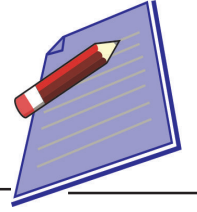


## 6

## MUDRARAKSHAS

*Notes*

Vishakhadatta is a prominent playwright of Sanskrit literature. His play Mudrarakshas is one of the plays that have occupied an important place in Sanskrit dramatic literature. The playwright Vishakhadatta has presented the historical and political scenes with great beauty in this play. Earlier, love stories were used as plots in Sanskrit plays, but in this series, Mudrarakshas presents itself with a completely different and new perspective in that tradition with its contemporary and political plot characteristics.

In the field of playwriting in the classical tradition, Mudrarakshas is a play based on a diplomatic theme. In such a case, it is essential to know about this play. In this chapter, therefore, we will focus on these characteristics of the Mudrarakshasa play.

**LEARNING OUTCOMES**

After studying this lesson, you-

- know about Vishakhadatta;
- know about the Mudrarakshas play;
- know about the story of Mudrarakshasa; and
- know about the characters of Mudrarakshasa;

**6.1 GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO VISHAKHADATTA**

In the Bharata Vakya of the play, Vishakhadatta accepts the name of the king as Chandragupta. Therefore, scholars believe that Vishakhadatta in his play refers to his

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patron Chandragupta-II through the description of Chandragupta Maurya whose time period was 375 to 413 AD. The Pataliputra described by Vishakhadatta is a very prosperous city. If we look at the history, by the time of Harshavardhana in the sixth century, Pataliputra was fragmented. It turns out that Buddhism was being re-introduced at that time and on the basis that scholars have accepted the time of Vishakhadatta as the beginning of the fifth century.

The direction of King Avanti Varma in the Bharatavakya of Vishakhadatta's play is proved from a historical point of view. King Avanti Varma was the king of Kannauj of the Maukhari dynasty end and beginning of the seventh century. At the end of the sixth century, terror of Gondas prevailed in western North India. King Avanti Varma defeated the Gondas with the help of King Prabhakar Vardhana of Thaneswar. This historical event dates back to 582 AD, So his time is fixed at the end of the sixth century. The same time period has been unanimously accepted by scholars.

Apart from Mudrarakshasa, two other plays written by Vishakhadatta are mentioned: (1) Devi Chandragupta and (2) Abhisarikavanchitaka. The second of these plays is unattainable. The first play, Devi Chandragupta, is also a romantic story as well as a political one.

### 6.2 GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO MUDRARAKSHA

Mudrarakshasa is a play of an interesting and innovative nature. In this seven-act play, Chanakya, Chandragupta and Nanda's Swamibhakt Amatya are in the center of the Rakshasa. Chanakya has installed Chandragupta on the throne by being proud of Nanda. Chanakya uses his diplomacy to make Nanda's trusted minister Rakshasa the minister of Chandragupta but Rakshasa does not accept it. He conspires against Chandragupta in various ways. In the end, Chanakya succeeds in his objective with his diplomatic skills. The whole play is based on these diplomatic moves.

Vishakhadatta's political erudition can be clearly seen in this play. In fact, writing such an intellectual play is a very difficult task. The playwright has carefully transformed the entire plot into a play while maintaining interest. It is an event-oriented play with a heroic theme. The sense of excitement we see in almost every character. There is no direct fight anywhere in the play but Vishakhadatta has cleverly used this tone through dialogues.



### INTEXT QUESTIONS 6.1

1. Who is Visakhadutt?
2. What are the creations of Visakhadutt?
3. What nature of play is Mudrarakshas?
4. On what is the main plot of Mudrarakshas based?
5. What is the main Rasa of Mudrarakshasa?

