

## DURYODHANA IN THE DRAMAS OF BHĀSA

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Bhāsa is considered one of the greatest and earliest playwrights in the Indian Literature. Though his name and the bits of his expressions were referred by the well known poets and rhetoricians in the field of Sanskrit literature, his works in full text had been misled for centuries. Very little was known about him and his works till the last century. Several respectful references about the characterstic presentation by of Bhāsa are reflected in the works of Kālidāsa, Bāṇabhaṭṭa, Daṇḍi and a number of other poets and critics. It is no doubt this pioneer of dramatist, Bhāsa was very much influenced by the great Indian epic Mahābhārata.

Mahābhārata is a collection of fairy tales, myths, moralistic stories, ethical orations and legendary history of ancient India. Luxury of incidents is one of the fascinating and noteworthy peculiarities of this great epic. It is the ancient and the best ever epic poem of India which assumed the present shape through the different phases of expansion. Its epic matter dealt with an extensive account of the Great War that was done on the land of Kurukṣetra between the five sons of Pāṇḍu and their associates on the one side and the hundred sons of king Dhṛtarāstra and their partners on the other side. The battle was the outcome of a long history of struggle and tactful strategy evolved by the Kauravas and Pāṇḍavas that still has great relevance in contemporary times.

In The Mahābhārata, the Pāṇḍavas appear as protagonists and Kauravas as antagonists. Each of the personalities of Pāṇḍavas and Kauravas represents a definitive characterstic strength. Yudhiṣṭhira reveals leadership and dharma, Bhīma discloses dynamism and bravery, Arjuna typifies the visage of easiness, Sahadeva represents intelligence and Nakula stands for attractiveness. Duryodhana, the eldest of Kauravas, symbolizes the shadow of most crooked and immoral personality. Almost all the later poets and dramatists studied and made use of

the characters of Mahābhārata for the creation of their poetical works. Among the thirteen plays attributed to Bhāsa, the seven are dealing with the story, characters and circumstances of Mahābhārata. Out of these seven, Duryodhana appeared as a major character in Pañcarātra, Dūtakhaṭotkaca, Dūtavākya and Ūrubhanga

Duryodhana's character in the great epic Mahabharata is a blend of an ambitious prince, tricky politician who is ready to lean any level to gain his aims and a villain of all anti heroic qualities. Bhāsa's special treatment of the character makes Duryodhana a combination of good and bad. Duryodhana holds separate personality and identity in all the four dramas of Bhāsa where he appears as a main character. He descends as a man of defiance in Dūtavākya and Dūtaghatoṭkaca. But in Pañcarātra he bears some greater qualities. Duryodhana is depicted as a tragic hero of immense qualities in Ūrubhanga. This paper aims to discuss how Bhāsa treated the character, Duryodhana in his plays

Pañcarātra is a drama of three acts. The theme of this play was taken from the Virāṭaparva of Mahābhārata. The play starts with the dialogues of three Brāhmaṇas after the words of Sūtradhāra. These Brāhmaṇas give an elaborate description of the yajña performed by Duryodhana at the time of ajñātavāsa of Pāṇḍavas. After this Viṣkambhaka, there enter Bhīṣma, Droṇa and other characters. At the end of yajña, Duryodhana offered a gift to Ācārya Droṇa and the dramatic situations there after are the theme of this play. Droṇa requests Duryodhana to find out the Pāṇḍavas and return their country, as a gift (dakṣiṇa) to him.

‘yeṣāṃ gatiḥ kvāpi nirā'sryāṇām  
 samvatsarairdvāda`sabhirna dṛṣṭā  
 tvam pāṇḍavānām kuru samvibhāga-  
 meṣā ca bhikṣā mama dakṣiṇā ca’ 1

Bhīṣma also have such a desire to share with Duryodhana. But ‘Sakuni interferes in the situation to prevent Duryodhana from committing their aspiration. Karṇa also supports ‘Sakuni. But the situation forces ‘Sakuni to announce the idea for the King Duryodhana, of giving half of the country to Pāṇḍavas under a condition. ‘yadi pañcarātreṇa pāṇḍavānām pravṛttirupanetavyā, rājyasyārtham pradāsyati kila. samānayatū bhavānidānīm.’ 2

The last act describes the fight between the Kaurava soldiers and the soldiers of Virāta. The description was done by the words of Sūta. From the name engraved in the arrows, Kauravas find that it is Arjuna who has fought for the King of Virāta. But 'Sakuni cries off to accept the fact and tries to prove it as false information. Even then Duryodhana repeats his decision to give the half of the country to Pāṇḍavas if Yudhiṣṭhira returns.

