CHAPTER VIII

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Sudraka had won the fame through his prakarana Mṛcchakatikā and he got a place among the dramatists. He also tried to give his own contributions for the development of the sanskrit literature. His name became so famous that the later writers quoted his name or some slokas from his works in their works. By the analytical and critical study of Mṛcchakatikā we can come to some conclusions. They are as follows:

1. The date of Bhasa and Kālidāsa is not well-established by the scholars which posses a problem for the scholars to decide the date of Sudraka. It is considered that Sudraka lived after Bhasa and before Kālidāsa. So we have to decide it by the historical and the internal evidences. There are so many conflicting theories. In prastāvana of the play it is explained that a Brāhmaṇa king named Sudraka wrote this prakarana.

"तिरीकधातिकमामौमैनेत्र: परिपूण्यत्रूप पुजारावः
विजयस्मृतपरे कत्यविलोक्त गुणवतः कृतस्तन्त्र इत्यविद्यायः
सतुस्थिति सातपित्रेण गतिनिधिध्वजं कल्याणं देशम्यं होमायोग‌
श्रव्यप्रायस्याक्षरप्रातित्तिकीः चतुर्विकाव्यः कालाणीहरेषु द्वारालं
नासानासी दृष्टिपुन दर्शितद्विखण्डनविरुध्धविवेकं विवेकं भवायितप्रायत्रः"

(1) Mṛcchakatikā Act-I-3 and 4.

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His fame is spreading everywhere in the later works like Kathasarit sāgara, Daśakumāra-carita, Harśa-carita, Kādambari, Vetaṭa Panḍaviṃśati Skanda Purāṇa, Rajatarangini etc. But to decide who is this Śūdraka we have to look carefully to the different Śūdrakas whose existence is recorded.

Some tried to seek in other ways. They say it is written by anonymously who was neither Śūdraka, nor his protage. But if we accept this then we cannot understand why later on it is attributed to king Śūdraka. This name appears to be a strong standing, which is remained unchallenged by Indian tradition. Another opinion is that it is written by Dandin because of the verse of Rajaśekara which states there are three works of Dandin. Two works are known so third one is Mṛcchakaṭīka. But it did not get serious support because of which we cannot dwell in this opinion.

Greater interests attaches to suggestion recently put forward that Bhāsa himself wrote this Prakarana. If this is written by Bhāsa only then there is no reason why that alone and not his other works should bear his appellation of Śūdraka, more over the Śūdraka of Mṛcchakaṭīka was king, which Bhāsa most certainly was not.

One of the familiar difficulties to settle the chronological problems is the plurality of writers bearing
the same name. Skanda Purāṇa mentions that a great king
name of Sudraka would reign in the year 3290 of Kali era.

This Sudraka is considered to be the founder of Andrabritya
which is about 200 B.C. This does not contrast to the
internal evidence of the play. So it is likely to happen
and accepted as a working hypothesis.

Dandin has given a life sketch of king Sudraka where
he says Sudraka was a Brāhmaṇa king of Ujjaini and he was a
great poet so the time of Sudraka would thus be about 56
B.C. The adventures of Sudraka who sung by Ramila and
Somila. Somila's name was mentioned by Kalidāsa with
respect. So Sudraka must have lived before Kalidāsa.

The name of Sudraka became so famous that a host
of Indian rulers, especially of the Pallava and the west
Ganges families adopted titles consisting of the word
Sudraka as a symbol of valour.

Another scholar identifies Sudraka with an Abira
Prince called Sivadatta who ruled in 3rd century A.D. But it
seems to be extremely doubtful. Some efforts have been made
to place Sudraka in 2nd century A.D. The word Nānaka
occurring in I 23 is believed to have come into use by the
time of king Kaniska who lived in 1st century A.D. But these attempts are not accepted by the scholars.

