

Role of Chanakya in Vishakhadatta's “Mudrarakshasa”

Dr. Sumit Kumari Dahiya^{1*} Mr. Naveen²

¹ Assistant Professor of English, Sh. L. N. Hindu College, Rohtak

² Assistant Professor of English, Sh. L. N. Hindu College, Rohtak

Abstract – The play ‘Mudrarakshasa’ is a Sanskrit play written by Vishakhadatta. It is translated into English by K.H. Dhruva ed. Horace Hayman Wilson. It is a historical play. Chanakya’s overall strategy is successful because of the signet ring given to him by son of Dhanananda. Translation is a strong medium today to understand the original text. Old texts translated into modern languages are very much helpful to those who are not able to understand the original texts. Due to translation of this play from Sanskrit to English, many readers are benefitted and are capable of learning Hindi history. The translation of plays has many problems as the added elements of actors, speech duration and relationship between the art of drama and acting. The translators have to take care of various aspects like final performance, acting tradition, characters and speaking style. Modern translators tend to simplify the sentence structure of the earlier dramas.

Key-Words: Role, Chanakya, Arthashastra, Mudrarakshasa, Education

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Often ancient texts of India are read without much critical intervention. Literary theories predominantly originating in the west have been frequently used as tools to re-read and re-interpret several western ancient texts, including several Greek and Roman dramas. For a long period of time ancient Indian texts were read and understood on the surface. However with the advent of the theories like New Historicism in the western world during the 1980s, the text only approach pursued by formalist new critics became obsolete. New historicists, like formalists and their critics, acknowledge the importance of the literary text, but they also analyze the text with an eye to history. The application of western literary theory on ancient Indian text open up the text to new way of reading and interpretation.

The Mudrarakshasa, unlike the majority of Sanskrit plays, is purely a political drama. It has for its theme, besides elevation of Chandragupta to the throne of Magadha, winning over of Rakshasa, the hostile minister of the Nanda dynasty to the side of Chandragupta and adoption of measures to strengthen the rule by Chanakya, the renowned politician of his time. Chanakya is called Indian Machiaveli and he was a crafty, clearheaded, self confident and intriguing politician. Chandragupta had a high respect for him. This minister, also called Vishnugupta, is famous as a writer on Niti or “rules of government and polity”, and the reputed author of numerous moral and political percepts like Arthashastra. Nanda is slain by the contrivances of

this crafty Brahman, who thus assists Chandragupta to the throne, and becomes his minister.

Chanakya, whose ability and diplomatic skills are of a high order, lays out various traps and machination to make Chandragupta the supreme sovereign in India, by winning over the noble Rakshasa to his master’s cause. At his point it must also be remembered that although Rakshasa appears to be innocent and loyal character he is definitely not without faults. He is also a politician like Kautilya. He too plans like Kautilya, the only difference being his lack of expertise in the execution of that plan. In fact his schemes to kill Chandragupta cost quite a few innocent lives. Therefore in such a situation it is extremely difficult to decide on the propriety of the actions of both Rakshasa and Kautilya and by implication the morality of the play which makes it highly postmodern in nature.

In their book entitled ‘The Sense of isolation in Arthur Miller’s All My Sons’: A Postmodernist Study’, Hooti and Azizpour some elemental nations of post modernism:

1. There exists no absolute truth.
2. Truth and Fallacy are synonyms

3. There is no determined rule to designate rationality and irrationality.
4. Morality is completely personal.
5. Postmodernists celebrate meaningless view of the world. By the time one reaches the end of the play one would find out almost all characteristics of postmodernity enlisted above are actually found in Mudrarakshasa.

Vishakhadatta's plays "Mudrarakshasa" reveals Chanakya as a complex character with excellent leadership skills. Chanakya is full of wit. Looks often don't reflect one's brain. As Chanakya has ugly appearance but had a brilliant mind. He was a teacher in Takshashila University and had seen the Greeks invading and conquering north western India. He went to gather support from Nanda of Magadha. Who turned him down after insulting him and calling him ugly. Chanakya educated and trained Chandragupta for seven long years. Chanakya, with the aid of his remarkable pupil Chandragupta, raised an army and defeated Nanda of Magadha. This led to founding of a vast and glorious empire which unified most of India and gave it the rules of state governance.

Chanakya recognized the excellent qualities and abilities of Amatya and his sense of loyalty. Chanakya wanted Rakshasa to come over as the Prime Minister. To achieve this, he weaved a complex plot involving The Signet Ring of Rakshasa.

Chanakya tried to convince Chandragupta, a bosom friend of Amatya Rakshasa so that he may not help Amatya. Chanakya frightened Chandragupta but Chandandasa was firm with his statement: -

Chandandasa: - What signs of fear do you behold in me,

To think I should be moved to sacrifice,

Those I had sheltered, by dread of death

But I have said it – those you seek of me

I have not in my power – what more remain.

Chanakya: (Apart) 'Tis bravely spoken.

Desire of wealth is common and the love

of knowledge not infrequent- far more rare

the generous self-devotion that this merchant

so nobly shows- (Aloud). This is your last resolve.

CHANDANDASA:

Chanakya was an ancient Indian Political figure. He is believed to be the author of the Arthashastra (The Science of Wealth and Governance), an early Indian treatise on statecraft. He is the real brain behind the overthrow of then-ruling dynasty of the Nandas and the establishment of the Mauryan empire, the earliest imperial formation in Indian history most part of "Arthashastra" is attributed to war and diplomacy. His philosophers are as under:-

Rule of king is to be secured and expanded, because your neighbor wants the same thing. How rule of King is secured? There must be two types of securities:-

1. **External Security:** is by expansion and defeat of enemy kings.
2. **Internal Security:** without internal security and peace no external security is successful.

Arthashastra advocates autocratic form of government of peace and war. It favours the woman's rights. It has knowledge about the espionage system, how to tackle anarchy, property issues, about state officials, about Mantri Parisadas, about religion, morality, punishment, finance and agriculture.

FAMOUS QUOTES BY CHANAKAYA

- Education is the best friend. An educated person is respected everywhere.
- Education beats the beauty and the youth.
- A man is great by deeds, not by birth.

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Corresponding Author

Dr. Sumit Kumari Dahiya*

Assistant Professor of English, Sh. L. N. Hindu
College, Rohtak

dr.sumitdahiya11@gmail.com