

category of Prof. Konow's inference from the word गोपाल, and cannot be considered as convincing.

We are thus left to make a choice between the Sudrakas described under (1) and (2); the materials for this choice are lacking, though it is clear that the Mrich. must have come from the pen of one of these two. It will thus have to be placed either in the third or the first century B. C.,¹ which makes it one of the earliest of Sanskrit plays now extant. We shall proceed to examine how far this claim to antiquity is supported by internal evidence; we shall find that it is all in favour of an early date. But here, too, critics have twisted various points to suit their own pet theories; as an instance we might mention that the law-suit described in the ninth Act is stated to be "in accordance with the rules of the law-books of the 6th or 7th century," the implication being that the Mrich. cannot be older than that; but what grounds are there for supposing that similar rules *did not hold good* in the first century B. C. too? Until that is definitely disproved the argument is of no value at all. The following are among the principal features of the internal evidence afforded by the play:—

(a) The drama refers to a period when Buddhism was in a flourishing condition. The *Bhikshu* is introduced as an ascetic to whom respect is paid by the people, and his practices are described with great detail and accuracy of observation; he finally becomes the head of all the monasteries (*cf.* तत्पृथिव्यां सर्वविहारेषु कुलपतिरयं क्रियताम् । p. 404). Buddhism began to decline about the beginning of the Christian era, before which period, therefore, the play can safely be held to have been composed; indeed, as is pointed out by Sir Dr. Bhandarkar,² under the *Andrabhrityas* the religion of Buddha was in a flourishing condition. (b) Many minute rules

1 This would of course make Sudraka a predecessor of Kalidasa. Some scholars, who would like to see Sudraka put later than Kalidasa, put forward the plea that since Kalidasa does not mention Sudraka, while he refers to Bhasa, Kaviputra, and Saumillaka with respect, Sudraka must not have been known to him and therefore did not exist before him. Such "argument by silence" is always ineffective, and can never be said to prove what it seeks to prove; for Kalidasa was not expected to enumerate *all* the famous poets with whose works he was acquainted. We have referred to it here, as reasoning on similar lines is not infrequently met with in antiquarian discussions.

2 *Early History of the Dekkan*, p. 31.

given by later writers on dramaturgy, such as those relating to the predominance of a particular *rasa*, and the assignment of a particular Prakrit dialect to a particular character, seem to be not observed by or unknown to Sudraka. (c) The reference to वैशिकी कला (I. 4) and the introduction of a courtesan as the heroine seem to be synchronous with the period when Vatsyayana wrote the वैशिक chapter of his Kama-Sutra, and Vatsyayana cannot be placed later than about 100 B. C. (d) The play contains many references to astrological science. In sl. 33 of Act IX the planet मङ्गल is described as the enemy of बृहस्पति, which is contrary to the opinion of modern astrologers led by Varahamihira, but is in strict agreement with the view of ancient writers to whom Varahamihira refers (see Brihajjataka II. 16, 15). As Varahamihira flourished at about 500 A. D., the Mrich. must be placed many centuries before that. (e) The general style of the play represents, in its simple grace and picturesque expression, the earlier style of Sanskrit dramatists, such as Bhasa; it is not so polished as that of Kalidasa, and not at all as elaborate and artificial as that of Bhavabhuti and Bhattanarayana. While none of these considerations would by themselves assign any specific date to our play, still, taken together and in conjunction with the other previously known facts, they substantially strengthen the probability of the Mrich. being a production of the 2nd century B. C.

We have thus tried to show that the tradition which ascribes the Mrich. to king Sudraka may be relied upon, a being universally current, and that this Sudraka was either identical with the founder of the Andhrabhritya dynasty (200 B. C., and this is more probable); or may be a king of Ujjayini described by Dandin (56 B. C.). As regards the details of his life, those in the Prologue have not been denied by any authority, and might therefore be taken as fairly accurate; if we accept Dandin's description of Sudraka, we get several additional facts which conflict with none in the Prologue. Beyond them little else is known about our author.

As regards Sudraka's works, nothing was known to be written by him except the *Mrichchhakatika*; only recently a Bhana called *Padmaprabhritaka* has been published in South India,¹ and its

1 In the booklet titled *Chaturbhāni*, which is referred to before.

editors claim that it is by the well-known author of the *Mrich.* This Bhana is an inferior production covering twenty-eight pages in print, whose style of composition bears little or no affinity to that of the *Mrich.*, but is on a par with the conventional mode affected by later writers. We have, therefore, very great hesitation in accepting the piece as a genuine production of our author. A third work *Vatsarajacharita* (also called *Vinavasavadatta*) is ascribed to him by Vallabhadeva; an edition of it has been announced for publication by the same editors, but the work is not yet accessible to us and hence its authenticity cannot be discussed at present; it may be assumed, however, on the authority of Vallabhadeva. The editors further state, in their introduction to the *Padmaprabhritaka*, that Sudraka, probably wrote a fourth drama, a *Prakarana* styled *Kamadatta*. On this point, too, the information available is tantalizingly meagre. Possibly we may be on the eve of important discoveries, which would be eagerly welcomed by all interested in the life and writings of the great artist who wrote the *Mrichchhakatika*.