### 6.3 STORY OF MUDRARAKSHASA

Visakhadutt has divided the story of the play Mudrarakshasa into 7 acts. The main story in the plot is of Chanakya using his diplomacy to make the Rakshasa Chandragupta's amatya. Veer Rasa Pradhan In this drama, the sequence of development of the story according to the numbers is as follows -

#### Act-1

At the beginning of this act, there is a discussion about Brahmin feast in general on the occasion of lunar eclipse. Then suddenly a voice comes from the background asking, who is there in my lifetime who can seduce Chandragupta? The narrator comes forward and tells the audience that he is Kautilya and then Chanakya enters the stage. As soon as Chanakya enters, he tells his grief that his minister, angry at the destruction of the Nanda dynasty, has joined the Rakshasa king Malayketu and is conspiring against Chandragupta. Chanakya knows the Amatya Rakshasa very well and he wants to somehow influence him and make him agree to become Chandragupta's Amatya. Chanakya, not expressing his feelings, makes a diplomatic plan. Chanakya comes to know that the family of Rakshasa Amatya is with Chandandas in Kusumpur of Pataliputra. The Rakshasa's favorite public believers are Kayastha Shakatdas and Siddharthaka. Chanakya also finds a currency of the Rakshasa. He gets Shakatdas to write a letter and gets the marks of the Rakshasa's currency made on it. The Rakshasa and his currency become the main basis of the plot of this play, hence the name of the play has also been named Mudrarakshas.

#### Act-2

In this act the conspiracy against Chandragupta is shown. At the beginning of the second act, a plan is being made to kill Chandragupta when he arrives at Nanda's

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grand palace. Chandragupta is about to enter Raj Prasad sitting on an elephant when the huge arch gate is conspiratorially demolished. The elephant moves quickly and saves Chandragupta. In this way Chandragupta is saved from dying.

#### Act-3

In this episode, bitterness increases between Chandragupta and Chanakya regarding the organization of Kaumudi Mahotsav. Chandragupta orders this event on the day of Sharad Purnima while Chanakya stops it. Another occasion comes when Chanakya stops the king from giving donations. Chandragupta gets angry and starts disobeying Chanakya. Chanakya publicizes this difference of opinion between himself and Chandragupta so that this news reaches the enemy and ultimately this is what happens. This news reaches the enemy.

#### Act-4

In this act, Amatya himself informs the Rakshasa Malayketu about the bitterness between Chandragupta and Chanakya mentioned in the previous act. Malayketu is convinced that Chandragupta is alienated from his people because of Chanakya's faults. If Chanakya is removed, the public will feel more affection towards Chandragupta than before.

#### Act-5

In this episode, Parvatraj Malayketu learns that his father has been killed not by Chanakya's conspiracy but due to the evil plan of Amatya Rakshas. Differences between Malayaketu and the Rakshasa begin to increase. Malayketu looks at the Rakshasa with suspicion. Bitterness starts increasing between the two. Now the Rakshasa Amatya feels helpless and gradually sinks into despair.

#### Act-6

After being insulted by Malaydas, the Rakshasa comes to Pataliputra. He comes to know that troubles have befallen Chandandas. The only fault of friend Chandandas was that he had given a place to hide to the family of Amatya Rakshas and he was not telling anything to the king because of friendship. The king has sentenced him to death and preparations are being made to hang him.

#### Act-7

The Rakshasa meets his friend Chandandas and reveals his secret to him that he is the Rakshasa because of whom he has been given death sentence. Then Chanakya enters from the backstage. Chanakya tells the Rakshasa about his diplomatic moves. At last,

the Rakshasa accepts Chandragupta's Amatya post. Chandragupta returns his kingdom to Malayketu and declares Chandandas as the head of the trade union. Thus, the play ends with good wishes for Chandragupta.



### INTEXT QUESTIONS 6.2

1. How many acts are there in the play Mudrarakshasa?
2. Why is the name of the play Mudrarakshas?
3. What happens in the number three of Mudrarakshasa?
4. Why is Chandandas given death penalty?
5. Why does Chanakya want to make Rakshasa Chandragupta's uncle?

### 16.3 CHARACTERS OF THE PLAY MUDRARAKSHASA

The entire plot of the play Mudrarakshas has been made keeping Chanakya, Rakshas, Chandragupta and Malayketu at the centre.

