CHAPTER II

AUTHOR - LIFE; DATE AND WORKS
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The progeny of sanskrit literature is very ancient. From the olden times to the present mode as there was no system of quoting the place and the time, there arose different kinds of illusions about a literary composition in the world of literature. Therefore it was not possible to come to a conclusion about the authors of so many compositions. Among the literary compositions Mrcchakatika is one.

There is difference of opinion, among the scholars about the author of Mrcchakatika. The dates of very few writers are given by themselves or by their contemporaries and consequently in the majority of cases they have to be inferred or evolved from a mass of literary material which may or may not be sufficient to yield satisfactory conclusions. Very often the result consists in the summing up of the different conflicting theories and approximating towards what appears to be the probable solutions. This has been well illustrated in the case of Mrcchakatika, concerning whose age and authorship not much was definitely known, when recently unexpected discovery of the plays of Bhāsa helped us with new data and brought to light the drama "Cārudatta" which was first published in the year 1914 by T. Ganapathy Sastri in the Trivendrum sanskrit series whose enlarged and completed version the "Mrcchakatika" seems to be. Since
then valuable contributions have been made to the discussions of several scholars, which have added to our knowledge of the sources of the play and finally laid to rest several doubts and hypotheses. Though the several inquiries were made to a more promising stage, it is still not in a position to decide the date of the play with the degree of accuracy desired by the earnest inquirer, perhaps the discoveries which will be held in future about the texts, which are not known, considered to be lost may give us fresh light on the problem.

The people who ask questions would look for knowing something about the poet are facing at the entrance gate by the truth that the very name of the author of the Mṛćchakāṭīka is more or less shaded in secrecy. Indian tradition has attributed the drama to one Sudraka; some curious and disconnected details about whose life are given in the Prastāvanā' of the play itself.

"स्वास्तिकारणिष्चक्षुरे: परिपूर्णेन्दुमक: शुब्धादशक।
द्विजमुर्गयतमेऽकर्मर्थसङ्ग्रहः प्राशितः सुद्रक श्रुतमाधासतः।" १

Here we are told that Sudraka was a Brāhmin king though of what country is not mentioned; he was very brave and handsome in appearance.

अष्टवेछें सामवेछें गौतिषमें कलो वैशिष्ट: धर्मस्तिष्क्षो शरस्वतो शर्वश्रसादास्वधयात्रान्तुमें नपन्तो चौपलनभाग।
राजान वैषम्य फुन्ति वदमसमुखयो जस्माधन शर्व्द्वा नविनं आयस्य श्रावस्य दशाप्रविष्टो शुद्रकोक्षेम प्रतिकळ:। २

1 Mṛćchakāṭīka - Act I - 3.
2 Ibid - 4.
He knew Rgveda, Sāmaveda, Mathematics, the art regarding courtesans, and the science of training elephants, he was a devotee of Śiva and had performed Āsvamedha, he died at the ripe age of a hundred years and ten days and composed this story of the loves of Cārudatta and Vasantasenā. This Prastāvanā however is on the face of it a later addition in the play, though of not far distant date and it is doubtful how far its statements are historically true. But it seems better to assume that either Śūdraka wrote the play or some one wrote it for him, and this Śūdraka was a king.

In sanskrit literature the fame of Śūdraka is spreading everywhere. In the Kathāsaritsāgara of Somadeva, in the Daśakumāracharita of Dandin, in the Harṣaṣcarita of Bāna, in the Kādambarī of Bāna Bhatta, in the Vetālapanīavīṃśati of Śivadāsa, in the Rājatarangini of Kalhana and in the Skanda Purāṇa; we can find the praise of Śūdraka.

Even from such a long time it is not possible to come to a conclusion that who was this Śūdraka and when he reached to the zenith of his fame in this country Bhārata. Śri Chanrabali Pāndya a great scholar told that son of Vaśiṣṭa Pulumāly was Śūdraka. Prof. Sten Konow told that in 248 A.D. there existed a king named Śivadatta, he was the real Śūdraka. Some others say that the minister of king Śālivāhana was Śūdraka. Gradually he only became the king

of Pratisthana. Poet Kalhana says that Sudraka was there before Vikramaditya. But we donot know that for whom Kalhana denotes Vikramaditya.

