

Question: Discuss the character of Chārudatta in Śūdraka's "Mṛcchakaṭika", highlighting how his moral values and social position contrast with the surrounding corruption and injustice in the play. How does Chārudatta's role reflect the themes of dharma, love, and sacrifice in the narrative?

Ans. Chārudatta, the protagonist of *Mṛcchakaṭika*, is portrayed as a noble and morally upright Brahmin, whose personal virtues starkly contrast with his declining social status and the corruption that surrounds him. Once a wealthy man, Chārudatta becomes impoverished due to his extreme generosity and charity. Yet, despite his financial ruin, he retains his dignity, compassion, and adherence to **dharma** (righteousness), which marks him as a true hero in Śūdraka's dramatic universe.

His relationship with Vasantasenā, a wealthy courtesan, further reflects his deep sense of ethics and emotional restraint. Unlike typical portrayals of lovers in Sanskrit dramas, Chārudatta's love is sincere, respectful, and devoid of lust or possessiveness. He never exploits Vasantasenā's affection or wealth, and instead, maintains a respectful distance, which showcases his commitment to honor and virtue, even when tempted.

Chārudatta's trials in the play, especially when he is falsely accused of murdering Vasantasenā, put his integrity to the test. Yet, he chooses silence and acceptance of injustice over dishonor, willing to sacrifice his life rather than speak ill or falsely accuse others. His readiness to face death calmly highlights not just personal courage, but the strength of character rooted in **dharma** and self-sacrifice.

Moreover, his interactions with other characters—his servant Maitreya, his wife, his child Rohasena—reveal a man of empathy, humility, and moral leadership. His behavior serves as a

critique of the corrupt societal structures, especially the legal system and political elite, as represented by the unjust king and the villainous courtier Śakāra.

In the end, when Vasantasenā reappears and the truth is revealed, Chārudatta is vindicated, and justice is restored. His elevation to a judge's position under the new king signifies the triumph of righteousness over corruption and the ideal of a just, moral society.

Thus, Chārudatta's character is a dramatic embodiment of **love**, **dharma**, and **sacrifice**, standing as a beacon of integrity in a world riddled with moral decay. Through him, Śūdraka offers a deeply humanistic vision where inner virtue is more valuable than wealth or status, and where justice ultimately prevails.