When we go through all the discussions about the author of Mrćchakatika that is Śudraka we are left to decide Śudrakas described according to Skanda Purāna or Avanti Sundarikatāsāra. But there is the lack for materials to decide about the author clearly, though it is clear that the Mrćchakatika must have come from one of these two Śudrakas. Now we have to look into the internal evidence. The law which was explained in the drama is said to be in accordance with the rules of law books of the 6th or 7th century. We cannot say that similar rules did not hold good in the first century B.C. too?

The drama explains the time when Buddhism was in a flourishing condition. Buddhism started declining when Christian era started. So the play can be safely held to have been composed is 1st century B.C. The importance of a particular Rasa and the Prākrit dialect to a particular character were known to Śudraka. The introduction of a courtesan as the heroine seems to be the same period in which Vatsāyana wrote 'Vaiśīka' chapter of his kāma sūtra and he cannot be placed later than 100 B.C.

Attempts also made to determine the date of the author on the strength of some astronomical, legal and other ideas occurring in it. The horoscopic system utilised in the play points to at least the end of the 4th century A.D.
while views of Mars opposed to Jupiter perhaps may show that Śūdraka cannot be much earlier than the beginning of the Christian era. Some of the Prākrit words which Śūdraka used in his play places him before Kalidāsa.

Technique is taken yet another point for determining Śūdraka's date. Mainly the name of the drama is not according to the hero or the heroine, scenes of violence on the stage, etc., have been supposed to be indicative of the early age of the play. Another circumstance in favour of the antiquity of the drama is derived from a peculiarity in the language of one of chief characters, Sakāra affects literature with which he has so little conversancy that his citations of poetic personages and events are as erroneous as frequent.

"इ भण्डारणामीहि बलुब्लावणाशाहायीं मि द्वारपदीव पलनायसे रसभावया।
परं दुर्गामे सहस्त्रोति यथा इत्यामान्
बीत्यावसे श्रीमलनीश्रीब तं सुभाषिय।" (3)

Peculiarities in manners contribute a similar conclusion and the very Panegyric of Śūdraka specifying his voluntary cremation when arrived at extreme old age, praises

3) Mṛecha Kalikam - Act I - 25 -
for him an act proscribed in Kali or the present period of the world.

"राजानं विद्यम फ़ूज़ो परमसमुदयोनामाध्येन सृजनः

लोकबा आयुः त्रानंदैं दशावियनेवति

महाप्रक्रो तरीके।" ॥६॥

The subject of the piece, the love of a respectable Brāhmaṇa for a courtesan, is also in favour of a period of some remoteness.

The play could be placed about 150 years before the production of Kālidāsa. This drama considered to be produced in the south. The peculiar words which are used in the drama are mostly to be found in South India. The revolt which is explained in the drama also denotes that the play is ancient. According to the social conditions, the Prākrit words used, the speciality of house of Vasantasena, the business of Ćārudatta, we can say that Mrčchākatika is very old Indian history also explains such a situation after the downfall of Maurya Empire and before the time of Guptas.

As Dandin quotes from Mrčchākatika, so it must be older than Dandin. Dandin lived in 6th century. When we go through all the above discussions we can come to a conclusion that a Brāhmaṇa king named Śudraka is the writer of the Prakarana Mrčchākatika and it was written in about 56 B.C.

4) Mrčchakāṭikām - Act 7 - 4
2. The discovery of 13 dramas created sensation among the scholars because one of the 13 dramas is Carudattam. So a question arises whether Bhāsa the author of Carudattam is a debtor or Sudraka the author of Mṛcchakaṭikam is a debtor. There are so many resemblances in both the dramas at the same time there are occasional differences also. When we go through the similarities and differences carefully we can come to a conclusion that Carudattam is an abridgement of the first four acts of an old version of the Mṛcchakaṭikam done by a person of very mediocre attainments. To father this work on Bhāsa is not only a violation of chronology, since Bhāsa is certainly earlier than the author of Mṛcchakaṭikam, but is also unjust to the great artist who produced the 'Swapnavāsavādattam'. So we can come to a conclusion that Sudraka is a debtor and Bhāsa is the Creditor.