It would clear the ground if we state in the beginning that we donot have any reason to reject the two assumptions, which are handed by traditions. No where in sanskrit literature will we find any alternative authorship affirmed and who ever wrote the prologue could have had interest in deliberately fabricating the name of Sudraka or in want—only connecting him with the present play. This play might have been by some pandit who was in the court for him, cannot be exactly found out because both can happen. In India there were many kings who were literary artists, themselves and a king might compose a work for pleasure just like any other ordinary human beings, while the practice of proteges writing in the name of thier patrons was also quite common. The point may be left undecided because it doesnot affect the question of poet's date. There is a possibility of some criticism, that while it may be true that to some person named Sudraka the king, in a later age the comparatively unknown poet might have easily be identified with this better known Sudraka the king. Totally it means that it is very necessary on our part to look carefully all the Sudraka whose existence is recorded, before we fix the author of Mrçchakatika, one of them was king or not. It can be pointed out that there are no specific grounds, for accepting only the name Sudraka: from the prastavanā and
discarding his chief qualification they seem to go together, and must be so understood in the absence of something definite to the contrary.

Some scholars tried to seek for a solution, in the other ways because of difficulty in identifying Śūdraka the king with any particular monarch because of the prologue being an interpolation. Once there arose all sorts of possibilities giving ample scope for fancible conjunctures because the name of Śūdraka was brushed aside. So a question arose who wrote Mrčchakatika if not Śūraka. Three different answers were given to the above question. They are:- (i) It is said to have been written anonymously by someone who was neither Śūdraka nor his protage. If we take this into consideration then we will fail to understand how or why later on it came to be attributed to king Śūdraka, for there is no getting behind the prastāvanā which is found in all the play and which, though put in afterwards, seems hardly to be written for recording invented facts. A work which is written originally can be attributed afterwards to all most any writer; but if it is to carry any conviction, there must exist sound independent evidence to connect the author with the work; without such evidence the work will continue to remain anonymous. But the name of Śūdraka which is connected to Mrčchakatika appears to be strong standing which is remained unchallenged by Indian

4) S. V. Karandikar B.A. (Hons) and V. K. Karandikar- Mrčchakatika - Poona - 1920 PB 1-12.

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tradition, that we cannot believe in the existence of an anonymous author; especially as there is nothing to support a conjecture. This view is supported by Prof. Keith who writes, "that Sudraka alleged author, was a real person, who wrote the drama, seems most implausible.......The obvious conclusion is that the writer and the reviver of Carudatta preferred to remain nameless and to ascribe his work to the legendary Sudraka". Then arises another question that why should an unknown author to select in particular the name of famous king Sudraka to father his own work on? Prof. Levis suggested that, he choose Sudraka for this purpose because he lived after Vikramaditya, patron of Kalidasa and wished to give his work the appearance of antiquity by associating it with a prince who preceded Vikramaditya. But Prof. Keith rejected this suggestion and he said "until satisfactory reasons are forthcoming, it is, difficult for us to accept his assumption of anonymity."

(ii) Late Dr. Pischel boldly formulated the theory that the poet Dandin the author of Dasakumaracarita was also the author of Mrucchakatika. There is a verse of Rajašekara which states

"तथा दुर्गिणम प्रमोदायच, तीषु नोनेमु विश्वुन्दनाम"

As only two works of Dandin are known, namely Dasakumaracarita and Kavyadarsha the learned Dr. Picked out the Mrucchakatika for occupying the third place, but no such

5) A. B. Keith - Sanskrit Drama in its Origin, Development and Practice - Delhi - 1992, p. 131
slender and fantastic grounds that very few scholars are prepared to agree his view. His main reason were two:

(a) that the verse "निर्दशलि तस्सैकुँलि" which occurs in Kāvyādāraśa (II 226) also occurs in the Mṛcchakaṭṭika (I-34) pointing to the probability of both the works being by the same author and

(b) That the state of society described in Daśakumār ċarita closely resembles that depicted in the Mṛcchakaṭṭika. It was unfortunate that neither of these reasons was sound or congruent. Apart from the questionable nature of the argument which attributes the same authorship to two works simply because there happen to have one verse in common, we now know that the stanza in question belonged originally neither to the Kāvyādāraśa nor to the Mṛcchakaṭṭika as it is found twice in the works of Bhāsa that is in Bālačarita and Cărudatta. It is also ascribed by different writers to various different poets, from which it would appear to have become a kind of floating subāshīta, Dandin must have quoted it as such. Dr.Pischel's second argument is pursued to its logical conclusion, would entail the preposterous supposition that all works describing the same kind of social conditions were written by one and the same author. We need hardly dwell longer on Dr.Pischel's theory, as happily it never received any serious support and is now suitably consigned to oblivion.

(iii) Greater interest attaches to a suggestion recently put forward that Bhāsa himself and none else, is the author
of Mrčchakaṭika. ‘शर्टक कवि’ being a sobriquet, bestowed upon him on account of him being a śūdra by caste and that the Mrčchakaṭika is simply an amplification by Bhāsa of his own work Cārudatta. If Bhāsa wrote the Mrčchakaṭika, then there is no reason why that alone, and not his other works should bear his appellation of Śūraka; moreover the Śūraka of Mrčchakaṭika was king, which Bhāsa most certainly was not.

