

## Thematic Elements in the Play "Mrichchakatika"=

Mrichchakatika is a rich document in terms of depicting various factions of the society, and several forms of emotion, which makes this a play director's delight. Following are the underlying themes in the play, which were apparent to me:

### Love=

Love is the central theme of the play, which is apparent in three different manifestations. Firstly, the love between Charudatta and Vasantasena is what sets the tone of the story, and the ways they try to please each other is pure, unadulterated love. Despite Vasantasena being a courtesan, who generally have immensely bad reputes, Charudatta falls in love with her, who is a brahmin himself. In fact, there's a point in the play when Maitreya, his friend tries to make him understand the dangers of being with a courtesan who is wanted by the king's close aide, but Charudatta's yearning for his love only increased. Realizing this, Maitreya says, "you can never reason with a lover."

Secondly, the story of Sharvilaka and Madanika portrays love in a controversial manner. Justifying the act of stealing sounds creepy, and Sharvilaka also had the thought of killing those who were sleeping and hadn't it been for Maitreya's conversation with him, he would certainly have killed them. However, that aside, Sharvilaka makes an honest effort to end the bondage of the woman he dearly loves and marries her as soon as she got free. Contrastingly, despite a happy ending, Vasantasena could never be the wife of Charudatta.

The third manifestation of love can be seen in a third love story, which is unapologetically understated, and that's the love and devotion of Charudatta's wife towards her husband. She is ready to give away her prized possessions, and even accept Vasantasena as her husband's mistress, only to make Charudatta happy. While this seems to be quite an injustice in modern times, the age in which the play is set, having a mistress was quite common, and the wife always had a higher status.

### Infidelity=

Infidelity is a prominent theme throughout the play, however, it is glorified. Charudatta is a man married to a devout wife, who's ready to do anything and everything for her husband, and also has a small adorable son. He is also a brahmin, who preaches at temples, and is known for his generosity. However, he falls for a courtesan, and openly proclaims his love for Vasantasena, without even considering what his wife would think of his newfound love.

Vasantasena, on the other hand, is equally insensitive to the feelings of a wife, whose husband has become her lover. She begins a romance, which would undoubtedly have been a heart-breaking time for the wife. Similarly, she loves Charudatta's son, Rohasena, and tries to please him by giving him gems. And in the end, both the lovers convince the wife, who doesn't resist at all, to accept their relationship.

### Poverty=

Being excessively generous makes Charudatta experience poverty and all the piercing truths that came along with it. His friends abandon him, and once who helped others, was seeing the role reversal. The story shows how poverty brings out the true colors of people, who claimed to be well-wishers during the spring and desert us during autumn.

Without money, people become more susceptible to injustice, as they don't have enough influence over others to prove themselves. In this case, Charudatta was convicted for a crime which he did not commit, simply because being poor was a possible motive for him killing Vasantasena and stealing her jewelry.

#### Jealousy=

Jealousy is one of the purest forms of emotion, and closely analyzing *Mrichchakatika* makes us realize that it is present within two characters, Sansthanaka and Maitreya. Sansthanaka desperately craves for Vasantasena, whether in love or lust, can't be said. When he realizes that it is Charudatta, and not him, who she loves, he becomes furious and conspires a tragedy, which eventually fails. He almost kills Vasantasena, for he couldn't bear the woman he wanted for himself to be in the arms of another man. Out of jealousy, he falsely accuses Charudatta of the murder of the courtesan and has him almost killed too.

Maitreya, on the other hand, is a poor brahmin, who overtly hates his fate, but inwardly is insecure and jealous of those living a higher worldly life than him and his friend Charudatta. Nonetheless, his jealousy is quite different than that of Sansthanaka, and he will never commit something as heinous crimes as the latter. However, even if wanted to, who couldn't commit such a huge crime, because he was poor, and he himself would've ended in serious trouble, unlike Sansthanaka.

#### Friendship=

Friendship is displayed on various occasions in the play, the most prominent being that between Sharvilaka and Aryaka, and Charudatta and Maitreya. Sharvilaka is newly married, with a girl for whom he committed the crime of stealing from a brahmin, but no sooner than he heard about his friend Aryaka's arrest, he vowed to help him, and he successfully did. This shows the strong bond between the two, who were both rebels in their own regard.

Likewise, the friendship between Charudatta and Maitreya is also quite strong, though, unlike Sharvilaka and Aryaka, theirs is bonded by mutual disdain and poverty, rather than the adventure of rebellion. Nevertheless, Maitreya comes across a very helpful friend, as he goes against his will to help his friend have a love affair with a courtesan. In fact, despite disliking Vasantasena, he frequently meets her on Charudatta's requests.

#### Loyalty=

One thing that has been among the most important elements of the monarchic times is loyalty, which is clearly evident in *Mrichchakatika* as well. There are incidents throughout the play that depict loyalty, though it hasn't been stressed upon as strongly as love and jealousy. The act of Sharvilaka separating from his newly wedded wife to save the future king, and the act of Aryaka restoring Charudatta's fortune display loyalty.

However, one incident which stands out in this regard is the scene in which Aryaka is hiding in Charudatta's bullock-cart carrying Vasantasena, and it gets confronted by Viraka, the head constable of the police, and one of the king's favored men. The valiant act by Chandanaka in order to save Aryaka, the destined king of the lands, was an impactful one. Risking one's life against one of the tyrant king's own men required a lot of courage, but his loyalty towards the rebel made Chandanaka do the unthinkable.

#### Injustice=

Injustice has been plaguing societies for centuries, and a perfect example is seen in this play. Charudatta is sentenced for a crime that he did not commit, while the real culprit almost went free. Being a close associate of the tyrant king, Sansthanaka could use all his resources to prove that Charudatta was the murderer, and if it hadn't been for the return of Vasantasena, Charudatta would have surely died. Even after Sansthanaka's slave informs that it was his master who killed the courtesan, no one believed him, for justice apparently is only for the privileged class.

The theme of injustice depicted in the play can be found even in today's world, where rapists and murderers of influential backgrounds go free, while those from the vulnerable groups spend years, and in some cases, decades in prison, without committing any crime. This makes the theme even more relatable.

#### Hope=

All is well that ends well, and this is what we get in the end, hope. The tyrant Plaka commits atrocities and plunders the weak, but he is replaced by the destined and just king Aryaka. Sansthanaka does whatever he could, still, he became an example of "crime never pays". Charudatta and Vasantasena reuniting gives joy, and it increases when Charudatta forgives Sansthanaka in the end.

We also get hope that if we help someone in their difficult times, the person could be of help during our crucial times. Vasantasena repaid the 10-gold coin loan of the Shampooer who became the monk, and in the end, the monk saved her life in the park after Sansthanaka strangled her. Similarly, Aryaka reinstated the fortunes of Charudatta and made him an important official in his court, because the broken brahmin had helped him escape the guards.