CHAPTER III

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The Sanskrit drama is plant blossoming in congenial soil of contemporary social life. As a piece of literary art, it fulfilled two functions:

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

ii) It represented the dramatists outlook on life. In the post Kālidāsa period one would expect the plays that exploit the art of the master. To such set of plays belongs the Mṛcchakatika attributed to King Sudraka.

Though every branch of the literary writings requires much of skill and ability to being success to an author attempting it, the drama needs grater attributes in a play conceived of should cater to all tastes required to make the piece an engaging and impressive representation. Hence perhaps the saying in Sanskrit, that a drama alone is the whet stone of a writer's ability is correct.

Literary writing in the land has not stopped with merely giving pleasures to readers but has acted as a stimulus to their earnest search for the ultimate truth. In the attempt to secure and idealistic atmosphere and aim the dramatists chose episodes for treatment from great epics like Rāmāyana and the Mahābhārata. No other literature of the world can boast of such splendid materials for poetic vision and the dramatic delineation as some of these great
books have revealed to us.

It does not mean that no dramas born of a writer's originality are helpful to the elevation of reader's mind. There can be instances to prove a dramatists extra-ordinary ability in divining incidents for the first time of creating a character who has not been previously met with. It is the Mrçchakatika a play born wholly of a playwright's imagination in both in its theme and characters. In deed it is an original play that has no equal of its kind in Sanskrit Literature.

According to the intelligence in writing 'Kavya's' Sudraka may not be in the midst of great poets but he had that intelligence. Otherwise how could he introduce different रस in different places wherever it is required. This inclusion of different रस 's itself is the cause for world familiarity. In the beginning itself there is हृदय रस and through out the drama main importance is give to शुद्ध रस. From the first to the fourth act

"तदुपर्य चालीकात्मकमुद्रुगीतिहि भवती। प्रतिरूपमाहृत्य परं द्वितीये दृष्टेस्वे सम्भौगुदारः नृत्तत्वात्या आपविष्यते। सत्यतत्त्वं। पर्याप्तमात्रमस्तर्कणिकिनिबद्धादितत्मतैः सर्वोत्तमः। सर्वसत्यं सर्वज्ञतां सुरक्षितः तत्त्वमात्रविदः। क्रमाेवद्विमाक्षमभ्रान्तिनः सत्याद्वितकमथियथागता। रथमुक्ता काल्पिकामवरं प्रेयतमा वियुत्समालिङ्गिनी।" ॥

1 Mrçchakatikam - Act V
In the fourth scene of the fourth act when vidūśa hands over the Ratnāvali to Vasantasenā we can find a ‘हरस्य रसः’ which attracts the mind of all the people. In the ninth act

"मेरै भों। की-वदनेस्वरि मनोपदाने
हि मानच्छाय। हिचतुः विमले प्रसूता।
हि मानच्छाय। नामं पालयि से विभवं
तेजस्वे नान्दविषि पच्चिंगणते नित्यः।""

In the tenth act:

"उतिभु भो! परिस साधुजनां कम्पिन्
निहकारणापि अध्ययये! धार्मिकाः
परमं कुलोहस्य सुमुहान्य मभौधारणः
सऽन न संबाहुः किं न कुंते ८सयाः।"

In the above two situations we can find करुण रस and it makes all the people to feel sad. We can come to a conclusion by these discussions that Sudraka had a great intelligence and poetic knowledge in framing the drama.

Even though the poet explains the situations it looks as if it is happening in front of us itself.

That is:-

"दुर्गिरितज्ञ, पुरूषस्य वानधवजनो भावे न समिलेते
सुक्लिन्द्रश्च विःसुपौर्णिया अवलोकिते बुद्धिः
सलं बाहमुंकिन्ति श्रीलक्षणिनः अवलोकिते
पाप करं से यदु पद्माती कृती ततःसंय सम्बन्धायते।"

"विलोकनोदोकनः-लम्बने-षांकी सुलिनं दूरतोर्षास्तिशकुटानं
पर्यःस्य-र्यःनं शर-नन्दकारे नाग्रावलिधिस्यं भिन्नं
नानावाक्रकं कहुपकीर्षीसितं कायकृष्णास्पदे
नीतिक्ष्मिन्त्यतं च स राजस्थान हिंस्येऽऽस्यायते।"

2) Mānechakājātakam - Act ix - 29
3) Ibid - Act ix - 31
4) Ibid - Act ix - 36
5) Ibid - Act ix - 14
when he explains the rainy season then the scenery of those things are experienced directly by the audience when they go on observing the drama.