We are then left with the task of finding out who this Śūraka was; to whom this play is ascribed and what may be age in which he should be held to have flourished. One of the familiar difficulties to settle the chronological problems in the plurality of writers bearing the same name. Śūraka has met with the same fate and one comes across a bewildering ample array of literary records that mention Śūraka by name. Some of them supply new and additional details concerning his life, career and personality. The important among them are the following:

1) A passage from the Kumārika Khanda of the Skanda Purāṇa “śrīku ṛṣe sahasrāṇam apallavādhanāḥ pariṣṭhitāḥ trīśāṇe śu vṛddhi-vyavahārāḥ abhirātāḥ 131. śrāvaka kā name bhīṣma nāma śatamāriśvāhāṃ śhitaḥ śrute bhūvahyāpanah 112,” mentions that a great king named Śūraka would reign in the

year 3290 of kali era, that is in 190 A.D. Col. Wilfred was first to identify this Sudraka of the Skanda Purana with the founder of the Andrabritya dynasty whose name is given as Simuka. The grounds given for this identification are

a) that the Bhagavat Purana

"हैदर सुद्र अरणी वृषालु द्वारा स्वरूपो तत्काली..."

...is likely that he was commonly known as Sudraka and
(b) That the name Simuka is variously given as Sinduka, Sisuka and Sipraka in various authorities, showing that its exact form was not quite settled and might as well have been Sudraka originally. Here is the proof of existence of great Sudraka or Sudra king whose exploits afterwards came to figure in later literature when he had acquired a legendary or mythical character. The date of the founder of Andra Britya is given as about 200 B.C. The date of this Sudraka does not conflict with the date to which the internal evidence of the play seems to point, nor does it conflict with the date to be assigned to his predecessor Bhasa. It is thus likely to happen and accepted as a working hypothesis, that Sudraka the founder of Andrabritya dynasty was ruled about 200 B.C. was the author of Mrchhakatika.

2) In the Avantisundarikatha a work of Dandin recently discovered in Madras, a life sketch of king Sudraka is

given. He was described as a Brāhmaṇa King of Ujjaini and a great poet and was said to have defeated Svāti a prince of Andhrabritya dynasty. Dandin's verse in the Avanti Sundarīkathā in praise of Śūdraka is:

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""तमुः अनुदेशतुर्वश्च नरसुद्राकर्षणः सर्द्द धार्मिकः।
अरट्राय भुक्तवन्मित्तवद नाचार स्वत्वचारेित धर्माः।"
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From the above words it appears that in Dandin's days it was understood that Śūdraka's writing consists of auto-biographical matters. Thus we can say that the Mṛcchakaṭikā explains several incidents from the life of Śūdraka himself. The time of Śūdraka would thus be about 56 B.C. must obviously be different from the founder of Andharabritya dynasty. Now we must treat Dandin's Śūdraka separately and the final decision from the vexed question must be suspended till we learn more of this king, either from Dandin's own work or some similar sources. The particulars given by Dandin neither agree nor conflict with those found in the prastāvanā of our play except in one particular, Dandin has described Śūdraka as a Brāhmaṇa and in the prastāvanā he is described as "the best among the Brāhmaṇas," if we accept the natural meaning of the compound as it appears at first sight.

(3) The adventures of king Śūdraka were sung by the poets Rāmila and Somila who were probably his contemporaries or lived after him:

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"ताः सुद्रकके कथा यहाः समस्या नालिचैषीचित्राः। नारायणाय
मयुक्तिमयारसी विनासीतस्य संपूर्णाः।"
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9) Dandi - Avanti Sundarīkathā - Madras 1968 P.50
10) Ramā Śankara Tripathi - Introduction to Mṛcchakaṭikā Delhi - 1986 P.16.
Somila appears to be the same as Saumillaka, whom Kalidāsa has mentioned with respect in the Mālavikāgnimitra

"प्राचीनयज्ञासों असकारो युजसो मुक्तिकालाकृति
प्रवर्तितानां वासनां"

thus the date of Ramila and Somila would before Kalidāsa whom we place in 56 B.C. therefore Śūdraka about whom Ramila and Somila have written, might have been the Andhra brītya Śūdraka. The name of Śūdraka also occurs in the titles of the three other works 'विहरराव शृङ्खला' a drama by an unknown author which is quoted in the Sarasvati Kānthābharana, ‘पुरुषोत्तम’ which is a parikāthā referred to by Rayamukuta, and घगुरकुरिक्क by an author named Pancaśika. As these books are not available now, it is not possible to investigate their historical information. The name of Śūdraka became so famous that a host of Indian rulers, especially of the Pallava and the west Ganges families adopted titles consisting of the word Śūdraka as a symbol of valour.