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III. THE PLAY.

(1) THE PLOT.

The *Mrichchhakatika* is a drama in ten Acts based on the story of the love of Charudatta, a prominent but poor inhabitant of Ujjayini, and Vasantasena, an exquisitely beautiful but pure-minded courtesan of the same city. The following is a summary of the plot as it is developed in the course of the various Acts:—

Act I. In the Prelude (*Prastavana*), after the Benedictory stanza (*Nandi*), the Sutradhara gives some interesting particulars about the author of the play which he is about to stage. A conversation between him and his wife (*Nati*), which follows, is intended chiefly to lead up to the entrance of the *Vidushaka* (*Maitreya*), at which point the action of the play properly begins. *Maitreya* is a poor Brahmana and an honest and sincere friend of Charudatta, a wealthy citizen of Ujjayini who, however, no longer possesses his former wealth, having spent it all in noble and charitable deeds. One *Churnavidha*, who is Charudatta's friend, sends a cloak by *Maitreya* with instructions to give the same to

his master. Charudatta enters, and the cloak is duly handed over to him. Their conversation for a while turns upon Charudatta's poverty; then Vasantasena comes upon the scene. She is being pursued by Sakara (Samsthanaka), the brother-in-law of king Palaka of Ujjayini, and the villain of the piece. He is a debauchee, a coward and a fool, with an exaggerated idea of his own importance and power; he is accompanied by two of his followers, Vita and Cheta. They entreat, cajole and threaten Vasantasena by turns, but all the same with great indignation she rejects Sakara's suit. She takes refuge in Charudatta's mansion; and in the darkness of the night her pursuers light on Radanika, a maid in Charudatta's employ, mistaking her for the object of their search. Maitreya intervenes and turns them all out. Vasantasena is next introduced to Charudatta; she had already heard of his virtues and fallen in love with him, contrary though it was to the profession of a courtesan to become attached to a penniless man. Wishing to keep up the acquaintance, she employs an ingenious device; she leaves her ornaments with Charudatta, ostensibly for safe custody, but really with the object that they should serve as an excuse for further communication with him. She then leaves, escorted by Charudatta who on returning makes over the ornaments to Maitreya for safe keeping.

Act II. Vasantasena, talking in confidence with her maid Madanika, reveals the warmth of her feeling for Charudatta, and also the real reason of depositing those ornaments with him. Then follows a scene introducing a number of gamblers; one of them, Samvahaka, is running away without paying his debt, and is being pursued by his creditor and the master of the gaming-house. Assisted by another gambler, Samvahaka escapes and takes shelter in the house of Vasantasena, who in her kindness pays his debt for him and rids him of his pursuers. Samvahaka is tired of gambling, and leaves after declaring his resolve of donning the robes of a Buddhist mendicant (Bhikshu). One of Vasantasena's servants then enters and relates how he had just rescued a Bhikshu (—i. e., presumably, Samvahaka—) and how his brave act was rewarded by Charudatta by the gift of his own cloak. This affords her another proof of the noble generosity of the worthy Charudatta; she takes the cloak and wears it herself, for she loves everything belonging to her beloved and worshipped hero.

Act III. There was a Brahmana in Ujjayini named Sarvilaka, who having fallen in love with Madanika, the slave-maid of Vasantasena, wanted to pay her ransom and marry her. Being himself poor, he had turned a burglar to obtain the necessary amount of gold. He breaks into Charudatta's house by night when all are wrapped in the arms of slumber, and happens to steal those very ornaments of Vasantasena which Maitreya had to keep with himself. The theft is soon discovered. Charudatta is distressed by the loss, not because the money meant anything to him, but because the ornaments were kept with him *as a deposit*, which he was bound in honour to return on demand. His wife Dhuta, however, whose nobility is on a par with her husband's, hands over her own necklace to help him out of the difficulty. Charudatta thereupon asks the Vid. to go to Vasa with that necklace, which he was to offer to her in exchange for her own ornaments, which, he was to state, were lost by his master at gambling, under the belief that they belonged to himself.

Act IV. Sarvilaka calls upon Madanika with a view to buy her freedom with those stolen ornaments. On being questioned as to the source of his sudden accession to wealth, he half-confesses that they belonged to Charudatta. Madanika, however, had recognized them as the property of her mistress; she recommends that Sarvilaka had better return them to where he had taken them from. Sarvilaka, however, could not face Charudatta as a declared thief; as an alternative, therefore, she urges him to see Vasantasena and offer them to her, professing that Charudatta had sent them back by him, as his house was thought unsafe. Sarvilaka does so; but Vasantasena, who has listened to the preceding conversation, is not taken in by the pseudo-messenger. Nevertheless in her goodness of heart she bestows Madanika on her adventurous suitor. Sarvilaka has to leave suddenly in a hurry to go to the assistance of his friend Aryaka, whom king Palaka had imprisoned for fear he might become the king, as a seer had predicted he would. Vasa is next visited by Maitreya, who, it may be remembered, is deputed by Charudatta to offer her his wife's necklace in exchange for those lost ornaments. Vasantasena is deeply touched by this fresh proof of Charudatta's nobility, and she sends word with the Vid. that she would be calling upon Charudatta that evening.