3. The title of the drama is an example for its speciality. The title of the drama will be given on the basis of the hero or important incidence or the theme of it. But the author of Mṛcchakaṭika has named the drama on the basis of a small incidence related to the play of the child of the hero. This title is the symbolic expression of the unsatisfaction. Most of the characters of this drama are not satisfied with their prevailing condition. Vasantasaṇa loves poor Carudatta for his good characters rather than Sakara for his richness. Carudatta is not satisfied with his wife Dūtā so he loves Vasantasaṇa.
Rohasena the son of Carudatta is not satisfied with clay cart; he wants golden cart only.

This little also denotes the poverty of Carudatta. The poverty of Carudatta is the symbol of the virtues, of Vasantasena, the shadow of which falls on the cart of Rohasena. Yet another important reason that the ornament which is given by Vasantasena to Rohasena in order to prepare the golden cart becomes a proof in the court for having killed Vasantasena by Carudatta as complained by Sakāra.

So, we can come to a conclusion that the title Mrčchakatika holds good to this drama because it throws a light on the poverty of Carudatta.

4. The basis of Mrčchakatikam is Daridra Carudatta of Bhāsa, but there is a lot of difference in the way in which this drama is written and usage of Prākrit language in the drama. The poet has shown his brilliance and novelty in

5) Mrčchakatikam - Act - vi

b) Ibid Act 1x
the drama. Bhāsa had explained only the love story, but Sūdraka showed his novelty by adding the political upheaval. The poet created the sense of humility by the character of sakara and some of other characters of this drama. By this we can come to a conclusion that the humility of Mrčchakaṭika is the original imagination of Sūdraka.

5. As a piece of literary art sanskrit drama fulfills two function:

(i) It represented as for as necessary contemporary life which served as a background.

(ii) It represents the dramatists outlook on life. Though everyone branches of the literary weighting requires much of skill and ability to being success to an author attempting it. The play conceived of should cater to all tastes required to make the piece an engaging and impressive representation. It is the Mrčchakaṭika a play born wholly of a play weights imagination both in its theme and characters. According to the intelligence in writing Kāvyā's Sūdraka may not be in the midst of great poets but he had that intelligence. Other wise how could he introduce different 'Rasa' in different places whenever it is required. This inclusion of different 'Rasas' itself is the cause for world familiarity. Even though the poet explains the situations it looks as if it is happening in
then the scenery of those things are experienced directly by the audience when they go on observing the drama. Mrčchakaṭika attracts the mind of crores of persons because it has got such a nice story. Another reason for this is that it explains the social and political conditions of that time very nicely. In Sanskrit Literature among the Roopakas which shows the virtues of the people this is considered to be the best. The poet had expounded new feelings, attractive similies, simple thinking in the drama. The main sentiment of the drama is erotic as it depicts the love story of a Brāhmin for a courtesan. The history of full fledged and complete Prakarana may very rightly be said to have started with Śūdraka, the writer of the Prakarana Mrčchakaṭika. In fact, Mrčchakaṭika holds a reality higher place in the estimation of western critics, than it enjoy in its own land. By these discussions we can come to a conclusion that the master piece of sanskrit comedy, Mrčchakaṭika attributed to king Śūdraka is offered both as a commentary on the play as literature and as an analysis of use in any production of the drama in the modern world. It

7) Mrčchakaṭikam - Act V - 13
may further be noted that during the long centuries of the decay in the Indian drama a less thoughtful and more overly erotic play weighting is preferred. Sūdraka's work is the very apotheosis of theatrical style. The language and style of the drama is very simple and it flows like a stream.