(4) The famous name of Śūdraka acquired a legendary name and it is found mentioned in many well known Sanskrit works. To quote Prof. Keith - "He was to Kalhana in Rājatarangini, a figure to be set beside Vikramāditya; the vetāla Pancavimśati knows of his age as a hundred and gives as his capital either Vardamana or Sobhāvati, which is the scene of his activities according to the Katā Saritsāgara, which

Kālidāsa - Mālavikāgnimitra - Delhi - 1970 P. 25

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tells of the sacrifice of a Brahmin who saves him from imminent death and secures his life of a hundred years by killing himself. In the Kādambarī he is located at Vindīśa and in Harṣaśāra we hear of the device by which he got rid of his enemy Chandraketu; prince of Chakora, while Dandin in Daśakumāra carita refers to his adventures in several lives." This shows that Śūdraka was a mythical personage to his later authors.

(5) Vāmana mentions about Śūdraka in his Kāvyālankāra Sūtra Vritti that he was famous for writing, exhibiting the 'कुष्ठ गुणा'. He does not state that Śūdraka was a king, and as the Mṛcchakatika is not a work that particularly excels in 'कुष्ठ गुणा' it is even doubtful whether he knew Śūdraka the author of Mṛcchakatika. The Daśaroopaka quotes from the Mṛcchakatika but it does not mention the name of Śūdraka.

6) Prof. Know, in his work on Sanskrit drama, identified Śūdraka with an Abira Prince called Sivadatta who ruled in the third century A.D. This seems to be extremely doubtful. The scene which mentions about Palaka who was overthrown by Aryaka who was the son of herdsman (स्नपालद्वारक) and the word 'अस्तित्र' means a "hardsman" which made konow to decide Śūdraka as a Abira Prince Sivadatta. But his theory was not accepted by the scholars.

(7) Similar efforts have been made to place Śūdraka in the second century A.D. just by the words what he used in his play. The expression 'श्यद्र राज्य' (viii 34 p. 286)

is held to refer to king Rudradamana of the Ksatrapa dynasty, whose date is given as 130 A.D., so that the Mṛchakaṭṭika could be posterior to that. The word occurring in I 23 is believed to have come into use by the time of king Kanīska who lived in the first century A.D., so that Mṛchakaṭṭika would have to be placed after that. These attempts are also not accepted by the scholars, like the theory of Prof. Konow.

When we go through all the discussions about the author of Mṛchakaṭṭika that is Śūdraka we are now left to decide Śūdrakas described according to Skanda Purāṇa or Avaṭisundarīkatāsāra. But there is the lack for materials to decide about the author clearly, though it is clear that the Mṛchakaṭṭika must have come from one of these two Śūdrakas. It will thus have to be placed either in the third or in the first century B.C. which makes it one of the earliest of Sanskrit plays now extant. Now we have to examine the internal evidence which will support the time of the play as mentioned earlier and it must be infavour of an early date. But some critics have twisted various points to prove their own theories. The law suit which was explained in the ninth act of the play is said to be "in accordance with the rules of law books of the 6th or 7th century", which implies that this play is not older than that. But how can we say that similar rules didnot hold good in the first century

B.C.too? The internal evidence supported by the play are:

(a) The drama explains the time when Buddhism was in a flourishing condition. The Bhikshu was introduced as an ascetic, who was given respect by the people and his practices were explained in detail and accuracy of observation. In the end he becomes the head of the monasteries

"तस्य बिष्णुयां सर्वनिश्चारं कुतस्तिरियं क्रियताम्!"

Buddhism started declining when Christian era started. Therefore the play can be safely held to have been composed; indeed as is pointed out by Sir, Dr. Bhandarkar under the Andhrabrityas the religion of Buddha was in a flourishing condition.

(b) The rules about the dramaturgy like the importance of a particular Rasa and the Prakrit dialect to a particular character which were explained by the later writers were known to Sudraka.

(c) The reference to \( अस्ति-किरी \) (14) and the introduction of a courtesan as the heroine seems to be the same period in which Vātsāyana wrote 'अस्ति-किरी' chapter of his Kāma Sūtra, and Vātsāyana cannot be placed later than about 100 B.C.

(d) Attempt is also made to determine the date of the play on the strength of some astronomical, legal and other ideas

(14) Mricchakatikam - Act 3
in the play according to Jacobi points to at least the end of the fourth century A.D. while views of Mars being opposed to Jupiter is said to be far anterior to Varahamihira who gives it in his Berhatsamhita as a view held by his predecessors. The express reference of Manu's authority on law:

"अत्य दे वा वात्सल न पेठभ अनुसारजनवैत्।
राज्यशासनातृत्वार्नु निवासो विविधस्वंक्षेपः सतः॥"

perhaps may show that Sudraka cannot be much earlier than the beginning of Christian era.

