indra worship and the festival of Indra initiated by Vasu seems to have spread to other kingdoms as hinted by the myth. We also see that, in Vrindavana which was in Surasena kingdom that neighbored Chedi to the west, Krishna revolted against the worship of Indra. Krishna insisted that his village should stop the worship of Indra and worship the mountain Govardhana. Thus Krishna ended the worship of Indra and made his community return to their former religion, which is the worship of mountains. Govardhana is mentioned as the giver of rains and the one who increase the wealth of kine. (Go-vardhana: Go:- Cow, Vardhana:- Increase in numbers, thus Govardhana means the one who increases the wealth of kine). Krishna rejected Indra, who was considered as the god of rains and praised the mountain Govardhana as the giver of rains. During the time of Krishna both, Surasena and Chedi (conquered by Vasu), and other kingdoms like Dasarna, Karusha, Kunti, Avanti, Heyaya, Vidarbha, Anarta and Dwaraka were all under the rule of Yadavas. Thus we learn that the Yadavas took back their territories from the Pauravas during those periods.

Was Vasu an Emperor?

As per Mahabharata, Mbh.1.63 The History of Uparichara Vasu, Vasu is mentioned as an emperor, not just the king of Chedi:- The emperor installed his sons as governors of various provinces. His son Vrihadratha was installed in Magadha and was known by the name of Maharatha. Another son of his was Pratyagraha; and another, Kusamva, who was also called Manivahana. The two others were Mavella, and Yadu of great prowess and invincible in battle. The five sons of Vasu planted kingdoms and towns after their own names and founded separate dynasties that lasted for long ages. Since Yadu is mentioned as a son, we can conclude that some among these five were not Vasu's sons but were kings who became part of Vasu's empire. Virahdratha was the king of Magadha, Anga and for some time the king of Kosala too. He was mentioned as the father of the famous Magadha king Jarasandha. A city by the name Kausambi lied close to Chedi and was the capital of Vatsa kingdom. Kusamva seems to be the ruler of Kausambi. Mavella resembles in name to Maveli or Mahabali a famous king who ruled in Narmada valley and probably coastal regions like Konkana and Kerala too. The Yadu mentioned in this list of five kings seems to be the king in the race of Yadu who ruled Chedi before Vasu conquered it. There is no other references to Pratyagraha. Thus Vasu's empire consisted of the kingdoms of Chedi, Vatsa, Magadha and probably the regions up to Narmada valley. Vasu's former kingdom was probably Kuru or Panchala since he is mentioned as belonging to the Puru's race. In later stages we see that Vasu's empire split into Yadava kingdoms like Chedi, Surasena, Dasarna, Karusha, Kunti Avanti and Hehaya. Magadha was taken by kings in the line of Vrihadratha belonging to another race. Vatsa was retained by the Pauravas.

Vasu and the Gandharva connection

Vasus were mentioned as a sub-clan of the Deva tribe, headed by Indra. All the sects of the Deva group like the Vasus, Rudras, Maruts, Sadhyas and the Adityas were considered as gods. Indra belonged to the Aditya group. Bhishma is mentioned as an incarnation of one among the eight Vasus. There was also a Gandharva by the name Viswavas. Gandharvas were always mentioned as allied to the Devas. They had their former settlements in Gandhara (from which the name 'Gandharva' originated) and in Harataka territories of the Yakshas in Tibet. Vasu also is mentioned as always found in the company of the Gandharvas. So there is reason to speculate that Viswavas and Uparichara Vasu were one and the same or were closely related.