‘teṣām rājyapradānārthamanṛtam kathyate yadi  
rājyasyārdham pradāsyāmi yāvaddṛste yudhiṣṭhire’<sup>3</sup>

Bhāsa gives such truthfulness in the character of Duryodhana in the play. The drama ends with the words of Duryodhana.

‘bādham dattam maya rājyam pāṇḍavebhyo yathāpuram  
mṛto’pi hi narāḥ sarve satye tiṣṭhati tiṣṭhati.’<sup>4</sup>

Bhāsa highlights the faithfulness of Duryodhana in the drama. While Śakuni is described a man of evil thought and negative ideas, Suyodhana appears as a man of some good persona, in the play. Śakuni always tries to misdirect the king Duryodhana. He never admits the qualities of Pāṇḍavas. Bhīṣmapitāmaha requests Duryodhana to neglect the words of 'Sakuni in the first act of the play. 'pautra! Duryodhana! avabhṛtasnānamātrameva tāvat. mitramukhasya 'satroḥ 'sakunervacan-  
am na 'srotavyam'.<sup>5</sup>

Dūtavākya is a one act play describing the situation of the Bhagavadgītā of Mahābhārata. Śrīkṛṣṇa appears as a messenger in this play. Here Bhāsa depicts how Kṛṣṇa overcome the derision of Duryodhana in an enthusiastic manner. Śrīkṛṣṇa reaches the court of Kauravas to make reconciliation in the problem prevailing between Pāṇḍavas and Kauravas. But Duryodhana has already prepared to ridicule Kṛṣṇa because of the wrath towards Pāṇḍavas. He scolds the Kāñcukīya who address Kṛṣṇa as 'puruṣottamo nārāyaṇaḥ' and forces him to say as 'dūtaḥ prāptaḥ ke'savaḥ'. As a conciliator, his request towards Duryodhana, is to part the half of the country for Pāṇḍavas.

‘dātumarhasi madvākyāt rājyārdham dhṛtarāstraja!  
anyathā sāgarāntam gām hariṣyanti hi pāṇḍavāḥ’.<sup>6</sup>

While hearing the words of Kṛṣṇa, Duryodhana becomes angry and tries to incarcerate him. But Duryodhana fails in his attempt and

there enter the weapons of Nārāyaṇa with extreme fury. Hearing the arrival of Vāsudeva, Dhṛtarāṣṭra comes before him and requests to forgive his son.

‘mama putrāparādhāt tu ‘sarīgapāṇe! tavādhunā  
etanme trida’sādhykṣa! pādayoḥ patitam ‘siraḥ.’ 7

The drama ends with the pleasant parting of Śrīkṛṣṇa and Dhṛtarāṣṭra. Bhāsa brings to light the holy traits of Śrīkṛṣṇa and the evil part of the nature of Duryodhana, in the play.

Dūtakaḥaṭokaca is another one act play based on a situation of Mahābhārata. Khaṭokaca appears as a messenger of Śrīkṛṣṇa in front of Kauravas. But the meeting of Duryodhana and Khaṭokaca becomes very rough and tough. The drama starts with the sthāpanā introducing the murder of Abhimanyu by Jayadratha. Hearing this heart-breaking news, Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Gāndhārī and Du’s’salā become very sad. But Duryodhana, enjoys the situation along with Du’s’sāsana and ‘Sakuni. Duryodhana says.

‘yāto’bhimanyunidhanāt sthīratām vīrodhaḥ  
prāpto jayaḥ pracalitā ripavo nirastāḥ  
unmūlito’sya ca mado madhusūdanasya  
labdho mayādyā samamabhyudayena ‘sabdaḥ.’ 8

It is at this time Khaṭokaca arrives there with the message of Kṛṣṇa. Dhṛtarāṣṭra welcomes him very happily. Khaṭokaca informs him the first part of the message of Śrīkṛṣṇa. But Duryodhana begins to ridicule Śrīkṛṣṇa and hence there take place a bickering between Duryodhana and Khaṭokaca. Dhṛtarāṣṭra interferes in the situation and consoles Khaṭokaca. Informing the second part of the message of Śrīkṛṣṇa, Khaṭokaca returns.

‘dharmam samācara kuru svajanavyapeṣām  
yat kāṅkṣitam manasi sarvamihānutiṣṭha  
jātyāpade’sa iva pāṇḍavarūpadhārī  
sūryām’subhiḥ samamupaīsyati vaḥ kṛtāntaḥ.’ 9

The playwright displays an adroit situation of the meeting of two persons, Duryodhana and Khaṭokaca, of rough in nature, more or less having the same qualities of courage and valor, in the play. Dhṛtarāṣṭra appears in Dūtavākya and Dūtakaḥaṭokaca for begging pardon for his son Duryodhana to Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa and Khaṭokaca, respectively. In Ūrubhaṅga he appears to see the last moment of his beloved son, Duryodhana.