(e) Dr. Paranje holds that Sudraka must have preceded Kalidasa. This early date for Sudraka he tries to support further on the strength of words like kāneti, Sakara and Ajjukā. The first according to him the name of Samsthanakā's mother, a proper name and has later on acquired general significance of an unchaster woman and a concubine; Sakara is only a popular name got by Samstanaka on account of the 'sakārabahulatva' of his speech and has later on come to signify a class of people. Ajjukā similarly is a form of Āryā popularised by our play but with a special significance attached to it.

15) Mr. Echakat:Kam - Act VI
16) Ibid - Act IX
(f) Technique is taken as yet another point for determining Sudraka's date. Thus the absurd phenomenon represented by the stage direction niskramya, Punah Praviṣya, the scenes of violence on the stage, figures like Śakara and viṭa, the hero not being present on the stage or the Prakarana, that is, the play not being named after the hero and the heroine all these have been supposed to be indicative of the early age of the play.

(g) Another circumstance in favour of the antiquity of the drama is derived from a peculiarity in the language of one of the chief characters. Saṁsthanaka the Rāja's brother-in-law affects literature with which he has so little conversancy, that his citations of poetic personages and events are as erroneous as frequent. Now it is a remarkable circumstance that all his citations are from the Rāmāyana and Mahābhārata and that he never alludes to the chief actors in the purānik legends.

"सम स्म भडुनमन्तुः। सनस्थं वरिश्यति।
निष्ठिः तः शायनक्रे सम स्निदानामाश्चिन्तनी।
प्रसरस्य अय्योहि प्रस्वलन्ती स्वलन्ती।
सम स्म वसि मनुयाति। रावणस्ये वै कृति॥ ॥" ⑦

We have great reason therefore to suspect that the Mṛcchakaṭīka was written prior to the composition of the Purānas or at least before the stories they contain had

⑦ Mṛcchakaṭīka - Act - I
acquired by their aggregation familiar and popular currency.

(h) Peculiarities in manners contribute to a similar conclusion and the very panegyric of Śūdraka specifying his voluntary cremation when arrived at extreme old age, praises for him an act proscribed in the kali or the present period of the world. By all current legal authorities, except the texts of the most ancient, suicide, is prohibited everywhere except at Prayāga and there it is allowed only under certain circumstances. The prohibition may be disregarded it is true, but such a breach of the law could not with any decency have been made the theme of the public eulogy by a Brahmāna in the sanskrit language, and therefore the event most probably preceded the law.

(i) The subject of the piece, the love of a respectable Brahmāna for a courtesan, is also in favour of a period of some remoteness, although it may be allowed to mark a state of social demoralisation, a decline from the purity of a Hindu institutions, at sometime it seems probable that the practice of antiquity, as regarded the intercourse of sexes, was much or less than it pretends to be in the modern days. The laws of Manu recognise the cohabitation of a śūdra female with a Brahmāna as an inferior kind of wife, or a handmaid. Now this association is prohibited in the kali age and its occurrence in the play in which Vasantasena who may be supposed to be a śūdra becomes the wife of Āruḍatta indicates a period anterior to the law prohibiting a marriage of śūdra by a Brahmāna. The choice
of such an event for the subject of a dramatic performance, renders it likely that such a prohibition could not have been then even contemplated.

(j) The system of self sacrifice, introduction of robbery performance of "Indra Dvajotsava", a fast named "Ratna Śasti", four ways of testing, sleeping and killing on the stage against to the rules of Natya śatra of Bharata, use of Prakrit words regarding the play of dice, use of some unpopular words like 'पयसापिण्डरक' 'राज्ञी' 'शानी' 'कृपणाटकमले' 'वैशीनी' 'बसवद्वासुक' popularity of Buddhism toleration towards Buddhism, Marriage of Brāhmaṇa with a Śūdra. all shows that this drama is very ancient.