"कर्ज वा वर्ष वा शाळा! मूर्त्ति वा शतशौचकारणी।
न शाळाय हि स्त्रियि रौद्रहु प्रस्थिता दूरियं प्रापि।" ⑥

Mrčchakaṭika attracts the mind of croress of persons because it has got such a nice story. It is filled with such an interesting situations which made the drama to be liked by all the people of this world.

Another reason for this is that it explains the social and political conditions of that particular time very nicely. In that society Brahamins had a great respect

"दू विद्यातिरिक्त स्त्री! कौशिकेऽप्राणिः: कामवने।
पूजनीयो श्री श्रावण अन।" ⑦

All these things are proving the above statement. But at the sametime they were engaged in bad activities for which Sarvilaka is example. That is he commits robbery inorder to get the hands of the maid of a courtesan. Carudatta is an example for engaging in trade by giving up his family business of study and teaching. There was a strong notion for the caste system

"आरे, स्वामि कथा? आरे का मे आता।" ⑧

are the example for the caste system. There was no proper lights in the streets, because of which in the night there

⑥ Mrčchakaṭikam - Act V
⑦ Ibid - Act II
⑧ Ibid - Act V

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was dense darkness in the streets, which gives rise to so many bad activities and it was very difficult to move alone in the night chasing of Vasantasena by Sakara and his friends in an example for this. The people where moving by quarreling each other without the fear of any rules and regulations. The rich persons were using the elephants as their vehicles. Vasantasena had an elephant named Khungtamotaka. There was no restrictions that the higher class of people should not marry the lower class lady. Cārudatta being a Brāhmin married a Śūdra lady named Vasantasena who was a courtesan. In the society we could observe the gambling, slavery and attachment to the courtesans.

Among the Sanskrit Roopakas, 'Mrčchakatika' is a glorious one. The poet has explained nicely the love story and the political conditions. In the sanskrit literature among the roopakas which show the virtues of the people this is considered to be the best. The poet has explained all types of characters with different situations which shows the real nature of the, society. The explanation about the

\[\text{Mrčchakatika - Act II}\]

\[\text{Ibid - Act II}\]

\[\text{Ibid - Act II}\]

\[\text{Ramā Śankara Triparī - Mrčchakatika - Delhi - 1986}\]

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situations of 'Dyutakara' and Samvahaka attracts the mind of all the people; a Brahmin thief Sarvilaka another side exchange of carts, another side there was an effort by Sakara to kill Vasantasena in garden and another side about place of hanging. One side we can find loyalty towards the husband, Kindness, attachment to the good characters, virtues brings light to everyone's life but on the other hand we can find the mixture of कपट, दुर्भ, कृत्य, शैलवन which brings the darkness to the life of everyone.

The poet has expounded new feelings, attractive similies simple thinking in the drama.

The language is very simple and it flows like a stream. In this drama we may not find the greatness of Kālidāsa's or the virtues of Bhavabūti's drama or there may not be realities of life but whatever the feelings 'मार्मिक' it expounds cannot be find in other dramas as we find in this.

In expounding the virtues also Śūdraka is great. All the characters of his drama creates a natural feelings in the mind of the audience. None of the characters will be

(14) Mrcehakafrikam - Au. V - 17
(15) Ibid Au. II - 25

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forgotten. Who will not find themselves fortunate by keeping Vasantasena who was having toleration for good qualities, helping nature, giving promise one who surrenders, kind hearted engaging in helping others, skill in different arts, and very beautiful in their heart.

The speciality of Mrçchakatika is the use of Prâkrit language more than in any other works of Sanskrit literature. All most all the characters of this drama use the Prâkrit language in their conversation.

