



Compiled and designed and modified by:

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❖ Title of the play *Mrichchhakatika (The Little Clay Cart)*

“A rose by any other name would smell as sweet”, says Shakespeare in his seminal drama *Romeo and Juliet* to indicate that name of a certain person or thing is not important, rather the quality of that very person or thing matters. In case of the title of a literary work, the above quoted words of Shakespeare cannot be taken for granted. The title of a certain literary work is the nucleus of that very literary piece. If the work is from the domain of Indian Classical Literature, Shakespeare’s above words prove to be abject failure because the names of the most of the Indian Classical literary pieces help the readers to trace the subject matter of pieces. For example, Kalidas’s play *Malabikagnimitram* depicts the love story of Malabika and Agnimitra. The theme of the play *Abhijansukuntalam* centres rounds the love story of Dushmanyta and Shakuntala. But the title of *Mrichchhakatika* does not fall into the category of any other typical Sanskrit drama. Though, the drama portrays the love story of Charudatta and Vasantasena, it is named as *Mrichchhakatika (The Little Clay Cart)*. There is hardly any apparent relation in between the title and the theme of the play. A detailed analysis of the play can put light into the title of the play.

There is not enough evidence about the author of the play because it was written more or less 1600 years ago. Some critics think that Bhasa, the Sanskrit playwright left a play unfinished namely *Charudattam*. Bhasa only wrote two acts of the play. Sudraka completed that adding eight more acts. However, the play is attributed to Sudraka, a king in ancient India in spite of having so many controversies regarding the authorship of the play. He was far away from the contemporary literary tradition of naming a play. He did not name his play after the name of the hero (*Nayaka*) or the heroine (*Nayika*), rather he was totally different from that. Though, apparently, there is no direct relation in between the title and the theme of the play *Mrichchhakatika*, the title is significant both literally and metaphorically.

The title bears the originality of Sudraka, in case of the nomenclature of the play. As it is a *Prakarana* (a kind of Sanskrit drama dealing with the life of the common people), Sudraka could easily use the name of the hero and the heroine as the name of the play but he differed from that. It indicates his inventiveness.

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The title *Mrichchhakatika* acts as a symbol in the play. If we analyse the Sanskrit title very carefully, we will find two words—*Mritz* (soil/clay) and *Shakatika* (Cart). The cart symbolizes domestic life. This also suggests the simple rustic life of Charudatta, the hero of the play. Vasantasena, the heroine of the play offers to add value to it, just as she adds value to Charudatta's ordinary existence. Through her offerings Vasantasena wants to be a part of the domestic life of Charudatta. When Vasantasena puts her jewellery on the little clay cart of Charudatta's son Rohsena, she (Vasantasena) is seen weeping. This indicates her maternal feelings. It also shows her childless peripheral existence. Vasantasena thinks that there is no value of wealth, if one is issueless. Thus, she feels that her ornaments get their actual value being placed on the clay cart of Rohsena, Charudatta's son. The clay cart therefore, works as a metaphor of the world of which Vasantasenta wants to be a part of.

As the play belongs to ancient India, it has a direct relation with Hindu religious and mythical beliefs. There are so many allusions from Hindu mythology in the play. The title is not also free from bearing a religious significance. According to Hindu religious belief wheel stands for the wheel of life. In the play Charudatta's son used to play with a gold cart earlier but due to the impoverished condition of Charudatta, his son was unable to do that. When Vasantasena put her jewels on the clay cart the circle was completed. So, the wheels of the cart stand for the cycle of life.

Above all, the title of the play *Mrichchhakatika* has a universal appeal also. "The Exchange of the Carriages" (Act-VI) stands as a metaphor for universal expense. Rohsena's yearning for a gold cart, on the other hand suggests the yearning for prosperity on the part of each and every human being.

Last but not the least, the development of the plot of the play centres round the clay cart. For example, the clay cart played a vital role in the love tryst of Charudatta and Vasantasena and also in the escapement of Aryaka (the future king of the town) from the prison of king Palaka.

Thus, though the clay cart has no direct relation with the plot of the play so much, it works as a thread into the plot of the play. So, both literally and metaphorically, the title of the play is an appropriate one.

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