#### Chandragupta

Scholars accepted Chandragupta as the hero of the play Mudra Rakshas, although Chandragupta enters only twice in the entire play. The first time in the Sati episode is when he has to fight with Chanakya and the second time is at the end of the play when the Rakshasa has to be invited to take up the post of minister. Chandragupta appears on the stage in some capacity only on these two occasions. On the basis of this, the character of Chandragupta in the play can be understood. Chandragupta is a courageous hero. He is humble by nature. He is also a devotee of Guru. He believes everything of Chanakya. Where he disagrees with the Guru he also experiences sorrow.

#### Malayketu

Malayketu is cautious by nature, trustworthy and quick to do work. He is proud of his influence that he is not in the control of his minister whereas in the drama he is seen taking part. Malayketu does whatever advice he gets. Due to a conspiracy hatched by Chanakya, he gets his own well-wishers killed who accuse the Rakshasa. He does not realize that it is possible that a conspiracy is being hatched. He has no knowledge of humans, that is why he trusts his enemies and distrusts his friends.



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### Chanakya

Chanakya is by nature a very intelligent, promising, brilliant and skilled politician character who is proficient in diplomacy. Chanakya had vowed to destroy the Nanda dynasty through his words and wisdom and accomplished it through Chandragupta. In the play, Chanakya has resolved to make the Rakshasa Chandragupta's minister and in the end he does so. Chanakya has a strong quality of foresight. Every incident of the play happens according to Chanakya. This is how the former creates. There is no such occasion seen anywhere in the play where all these characters are seen disbelieving Chanakya. One of the main qualities of Chanakya is his knowledge of people. He believes that all the spies of Chanakya are under his control. He also used Vishkanya sent for Chandragupta as a promoter. Chanakya's skillful diplomacy was behind Chandragupta's monopolistic rule. Chanakya, despite being a skilled politician, was a scholar in the true sense. Despite being the king's guru, he lived in his hut. He also praises the qualities of his enemies in his heart. On the basis of his diplomacy, he does not allow bloodshed to happen without any reason.

### Rakshasa

The Character of the Rakshasa-The Mudrarakshas is an important character. The Rakshasa has unwavering devotion to his master in his heart and a firm commitment to avenge Nanda even after his death. Chanakya also knows the quality of the Rakshasa so he wants to make him the minister of Chandragupta. The Rakshasa is a happily faithful person. He does not know crooked policy that is why he makes the persons sent by Chanakya his close friends and confidants. He finally learns who his enemy is. What surprises Chanakya the Rakshasa readily accepts. The Rakshasa is a bit of a wary character as well. He gladly gives his ornaments to Siddhartha which Malayaketu sent him. He accepts every situation as simple and easy. He is also mighty by nature. Other characters in the play-

### Vibhatsaka

This character went to kill Chandragupta while he was asleep on the orders of the Rakshasa. He was hiding in the tunnel with his comrades. He could not hide from Chanakya's eyes. Chanakya was suspicious of the row of ants from the crack and set fire to the wall. It was an obedient character.

### Parvataka

Chanakya had destroyed Nanda with the help of even Parvata and then defeated his minister Rakshasa. Chanakya had promised to divide half the kingdom to conquer Kusumpur but when the Rakshasa was defeated he took Parvataka on his side. The

Vishakanya whom the Rakshasa had sent to kill Chandragupta was sent by Chanakya to Parvataka and killed him

### Vairodhaka

The Vairodhaka was the brother of Parvataka. After Parvataka died, Chanakya offered to give half the kingdom to the Vairodhaka and invited him inside. The barbar, who sat down to kill Chandragupta killed Vairodhaka.

### Vishnu Sharma/Nipunaka

Nipunaka is a friend of Chanakya who is a knower of Shukra Niti and the 64 arts. He lived in disguise as an expert. In the play, Vishnu Sharma remains Chanakya's spy as a master. It plays an important role in the plot because it is the one who brings the Rakshasa's ring and gives it to Chanakya

### Siddhartha

Siddhartha is also a spy of Chanakya who stays with the Rakshasa together with Shakatdas and conveys his secret to Chanakya.