The 'क्रेन्ति' of Śūdraka is very simple. He has used very less prosody's in his work. The main 'रस' of this drama is श्रवण. The poet has explained the rain very nicely. Carudatta who was considering Dharma as his life, remembers the नीला of Lord Vāmana by observing the sky, which was covered by the clouds:

"अनायते स्थवरं न शुभं जीवनं।
विधिलिङ्गाभारं विद्युतं नमस्ते।"

In Europe this drama has all along been popular and has always been held in high esteem and it deserves this honour to the fullest extent since it differs from the model more than any other Indian drama and indeed it has been fashioned wholly on the basis of actual life. The characters are presented in a lovely manner. The conical scenes with their blent humour are often full of spirit and

16) Mrçchakatika - Act - V - 2
wit, and in the matter of tenderness and favour remained us of the most beautiful passages in the dramas of Kālidāsa. It is true that primarily we know, in respect of the first four acts only the extent to which the beauty of the poetry goes to the credit of Bhāsa and that of Śūdraka.

Mṛcchakatika is one of the greatest and the most enjoyable of the Sanskrit dramas. The drama has real poetry and sentiment and is more realistic. It is concerned with a world in which thieves, gamblers, political schemers, mendicants, courtesans, and house maids take part freely. It includes in its broad scope force and tragedy, wit, humour, satire and pathos, poetry and wisdom, kindliness and humanity. The dramatic theme has become more social and does not involve mere royalties. This modern trend can also be felt from the way the title is selected. Instead of giving importance to the characters, especially the hero and the heroine, the title refers to a scene which has importance because it involves psychological conflict and hence proves to be the turning point in this drama. This background of variety character, and the humour touch in their delineation, interpersed with a political plot, give this drama a wider and a fuller scope for the study of the conflict in its various aspects.

The main sentiment of the drama is erotic as it depicts the love story of a noble Brāhmin for a courtesan. Čārudatta is a Dhirend̄atta type of hero who is extremely noble and self controlled person. His extra-ordinary
generosity despite adverse circumstances leads him into poverty. This provides first stage in the weaving of conflict in this interesting drama; that the hero should be internally distressed and miserable in consequence of his external circumstances of poverty. He continually broods over it, and denounces poverty by saying:

"दृष्टिकोणां मरणं सभी सैतनी न दारिक्षुः।
अनपकलेता भावां दरिक्षां आमरां चुस्ति नरां।" (17)

In act I he is interrupted in this despairing reverie as Vasantasena enters his house. Vasantasena is a courtesan by profession, yet her innate nobility, distinguishes her from others. Though a courtesan by birth and profession, she cherish every woman's hearts desire to love and be loved on intrinsic merits, rather than extrinsic or accidental grounds as she says:

"जुगल: सत्त्वनुसमाजमय कामणां न मुनत्त्वताकारां।" (18)

So Vasantasena's very existence becomes a paradox as it represents a conflict between what she is and what she wants to be. This conflict becomes apparent when she is pursued by Sakāra the kings brother-in-law. Ordinarily a courtesan would have welcomed and rejoiced at the opportunity of having a wealthy and powerful patron, but Vasantasena's reaction, as might be expected is quite the

17) M. E. Chakravartī - Act - I - 11
18) Ibid.
contrary—though quite in consonance with the worldly wisdom of Vita's epigram:

“अनानि मुद्देनि हर्नि बाजी बलगाहि शुद्धि।
द्वीभूति नानाय यवीं नालिनि गांवताद।”

Again by this action of Vasantaseña as rightly observed by Prof. R.V. Jagirdar. “She herself becomes a source of conflict from the moment she is feeling from the vulgar in life (Sakāra) to seek safety and sympathy amid culture and sincerity (Carudatta). While Brahmin has tested the miseries of life to grow miser and more sympathetic, Sakāra has tested the pleasures of high position only to grow self-centred and spiteful. Vasantaseña’s persuasion by Sakāra throws him up against Radanika and Vidūṣaka, Maitreya the latter of whom puts up a brave face and threatens even to strike.”

The small incident lays the seed of a life-long hostility between Sakāra and Carudatta on whose matrix, the diverse patterns of incidents and situation on women so as to produce a highly satisfying design.