6. The play deals mainly with the love-affairs of Cārūdatta and Vasantasena. There is also an underplot which has a distinct beginning, middle and end, and which comes into contact with the main thread of the story on many occasions and through many persons. There are thus two themes in the play namely, the story of lovers and that of the political revolution, the later being thrown into the background and serving only as a supplement to the former. Some critics have observed that the underplot is a mere overgrowth on the body of the play and it mars its beauty, but we think otherwise. An underplot is perfectly justifiable in a play and does not mar its symmetry at all. A comparatively more important fact is that the play utilises more characters both male and female belonging to the lower society. Similarly, the very development and the subject matter of the play might throw some light on the time the play was written in. For convincing realism of social life the drama must go beyond the restricted atmosphere of real court and harem and we have fine specimen of this trend in Sūdrakas Mr̥chakaṭīka. By this we can come to a conclusion that Cārūdatta's surpassing goodness and the misplay of the circumstances combine to create one difficulty after
another, in the main theme of the drama. The sub plot turning on the political fortunes of Aryaka adds to the tension of the situation and has a vital influences in shaping the denovement of the love affairs between the hero and the heroine. The enormous interest evoked by Mṛcchakatika all over the world, derives as much from the continuous through varied, forms of conflict as from its other dramatic qualities.

7. When we go through the nature and position of the characters of Mṛcchakatika we can come to a conclusion that Sudraka has given us not only a very large number and a large variety of characters drawn from different castes, but has also shown great skill in dipicting and developing them. Even the minor characters have been given some traits which at once make them easily distinguishable from one another. Character painting has in fact said to be one of the chief virtues of Sudraka's dramatic art. Evidently the hero and heroine of the play are not the citizens of the world. Nor the minor characters such as the cetas, the viṭas, the candālas who have time and again expressed their faith in the other world.

"कालिन फ़िजियं स असांगव जियूवरणं ए बैशाहार्वत तिद्य प्रशान्ति पुनः।
पृष्ठ मनागसम्मे यदि स्मायमोऽः
कैंटृपैण पदः लोकनदी नस्तिस्ये।" ॥

8) Mṛcchakatika Act VIII - 23
doctrines of Karman, caste system which are peculiarly Hindu ideas. No such ideas have been expressed by Maitreya, Madanika and Samstānaka. The qualities possesed by them may be found to be possessed by persons in any land and climate of the world. They are virtues that are common to mankind all over the world. In fact, even these characters are breathing the same atmosphere of Hindus and represent the same society as the rest with this difference that while Ārūḍātta or Vasantasena can be found only among the Hindus, Maitreya or Rādanika Samsthānaka may be found not only among the Hindus but among any people in any part of the world.

8. When we go through the society as depicted in Mṛcchakatākī we can come to a conclusion that the society was not rigid. The people could take any profession which they like. The Brāhmaṇas could engage in trade or he could become a thief. Even they could marry a courtesan or the maid of a courtesan. A cobbler and a barbar could rise to be a police officer and even an ordinary cow boy could become a king.

Some persons were engaged in their hereditary professions

\[9\] Mṛcchakatākī - Act IV
just as is done by the candalas. Untouchability was not existed.

9. Really a kulavadhū had to be considered as a prakāśanārī and ganikas had to be considered aprakāśanārī. But in Mrčchakaṭīka it is quite opposite. The ganikas could amass vast wealth and were so rich as to own a palatial mansions with varied riches and have even elephants. But their social status was far inferior to that of kulavadhū so much so that neither they nor anything belonging to them had any access to the interior of the house of a gentleman.

But they were welversed in several arts. But in rare cases some courtesans were however too good for the profession and refused to be attracted by wealth. A courtesan could attain the status of a kulavadhū by getting married.

But the Kulavadhū was in the harem or in the apartments of

10) Mrčchakaṭīkan Act I

11) Ibid Act 14 and 3
the house and if and when she moved out of course on rare occasion she put on a veil. She could have her own stridhana. Which she could dispose of any way she liked. A woman was well respected on the whole and it was considered wrong to try to outrage the modesty of a woman of any class.

10. There seem to have been no caste restrictions in marriage a Brāhmaṇa could marry even a courtesan, or even her slave. Great importance was attached to friendship and a friend in danger or in the hour of his need was considered worth more than a hundred wives.