### Samiddharthaka

Samiddharthaka is a friend of Siddhartha and he lives with his friend in the guise of a Chandala. It also appears as Chanakya's spy.

### Bhagurayan

Bhagurayana is Chanakya's spy and appears in the play as a friend of Malayaketu. Bhagurayana is skilled in the art of espionage. He hides his secret and puts such things in Malayaketu's mind which results in a split between the Rakshasa and Malayaketu.

### Jivasiddha Kshapanaka or Bhadanta

He was a spy of Chanakya and a skilled astrologer.

### Vijayavarma

Vijay Varma plans with Chandragupta's army to Malayaketu's house at Chanakya's request and conveys his information to Chanakya

### Achaldatta Kayastha

This is the minister of Chandragupta.

### Shonottari

It is the gatekeeper of Chandragupta.



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**Vijayapal Durgpal**

It is the chief servant of Chandragupta.

**Vishvasu**

This is the Brahmin to whom Chandragupta gives charity.

**Kapal Pashik and Dand Pashik**

These are chandalas who do the crucifixion.

**Sharngarav**

This is a disciple of Chanakya.

**Hingurat**

It is the chief of the gatekeepers of Chandragupta who goes to Malayaketu on the orders of Chanakya.

**Balgupta**

Stays with Malayaketu to take the secrets.

**Rajsen**

This is the childhood servant of Chandragupta who goes to the army of Malayaketu at the behest of Chanakya.

**Bhadrabhat**

He was also a spy of Chanakya who lives as a servant of Malaya Ketu.

**Chandrabhanu**

It had gone to Malayaketu at the behest of Chanakya.

**Singhal Dutt**

He was Chandragupta's commander who had joined Malayketu at the behest of Chanakya.

**Rohitaksh**

He was the son of the Malwa king who had joined Malayketu on the advice of Chanakya.

**Deerghachakshu**

Was the gate guard of Malayketu.



**Shikharsen**

He was the commander of Malayketu. Parvataka had ordered him to be crushed by the elephant.

**Sarvaarthisiddhi**

He was the brother of King Nand. After the death of King Nand, the Rakshasa placed him on the throne. Due to fear of Chanakya, he ran away from the state and reached the forest where Jeevasiddhi got him killed.

**Vakranash**

Minister of Nanda dynasty before Mahananda

**Shaktar**

He was a minister of the Nanda dynasty and was a Shudra by caste.

**Vichakshana**

She was the maid of King Nand.

**Priyambadak**

He is a servant of the Rakshasa.

**Chandandas**

He is a businessman from Pataliputra who is a friend of the Rakshasa. The Rakshasa had given shelter to his family here for which he was sentenced to death.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 6.3**

1. Who is the hero of Mudrarakshasa?
2. Who is Chanakya?
3. Who is the Rakshasa?
4. Why is Chandandas hanged?
5. Who is Bhadrabhata?
6. Who is the Nipunaka?
7. Who is Siddharthaka?
8. Who is the Vairodhaka?
9. Who is Shikharasen?



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## 10. Who is Shaktar?

**6.4 THEATRICAL STYLE OF MUDRARAKSHASA**

The play Mudrarakshas written by Visakhadutt is an incident oriented play. By keeping the heroic spirit at the centre, the playwright has given prominence to the feeling of enthusiasm in all the characters. The way all the characters communicate throughout the story shows immense enthusiasm and energy. In general, this play is full of energetic dialogues, description of war and statements like bravery of heroes. Chanakya is at the center of the play and feelings of bravery can be clearly seen in Chanakya's statements. Without war, Chanakya defeated the Rakshasa with his diplomacy. This is the skill of Vijakhadutt.

There is a lack of female characters and clowns in the play Mudrarakshasa. In the play, Chandandas's wife definitely enters the stage for some time but she does not play any specific role in giving momentum to the plot. The humor has also not been planned by the clown, Vishakhadutt. Perhaps he does not consider this appropriate for the seriousness of his story. But even after being serious and not using a clown, there has been no reduction in the interestingness of the play.