The history of full-fledged and complete Prakarana may very rightly be said to have started with Sudraka, the

19) Mr. Chakravarti - Act-I - 50
20) I Ibid.
writer of the Prakarana Mṛcchakatika. The playwrights occupied themselves with the portrayal of courtly love but with the advent of Śūdraka, a new avenue opens before us, where instead of any royal personages, Cārudattā a merchant, Maitreya a devoted friend; the scheming of Sakara, the favourite of the King, Sarvilaka, a leader of a revolutionary party, Vasantasena a courtesan, common, but not common place, characters of gamblers, military offices, a city magistrate, judges; executioners and great variety of men are presented on canvas as wide as to cover ten long acts. This is for the first time in the History of Sanskrit literature, that there come so many persons of different status of life and the playwright, is highly successful in presenting them in a charmingly realistic manner.

The observation of Dr. S.K. De, regarding unique character of the play is worth-quoting. He observes- "It is thus, not the usual type of the dramatic poem, but possesses distinctly dramatic qualities, which make a greater appeal to modern taste and idea. Apart from the graphic picture it presents of some phases of contemporary life, the work is truly worthy of a great dramatist in its skillful handling of a swift moving plot of sustained interest, in its variety of incidents and characters; in its freedom for the usual fault of over elaboration, in its sharpness of characterization, in its use of direct and homely imageries conveyed in a clear, forcible and unaffected diction, in its skillful employment of a variety of Sanskrit and Prākrit
metres, in its wilty dialogue, in its general liveliness and dramatic effect in its mastery of deep pathos and in its rave quality of quiet humour.

The master piece of Sanskrit comedy, "The Little Clay Cart" 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. In fact, it holds a reality higher place in the estimation of western critics, than it enjoys in its own land. It may further be mentioned that during the long centuries of decay in the Indian drama a less thoughtful and more overtly erotic playwriting was preferred Śūdrakā's work in the very apotheosis of the theatrical style.22

The word "Little Clay Cart" means life shrewed observations and perceptions abound in its presentation of all manner of themes, including politics, religion, society, psychology and the art. It is not a "Problem Play" for the sufficient reason that its discursive thoughts impinge on most of the chief matters that vitally concern mankind.

In terms of Indian dramatic practice on at once observes the usual hero and the heroine, for Sanskrit drama is even more committed to the presence of these two leading figures than in European. Both are invariably idealised party because the Indian aesthetics regards all

art as by rights idealistics. This idealism is not so much intellectual or moral as spiritual. The pious Cārudatta and the pleasure loving Vasantasena are typical variations on this basic theme of idealization. The other characters follow suit. The reckless and acquisitive gambler, the Vidusaka, attendant on the hero, being a Brahmana who loves good eating and all physical pleasures, except perhaps those of sex, the witty maid, the subservient courtier, the princely buffon, the corpulent bawd; mother of the resplendent and generous courtesan, all these are familiar figures on the Indian stage. Sudraka Contributes fresh developments to all of them on the basis of well established themes.

From the foregoing two conclusions are to be drawn. The play is brutally damaged if any considerable feature of it is removed and its many actors are rewarded with remarkably good roles, which enable them to use much of their experience in other plays and further prepare them plays in which they will appear later. Most emphatically, the 'Little Clay Cart", stands in the main line of theatricle discipline. It might well be in the programme for the early years in any drama school, in any land or period.

The aesthetics is a highly convincing body of that, based, as it is, to so a great degree on music and the dance, of which Siva is the ultimate patron. There are three major scenes in the ceremonial or situalistic manner,
located at the three most strategic points, namely acts one, five and ten. The chief incident in the first act is a ceremonious pursuit of Vasantasena by Sakāra and his friends in the night through the streets of the city, ending only when she escapes through the opened side door of Carudatta's house.

The second of these episodes the central incident in act V, a closely studied parallel to the first act is enacted by four figures, with no less vigorous poetry and no less animated gestures. Alternating stanzas of courtesan, Viṭa strophe and antistrophe, express the divergent aspect of the scene, which is equally poetic and choreographic.