(k) The play could be placed about 150 years before the production of Kālidāsa, that is V.A.Smith inclined to place Śūdraka earlier than Kālidāsa in his book "Early history of India (P 307)

There are two collateral considerations which further support the conclusion arrived at above :-

(i) The Āndhraṛitya were a southern race. The fact that this play is rarely quoted by northern rhetoricians would also tend to show that it was produced in the south. In the play itself we find that the poet makes Čāndālas describe the goddess Durga as "सह्रबारीनी" and not "बिर-धयामालिनी"

18) K. C. Mehendale - Bhandarkar Communication vol. P.368
is a strong indication of the author being a resident of South India. The play contains so many peculiar words and expressions which are used only in the south (सुपा मोदक, कर्जकलप) and the author has mentioned the दक्षिणात्यांग along with a member of mlechcha tribes

वर्ष हिंदू कल्याणा अन्ययक्ष भाषिणां: स्थान, स्थानी, कर्ड, कड़ड़ौर्या, कर्ण, कर्ण प्रारंभ - ड्राविड - चौल - चीन - बंकड़, खूर्ष - सकान - मुसमधुधान प्रेमतीला मेलेंच्चा - तीनां अनेकदेशाभाषाभिया यथिवां मनामः।।20

which are mostly to be found in South India

(ii) In the plot there runs the thread of a political revolution wrought, wherein one Pālaka, king of Ujjaini is deposed and Āryaka succeeds him on the throne

हेतु नं कुटुम्भेऽ हि पालकं भौ- 
हरिवम्सायु मृत्युमारीच्च अविक्रिया तमः॥21

As this revolution has nothing directly to do with the action of the play, it could very well have been dispensed with. The first of the Andhra brityas established himself as the result of a revolution and very likely the author must have had that in his mind, the actual names that he mentions were not those of the recent revolution, but such as were in his days past history. According to the Jaina Harivamśa which is the work of a fourth century B.C. a king named Pālaka ruled in the sixth century B.C., the persons Pālaka and Āryaka are not imaginary, but are shown to be historical and the political upheavals in which they were

20) Mleccha Kaṇam - Act 71
21) Ibid - Act 3 - 47
embroiled is described as having taken place shortly after
the death of Gautama Buddha though to us it seems obscure, the
incident of the disposition of Pālaka must have been
current in obvious purpose, could only be justified on the
supposition that Śūdraka is referring to his exploits at the
beginning of his career.

According to the social conditions the Prākrit
words used like
"श्रीरस्त्री, भागधी, शाकारी, अण्डारी,
प्राण्यावर्ती कालिका;"
the some other words like
"पाणक, प्राणायण, काशिपुर, सुवर्ण;

etc. the speciality of the house of
Vasantasena, the business of Ċārudatta, we can say that
Mṛcchakatika is very old. After the downfall of Maurya
Empire and before the time of Guptas the political
conditions of India was not satisfactory. The Indian
history itself is the proof for that, we can find such a
condition for about 250 years. The people were moving
freely and were leading their life in their own way, without
any restrictions because of not having any
ruler in the centre. We can find such a condition in
Mṛcchakatika.

Quotations from the Mṛcchakatika occurs in
Dandin's Kāvyadarśa (6th century). Hence Śūdraka was an old
poet who flourished before Dandin. The style of
Mṛcchakatika is as observed by Wilson is simple and

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unartificial, and of the day preceding the elaborate, the richness of Hindu writings. The presence of many obscure words such as 'पयसपिण्डरक', 'वसन्दमालबुम', 'कण्यावर्त', 'गौतमम', 'कृष्णमकाकी',
which do not occur in the words of Kalidāsa Bhavabuti or Bāna, the extensive use of Prākrit dialects, which the poet handles with all the ease of a master, and the inequality of the poetry which, although it rises at times to great heights shows few signs of knowledge of rules or an aim at being correct and artistic. All these are the indications of antiquity of the play. All these go to prove that the author lived about the first century B.C.

In this way we can say that the tradition which ascribes the Mrčchakaṭika to king Śūdraka may be relied upon, a being universally current and this Śūdraka was either identical with the founder of Andhrabṛitya's dynasty (200 B.C. and this is more probable) or may be a king of Ujjaini described by Dandin (56 B.C.) No one denied the details of Śūdraka's life which were explained in the prologue of the play. So we can take it as fairly accurate. When we take the explanation of Dandin about Śūdraka we get so many additional facts which did not contrast with the prologue. But we got some more information about the author of this play.

As regards the work of Śūdraka nothing was known to be written by him except the Mrčchakaṭika recently a
Bhāna called Padmaprāḥritaka has been published in south India and its editors claim that it is by the well known author of Mṛcchakaṭīka. It is an inferior production covering twenty eight pages in print, whose style composition bears little or no affinity to that of Mṛcchakaṭīka, but it is on a par with the conventional mode affects by later writers. A third work Vatsarāja ḍarita is ascribed to him by Vallabhādeva, but the work is not yet available because of which its authenticity cannot be discussed at present. The editors of Padmaprāḥritake state in their introduction that perhaps Śūdraka wrote a fourth drama, a prakarna styled Kāmadatta. The information about this is also meagre. When we take into consideration all the discussions given above about the author, his time and works we can come into conclusion that Śūdraka is the author of the drama Mṛcchakaṭīka and it is written in about 56 B.C.