The play, *Ūrubhanga* deals with the story of the club battle between Bhīma and Duryodhana at the end of the Mahābhārata war. The murder of Duryodhana and the tragic situations there after are the theme of the play. The club battle is described in the drama through the words of three soldiers. Bhīmasena disobeys the rules of club battle with the direction of Śrīkṛṣṇa and beats Duryodhana on his thighs.

‘bhūmou pāṇitale nighṛṣya tarasā bāhūpramṛjyādhikam  
sandaṣṭoṣṭhapuṭena vikramabalāt krodhādhikam garjata  
tyaktvā dharmaghrṇām vihāya samayam kṛṣṇasya samjñāsamam  
gāndhārītanayasya pāṇḍutanayenorvorvimuktā gada’ 10

Duryodhana falls down with broken limb. Seeing this disobedience of the rules Baladeva, his teacher of club battle prepares to punish Bhīma. But Duryodhana prevents him. Here he appears as a learned and salient personality who is capable to advice even his preceptor, Balarāma. He says –

‘pratijñāvasite bhīme gate bhrāṭṛ’sate divam  
mayi caivam gate rama! vighrahaḥ kim kariṣyati’? 11

Hearing the tragic end of their son, Dhṛtarāṣṭra, and Gāndhārī arrive there. The little child Durjaya wants sit on the lap of his father, Duryadhana and there happens the painful moments at the zenith. Bhāsa illustrates the drastic change in the character of Duryodhana before his death, in the drama.

Among the seven Bhāsanāṭakas on Mahābhārata, Duryodhana characterizes as the hero in the two. They are Pañcarātra and *Ūrubhanga*. In *Dūtavākya* and *Dūtakhaṭokaca*, he appears with an anti heroic nature. Though Duryodhana appears as an anti – hero or a villain in the Mahābhārata, Bhāsa gave a heroic corona to this character with several gentle and genial manners. The following incident in the first act of Pañcarātra is a good example of his gentleness. While Ācārya Droṇa requests him to give half of the country to Pāṇḍavas, Duryodhana has a positive attitude towards his words. But ‘Sakuni discloses a negative attitude towards the necessitude of Droṇa – ‘na dātavyamiti me ni’scayaḥ.’<sup>12</sup> Then Duryodhana tries to correct him - ‘dātavyamiti vaktumarhati mātulaḥ.’<sup>13</sup> Even though Pāṇḍavas lead a life, hiding somewhere else, Duryodhana keeps a bit of love towards them as a brother and also he loves their sons as his own. While hearing the abduction of Abhimanyu by the king of Virāṭa, his response is sincere and heart

touching. 'sūta! kathaya kathaya. kenopanīto`bhimanyuḥ. ahamevain-  
am mokṣayāmi. kutaḥ,

mama hi piṭṛbhirasya prastuto jñātibheda –  
stadiha mama ca doṣo vaktṛbhiḥ pātaniyaḥ.  
atha ca mama sa putraḥ pāṇḍavānām tu pa'scāt  
sati ca kulavirodhe nāparādhyanti bālāḥ.' 14

A study of Duryodhana's behavior will lead an individual, to a necessary understanding of the strange side of the mind. He is a vigorous personality because his behavior and dealings are contradicted to anything we find positive. Duryodhana's actions are morally culpable. He is unsighted by envy and gluttony for the Pāṇḍavas' prosperity and good destiny. He is easily biased against them and holds deep jealousy. Duryodhana is the worthy villain in the Mahabharata as he represents an antithesis to morality. Although he may have lived a decadent life, he had a noble death, dying in battle specifically in one-to-one fight. In spite of all his ill deeds, Duryodhana experiences a heroic end and receives a place in heaven, the realm of self-actualization, naturally kept for conscious heroes.

### Notes

1. Pañcarātra. I – 31
2. ibid. I. p. 13
3. ibid. III. 21.
4. ibid. III. 25.
5. ibid. I. p.10
6. Dūtavākhyā. I. 34.
7. ibid. I. 55.
8. Dūtakṣatōtkaca. I. 11.
9. ibid. I. 5210.
10. Ūrubhanga. I. 24.
11. ibid. I. 33.
12. Pañcarātra. I. p. 12
13. ibid. I. p. 12
14. ibid. III. 4