The third and the final passage conspicuously combining pageant movement with poetical affiliates is much more complex. The proclamation announcing Carudattas execution is declaimed four times by executioners and imagined as heard in the four chief sections of the city.

"चारुदत्तसः किलाकार्यकारिणाः गणिकार्यस्माति थीकायते बन्धुश्रुषणयु मपणकयुक्तियोऽभावम्। प्रत्येक बादुपाश्चविनादस्य मानन्ति वृष सतीत्या मुः। सवये च प्रतिपदे। ततो राजा पालनेन वधानानाथेः पुनः भागविनाम्। सद्यं ईदृशं उभयार्थिकविषये अनेकार्य सार्थी तमापि राजा पालन भूमवेन स्वाहिते।" (२३)

In addition to the proclamation there are several stanzas

(२३) Mṛchakātikā - Act X
spoken at repeated intervals by Čārudatta keeping pace with the monarch to the southern cemetery.

One of the finest themes in the play's development and one of the least controlled by fantasy in the politics. With exception of the antagonist, Śakāra all characters agree indetesting the tyrannical king Pālaka and in admiration of the rightful heir to the throne, the cruelly imprisoned Āryaka. The importance of the political theme is shrewdly in Čārudatta in poverty but commences its impressive progress only with the I act, part two, that is act VI.

Even the name of Śūdraka's play points to religious consolations. The 'toy cart' is presumably a reference to the celebrated Buddhistic parable of the burning house. In this parable the house signifies the material world and the worldly life of man. the most effective means that the gods have found, to here man out of his predicament is a subterfuge. Reason is of small avail. But on being told that toy carts are just outside his door, the wiseman at least leaves his fatal dwelling to play with these deceptive trifles. Further more the play cart is preferred by the play wright as symbol of Čārudatta's poverty and enforced asceticism, the gold cart, so much preferred by his son, is the symbol of Vasantasesen's magnificence. His lightness of touch is a sophisticated assumption. Behind the mark of human comedy is the grave face of religious idealism.

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There is not much to be said about the scholarship of Sudraka. He has shown his acquaintance with astrology and very sound knowledge of the legal procedure. Act IX has been so cleverly managed and the piece of evidence have been so brought out one after another that one cannot but admire the legal acumen possessed by Sudraka. His general knowledge of the language and abundant sprinkling of mythological references:

"सायंगानाथ: कर्ण: चतुर्विश्वम: कर्त्ती च यद्यः।
यद्यथ: भार्यविगृही भूमिस्वरूपः: पञ्चम: कर्णः।"

and also figures of speech and use of different metres short as well as long with good ease are enough to show his general equipment as a dramatist can easily be guessed from the skill he has displayed in managing his raw materials and infusing life into them. There is hardly any indication regarding his religious belief and yet from the "Nāndi" verses:

"पानु श्रुत्येष्यण्डीतत्त्वं त्रिवेड:।
नातु श्रीमारुपस्य कर्ण:।
गौरी कुजनति यज विधुलिनेऽस्मि।"

and the reference to Vṛṣabhakṣetu and the Sahyavāsini, one may be inclined to say that he was a Śaiva and the believer in the vedic, ritualistic religion as many perhaps be
gathered from a remark, put in the mouth of Cāruadṛta:

"मातृं शैलिः सपविद् मदुमुदे वेदांतिनां।
हृदयं समस्मन्दित्वं सिन्तन्त्यरेव।
तुष्कावः समप्रति विन्दुवपासु दृश्ये।
कीज़परले पतनी कीर्त्तु मुखावली हि।"

The style throughout meager, is in general simple and unartificial and of a day evidently preceding the elaborate richness of Hindu writing, not to speak of the fantastic tricks and abuses which began to disgrace Sanskrit composition apparently in the IX and X centuries. This may be considered a safe indication in a work of such pretence as one attributed to a legal board; and although it could not be admitted alone as conclusive, yet as associated with the name and the date of Śūdraka, it is a strong confirmation of the later at least being correct.

The place which the Mṛcchakārtika 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 represents a state of society sufficiently advanced in civilization to be luxurious, and corrupt, and is certainly very far from offering, a flattering similitude although not without some attractive features.

26) Mṛcchakārtika - Act I - 9