Comparison of Mṛcchakaṭīka of Śūdraka and Daridra Cārudatta of Bhāsa

The discovery of 13 dramas by Pandita Ganapathy śastri of Trivendrum in 1912 created sensation among the Indologists which was never witnessed before or since. One of the thirteen dramas is Cārudattam. The four acts of which this drama consists bear such an extra ordinary resemblance to the first four acts of which this drama Mṛcchakaṭīka that no doubt has ever existed about the


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indebtedness of one to the other. But the crux of the problem is to determine which of the two is the debtor and which is the creditor.

Once Carudattam like other plays of the group was accepted as a work of Bhāsa, it was natural to regard it as the original play and the Mṛcchakaṭikam as its amplified revision of the Carudattam is that the Mṛcchakaṭikam generally gives a better or more polished reading wherever there is a difference in the readings between the two works. There are however much weightier reasons which prove the quite contrary.

A careful persual of Carudattam leaves no doubt in the mind of the reader that the author was acquainted with some version of the bigger drama and has deliberately omitted those portions, incidents and characters of the big drama which were of no use for the limited scope of his work. The author of Carudattam has committed blunders which can be explained only if we regard the play as an abridgement of some version of the Mṛcchakaṭikam.

The prologue of both play consists of humorous dialogue between the Sūtradhāra and the nati. But whereas in Mṛcchakaṭikam the Sūtradhāra first introduces the play to the audience and then takes up the role of a prākrit speaking citizen of Ujjaini, in Carudattam he at once takes up the latter role. In fact there is no other work in the whole range of sanskrit dramatic literature including the
Trivendrum plays where the Sūtradhāra from very beginning plays the part of one of the characters of the story of the play.

In both the plays we find the hero Carudatta bewailing his poverty just after the soliloquy of his friend Maitreya at the outset of this act. The author of Cārudatta has jumbled up at one place a number of verses which Cārudatta utters with reference to his poverty in different occasions in the Mṛcchakaṭākam.

"हो द्वारिकारात् पुनः पघस्य अस्तितवजने धाक्षेण न सान्तःक्षे जीवनं न पापं च यन्तं परस्य प्रेमसिद्धे कृतं ततं नस्य सम्भावये।"

The first is clear reference to Maitreya who refers to offer oblations to the mother goddess on behalf of Cārudatta. The last line of this verse also has clear reference to the strangling of Vasanthasenā by Saṃsthanaka and shifting of the guilt on Cārudatta as depicted in acts VIII and IX of Mṛcchakaṭākam.

In the second act there is a scene of gamblers which makes this act so attractive in Mṛcchakaṭākam is not found in Cārudatta.

In act VII of Mṛcchakaṭākam Cārudatta is expecting Vasantasenā in his carriage, but on peeping into the carriage Vidūṣaka discouers Āryaka sitting in it and makes the humorous remark.

"अर: न वसन्तहें, वसन्तहें: सन्तु प्रसं।"

23) Mṛcchakaṭākam - Act I
24) Ibid - Act VII
But in Cārudatta in Act III itself we find a deliberate attempt on the part of the author to introduce a humour occurring in Act VII of Mṛcchakaṭikam.

The foregoing observations make it clear that the author of Cārudattam was definitely aware of the longer drama which he was trying to abridge and adapt for stage purposes. Not only the colophar of the manuscript which says "अमराकृष्णं चाशुपदम्" but the dialogue between Vasantasena and her maid at the very end of Act IV also shows that the author intend to finish the drama after the fourth act in order to have a play of about an hours duration.

One question still awaits solution. If the Cārudatta is the abridgement of Mṛcchakaṭikam how are we to account for occasional differences in readings between the two works? It appears that in some cases at least the author of Cārudattam has deliberately introduced changes in the language, imagery and the humour of the original play and since he was far inferior as an artist to the author of Mṛcchakaṭikam, the changed readings have lost the charm and polish of the original passages. It is however also possible that the author of the Cārudattam had before him a version of the Mṛcchakaṭikam which was slightly different from and older than the present version. Some of the verses of Cārudattam are not found in the present Mṛcchakaṭikam were probably taken from the older version.
To sum up, Cārudattam is an abridgement of the first four acts of an old version of the Mrcchakatikam 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 Mrcchakatikam, but is also unjust to the great artist who produced the Svapnavāsavadattam.

Importance of the Title:- The title 'Mrcchakatika' is an example for its speciality. The title of a poetry or drama will be given on the basis of the characters or important incidence or the theme of it. If we think on this basis this drama would have been named Cārudatta'. But author had named this drama on the basis of a small incidence which occurs in the sixth act related to the play of the child of the hero. The boy wants to play in the golden cart rather than the clay cart.