11. There were so many social evils such as gambling, robbery, slavery, poverty, institution of courtesans. Gambling was considered to be the dignity of the person. Even great persons like Cārudatta did not consider it below his dignity to inform that he lost the ornaments in gambling.

12) Mṛcchakatikā, Act IV - 25
13) Ibid, Act IV
As a general rule however, a gambler going from bad to worse became more and more confirmed in his addiction. Attachment to gambling was so high that even after entering a temple and acting like a god Samvāhaka could not get away from gambling when it was played in front of him.

"अताश्रयस्त्र निस्मृतिज्ञानस्य हस्ती हृदयः सतुमयः
भगवत्सि श्रापि इस नायोधिपत्य प्रभावतात्त्यतः।
जोगिणी न क्राहित्याल्लिस्तु मृत्यु निष्कर्षपति स्निवेयं यूते।
तथापि तरलु कषुपिनमधुरः कर्मशाक्ये मनो हयसे।"

Robbery appeared as a science in Mrccchakatikam with a deity and tradition of its own. Robbery was resorted to even by persons of highest caste mainly for acquiring money. Some code of conduct was maintained during the time of robbery.

"नै मुख्यालक्ष्यमेव निस्मृतिज्ञानी युक्ताभिस्मृताः नाती
लोकार्थवर्णं न हुः स्मृती भावनस्य धर्मविद्युत्सुः।
सार्युस्तकुलं हस्ती न स्मृति न भानं भलायती नाति।
कलार्यां वाक्यिनमान्ते भभि भवितिनिर्जीविवे निरं रिकियना।"

The thieves had to acquire several qualities before they took to their profession. Slaves both male and female were completely at the mercy of their masters or mistress. And could be bought or sold or ransomed. As a general rule their word had little value and as against their masters.

(14) Mrccchakatikam Act ii - 6
though even for them they would not commit anything immoral.

"वायुत्तवो अत्तेकं, मानवं अत्रं अकालं न करिव्यामि।" (६)

Poverty was considered to be the cause for all the evils. The people had the belief that "All virtues resort to gold". Society cared for the quality of a person rather than to the wealth of a person. A gentleman could have connection with a courtesan and yet could declare that it had nothing to do with his character.

"यथवनस्त्रापरस्थाजं न अहिम्मभवं।" (७)

If a courtesan enters a house will be ousted on when the man was spurned and all the wealth was exhausted.

12. Hinduism comprised not only sacrifices and worship of dieties, but also offering bali and upahara to different dieties.

"वयुध्य कृती मया गुट्टदेवतास्ति शान्ति। सारथे, रक्मवर्ध
अनुशुष्कै भात्स्य २अ महिमपरवं।" 

Several vratas were observed with fasts, daksina was paid to Brahmanas. Only two asramas were referred to. The grahastha had some obligatory duties and rites in which he

16) Maereakaikam - Act viii
17) Ibid - Act ix
18) Ibid - Act i
had unflinching faith. Śamnyāsa was degenerated owing to some unworthy persons embracing it. The word Śamnyāsa referred to a mendicants life in general.

13. Doctrine of Karman had a strong hold on the society. The belief of doctrine of Karman had proved a vertible source of strength and a solid bedrock for a highly keen sense of morality and uprightness. The people felt extremely sorry if even unwittingly they had been responsible for some wrong and tried to set the things right. In their words as well as deeds people appeared to have been more honest and god fearing than otherwise, though there are a few instances to the contrary also.

14. Buddhism was flourishing and any one irrespective of caste or age or even social standing could be a monk at his will. The monks and nuns were reciting dharmaksaras with the hope of attaining swarga. They appear on the whole to be well behaved and attach great importance to control over sense organs more than anything else. Inspite of the apparently flourishing condition and royal patronage of Buddhism the sight of a Buddhistic monk was looked upon as being inauspicious and ill omen.

"कर्मात्मकतः पुनर्वद्योगी विवेकानन्दयोगी"

15. Belief in omens good and bad was quite common.

19) Māca Kaṭṭikām Act VII

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Astrology was also fairly popular and it was believed that positions and the conjunctions of the stars in the firmament had good or bad influence on the life of human beings on the earth below.