If we study the play Mudrarakshasa, we find that he has saved the play from the defects of poetry. He has allowed the style of drama to remain in the play. The language is simple and has abundance of sweetness and prasad qualities. Figures of speech have been used very little in this play. Figures of speech like metaphor, alliteration and simile have been used in it. The naturalness of the drama has increased due to the use of prose more than poetry in the dialogues. Due to its diplomatic theme, Mudrarakshasa is considered a special play in Sanskrit dramatic literature. It is an attractive and unique drama of its own kind in the classical tradition.

**WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNT**

- The time period of Visakhadutta is the end of the sixth century.
- Visakhadutt's ancestors were kings, hence he inherited the knowledge of politics and diplomacy.
- Vishakhadutt has composed the play Mudrarakshasa.
- There is mention of two more plays written by Visakhadutta - Devi Chandragupta and Abhisarikavanchitak.
- Mudrarakshas is an eventful drama.

- The story in Mudrarakshasa is described in seven chapters.
- The main essence of Mudrarakshasa is Veer.
- The main story of this play is Chanakya's unopposed ascension to the throne of Chandragupta by placing Chandragupta's opponent and Nand's minister Rakshas on the post of Amatya.
- The main characters of the play are: Chandragupta, Chanakya, Malayketu and Rakshas. Apart from these, there are 29 other supporting characters in the play.
- The subject of politics and diplomacy is described in Mudrarakshasa.
- There is also more use of prose in the drama.
- " Mudrarakshasa lacks a clown and a female character.
- In the fifth act, there is the story of Jimutavahana getting stained with blood from Garuda's beak and Garuda repenting.



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### TERMINAL EXERCISE

1. What is the main story of Mudrarakshasa?
2. What did you know about Vijakhadutt?
3. Tell about character of Chanakya?
4. Tell about the theater craft of Mudrarakshasa?



### ANSWERS TO INTEXT QUESTIONS

#### 6.1

1. Visakhadutt is the playwright of Mudrarakshasa. His ancestors were kings.
2. Mudrarakshasa, Devi Chandragupta and Abhisarikavanchitak.
3. Mudrarakshas is a drama of political and diplomatic nature.
4. The main plot of Mudrarakshasa is based on Chanakya's diplomacy to make the Rakshasa Chandragupta's minister.
5. The main essence of Mudrarakshasa is Veer.

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6.2

1. There are seven acts in the play Mudrarakshasa.
2. Chanakya also gets a currency of the Rakshasa. He gets Shakatdas to write a letter and gets the marks of the Rakshasa's currency made on it. The Rakshasa and his currency become the main basis of the plot of this play, hence the name of the play has also been named Mudrarakshas. What happens in act three of Mudrarakshas?
3. Giving death penalty to Chandandas is a part of Chanakya's diplomacy. He knew that Chandandas had given shelter to the Rakshasa's family. If he does this, the Rakshasa will definitely come to save him.
4. Chanakya is well aware of the qualities of the Rakshasa. He is an honest and devoted person. The second reason is that this will also end Chandragupta's opposition.

6.3

1. The hero of Mudrarakshasa is Chandragupta.
2. Chanakya is the guru of Chandragupta. It was he who appointed Chandragupta on the throne in honor of Nand Vanj.
3. Rakshasa is the minister of King Nanda.
4. Chandandas is hanged because he had helped the Rakshasa.
5. Bhadrabhat is Chanakya's spy who lives as a servant of Malayketu.
6. Nipunak is a friend of Chanakya who had brought the Rakshasa's ring.
7. Siddharthaka is Chanakya's spy who lives with the Rakshasa as a friend of Shakatdas.
8. Vairodhaka is the brother of Parvatika who is killed by the barbarian.
9. Shikharsena is the commander of Malayketu whom Parvatika orders to be crushed by the elephant.
10. Shaktar is a minister of Nand dynasty and is a Shudra by caste.