"रदनिकै! किं सम्बंध भृगिष्कंकंकियाः? नामेन सर्वप्रां-
हारांतिनो दृष्टे।" (२६)

Radanikā the servant of Cārudatta tried to console him.

अति! कुष्ठेन्द्रमाने शुभर्नं ठखंघर्व। तत्तनयु पुत्राविं वट्ठ्यया 
सुवर्णं शालिवं। कृष्टिष्यति।" (२७)

But he did not agree. So she took him to Vasantasenā. After a small discussion there Vasantasenā removes all her ornaments and gave them to the boy in order to prepare the golden cart. "उपहारं समवेन शालिवं सोलवासनकं कार्य।" (२८)

25) Dr. Purushottam Lal Bhārgava Jaipur - Gopināth
   Kavi-rāj Abhinandana Grantha - Article: The
   Mrcchakāṭikā and Cārudattam - Lucknow 1967 P.P.305-310
26) Mrcchakāṭikā - Act VI
27) Ibid
28) Ibid
The above incidence is the basis for the title of this drama. What is the relationship between this title and the incidence? This title is the symbolic expression of the unsatisfaction. Most of the characters of this drama are not satisfied with their prevailing condition and we can find in this drama the glimpse of unsatisfaction. VasántaSenā loves poor Cārūdatta for his good characters rather than Śākara for his richness. She sends the golden necklace to the wife of Cārūdatta informing that

"अन्तः कृत्यादन्तरे सुप्रभावीतादानी, तदां सुभाविकाः | 
तद्रैखा तस्ये अण्डाभरणं अभु सत्नाबनि।"

Cārūdatta is not satisfied with his wife, Dūta so he loves VasántaSenā

"मथ्या मे जनेत: कांशु: कृत्य: निर्भरविथना। | 
कौध: कुदुःखवर्येव स्वमागाध्येव सीढ़िन।"

Rohasena the son of Cārūdatta is not satisfied with clay cart, he wants golden cart only

"किम ज्ञातवत्र नृतिकाञ्चकर्तव्यम, तामेव सवंयणे | 
श्राकारिनां तृतीय।"

The poet has explained very nicely in this drama, about the difficulties what a person gets in his life for not getting satisfaction in the things at his disposal. Therefore the title holds good to this drama in the above condition. Another reason for this is that the attention of author is more on the poverty of Cārūdatta and the clay cart of the boy, eventhough he shows the greatness of the gold. The

29) Mrceha Kaṭkam - Act Ⅵ
30) I bid Act Ⅰ-55
31) I bid Act Ⅳ
poet had given more importance to the virtue of Vasantasena rather than for her richness.

"दुरीद्रपुष्टः मनः क्राणकाननः: समु भाणिका तीक्ष्णाकांतिया
भवति।" (२४)

In this way the poverty of Cārudatta is the symbol for her virtues, the shadow of which falls on the cart of Rohasena. Really the poet gave more importance to the poverty of Cārudatta and not to the richness of Vasantasena. Yet, another important reason is that the ornament which was given by Vasantasena to Rohansena in order to prepare the golden cart becomes a proof in the court for having killed Vasantasena by Cārudatta as complained by Śakāra.

"विदुःकार्यं काँडः यथेच्छ वानिति आभ्युः दृष्टव् शौचतः;
"पद्मानु पहुँच्यन्तावाच। यथा सम्मु तस्यात्परं विद्धः
अत्तकारः। आस्त्वाधिकास्तु स्वरूपम् वर्ग्या भासीता
अपाविदिता। एति वदति।" (२५)

Therefore the title Mṛcchakatika holds good to this drama, because it throws light on the poverty of Cārudatta.

Basis for Drama: - Śūdraka wrote this drama on the basis of Daridara Cārudatta 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 the drama. Bhāsa had explained only the love story of Cārudatta and Vasantasena, but Śūdraka showed his novelty by adding the political upheaval. In this there is the relationship between the

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32) Mṛcchakatikā - Act II
33) Ibid - Act III
fate of the lovers and the fate of the politics. The addition of the gambling scene in the second act is the original imagination of the poet, by which the drama came very near to the life of an individual and it attracts the mind of all the people. The poet created the sense of humility by the character of Sakāra and some of other characters of this drama. Therefore the humility of Mṛcchakatika is the original imagination of Śūdraka.


35) R. Bask - Indian Society as Pictured in Mṛcchakatika IHA V721

36) S. K. Belvalkar - The Relationship of Śūdraka's Mṛcchakatika to Cārvnadalama of Bhāsa - Bombay 1968. P. P. 60-100


38) H. W. Wells - The little clay Cart - Bombay 1970 P. P. HH-193

39) A.