"भुज कर-व अन्माने बोलो नकसरतस्वते यूरसुन्।
अज्ञानी चन्दनन्त क: ल: ते पाण्डारके हैसानि।" (२०)

The general standard of morality was very high. For it is not only great persons like Carudatta or Vasantasena, but even low-class persons like Sthavarakā that show a moral rectitude, though persons like Sakara a complete moral wreck and also persons like Maitreya, intensely practical persons, were not wanting.

16. According to Taittiriya samhita a king was regarded as keeping the people within bounds.

"सुने से देला: प्रत्यक्ष्य अंह श्राक्षयावाम।" (२१)

According to Aitareya Brahmana, when a king was crowned it was thought that "a ksatriya was produced, a lord of all

(२०) Mātaccaka Kālikām Act VI - 6-10
(२१) Taittiriya Samhita I 7.8.1
(२२) Aitareya Brāhmaṇa - 37.5
beings, the defender of Brāhmaṇas or of holy texts and of dharma".

But when we go through Mṛcchakaṭika we find that king Pālaka a sovereign was not defending the Brāhmaṇas or dharma. He used to punish severely. He was the cause for the destruction of the society itself. So the people had no safety in the society. Even the officers who were under his control were going against his orders because of their good nature. They wanted to give proper protection to the good rather than the bad. In that society king was the final authority to pass a sentence in a case after it had been duly conducted and reported to him by the judge.

"अर्यं अत्तरं! गुणवत्तेऽथ गाम्य प्रमाणम्, नैषेः चैव दिसेतः तुरुणः" (29)

According Manu Smṛti a Brāhmaṇa should not be killed. But against to that king Pālaka sentenced Cārudatta a Brāhmaṇa to death. Totally we can say that the king was cruel and he was destroying Dharma.

17. A special officer was appointed to look after the law. His duty was only to trial the case. He had no power to
give punishments. But they could have recommended about the punishement which can be given to a culprit.

There were sresthin and Kāyastha to help the officer in trialing a case. Any one could go to the court and lodge a complaint. The judge had to be very cautious while dealing with royal favourites.

18. The trial was very speedy though attempt was made to sift all sorts of evidence from all possible sources. If the evidence was all inconclusive the recourses was had to trial by ordeal. The culprit had to make an open confession of his guilty.

19. The police department had been working with great zeal. There were night watches also. But apparently they didnot hinder the pursuit of a lady like Vasantasena on open street by persons like Śakāra. Roberry was also taking place in the night. This shows that the night watches were not vigilant. Certain occasions all the carts were inspected. Scuffles could also take place on the streets and there would be no police to look into the matter. The police

60 Mṛcchakatika - Act ΙΧ - 39
61  Ibid  Αν-ΙΧ - 38
officers could be drawn from any caste or class. So it is
natural to have the weaknesses of their own.

20. Punishments were very strict and harsh.

"..."

Just by suspicion also the people could be put in the
dungeon. The culprit who was sentenced to death were taken
in the procession with the things which shows the mark of
the death. He had to declare his crime with his own lips.

"..."

But there were cases even the culprit were set free when a
great thing happens in the kingdom.

"..."

21. Revolution could take place very easily. If there was
a proper leader then the dissatisfied and distressed persons
were raling round the leader and they could revolt against
the king and they could change the king itself. The ruling

32) M. echarakham - Act IX
33) Ibid. Act x-
34) Ibid. Act x.
king would try to stop this but there was no hope of success. If he had to succeed in his attempt he had to get the respect and the sympathy of his subjects by his benevolent rule only.

Totally we can say that the place which the Mṛcchakaṇṭhā holds in dramatic literature of all nations will however be thought the matter of more interest by most readers than its antiquity or historical importance. It represented a state of society sufficiently advanced in civilization to be luxurious, and corrupt and was certainly very far from offering, a flattering similitude although not without some attractive features.