

and Sūdraka have Santuṣṭa and Maitreya; and these names indicate a contented and a devoted companion of the hero.¹⁹

The rule about the name of the Vidūṣaka is really speaking unimportant. And yet, what must have led the theorists to prescribe the rule was probably the conventional nature of this dramatic character, which could be naturally suggested by an appropriately symbolical name.

The divergence between theory and practice, however, though again unimportant, is surprising. The later theorists certainly must have been aware of the classical plays. How did they fail to notice the deviations, at least in the plays of Kālidāsa? It appears that they possibly had some other minor but currently popular plays before them on which they drew for their rule, and which plays are now lost to us; or, what appears to be more likely is that, they were prescribing a mechanical rule, relying more on the prevailing tradition than on a study of the available dramatic literature.

Whatever the proper name of the Vidūṣaka, it occurs only in the spoken dialogue. The dramatists refer in their writings to this character always by the general name Vidūṣaka, as they refer to the hero by the name Rājā. This is undoubtedly indicative of fixed character-types; and, consequently, of the prevailing form of drama. Most of the Sanskrit plays are court comedies; and so, the 'king' and 'jester' are invariably associated with them. The form appears to have assumed such a fixed character that the dramatists did not find it necessary to mention the 'hero' and his 'companion' by their real names, except in actual conversation. It is only in the mythological, epic and social plays that the hero is mentioned by his real name. But even here, when the Vidūṣaka can be

¹⁹ 'सन्तुष्ट' obviously means 'contented'. And मैत्रेय may be explained as मित्रे साधुः मैत्रेयः, 'one who is well-disposed towards a friend', therefore, a real and sincere friend.

legitimately provided, as in the social play of the *Prakarana* type, and the legendary play with a social background, the Vidūṣaka is mentioned by the general name only.²⁰

There appears to be some doubt regarding the correct explanation of this general name, Vidūṣaka. Keith took it to mean 'one given to abuse' and connected the Vidūṣaka thereby to the Brahmacārin of the Mahāvratā²¹. It has been explained that this cannot be correct.

Another attempt to explain the name has been made on the assumption that the Vidūṣaka "represents a caricature of the learned Purohita who was the sole adviser of the king in almost all home-affairs", and by taking "the Prakritic basis of his name" as a good proof for his being a popular creation. The name is thus explained: "The name Vidūṣakaḥ is just a hyper-Sanskritic back-formation of Prakrit *viuso* or *viusao* (with *k*-suffix) which is to be connected with *vidvas*."²²

It is very difficult to accept that the Vidūṣaka is a caricature of the Purohita. The Vidūṣaka may hold the Brahmin caste to ridicule; but there are many other persons, like the king himself, the king's officers, the courtesans and maids whom he makes targets for his fun, and who do not belong to the Brahmin caste. If the Vidūṣaka, therefore, caricatured his own class, it is in a general way that he did so. There is no particular *type* of Brahmin that is the basis of the Vidūṣaka's fun. And if at all it occasionally were, it is the Śrottriya rather than the Purohita who could have been a fitter subject for comic expo-

²⁰ See Mṛc. Of the legendary play the illustrations are Avi. of Bhāsa, Vik. and Śāk. of Kālidāsa and so on. The exception is a late Rāma drama, *Abhutadarpaṇa*, where the Vidūṣaka is mentioned by his character name.

²¹ Sk. Dr., p. 39.

²² Dr. A. N. Upadhye, *Candralekhā* (Bharatiya Vidya Series, Vol. 6; Bombay, 1945); Introduction, pp. 26-27.

Suhrd

Meaning of
"Vidūṣaka"

Purohita

sure. The boast about learning, the daily routine of ablution and recitation of sacred texts, the love of food and cowardice, are characteristics to be associated with a Śrotriya. The Purohita was no doubt a learned Brahmin; but his capability and wisdom lay in quite another sphere. The Purohita was not required to win royal favour and presents of Swastivācana by parading his learning. He held an important post mainly as a Counsellor on military and political matters; and since it is on record that the Purohita accompanied the king on his campaigns, a trait like cowardice which is generally associated with the Vidūṣaka is inconceivable in the case of the Purohita. What is there in the Purohita then that can be comically represented? Finally, the fact that dramatists like Kālidāsa and Vijaya-bhaṭṭārikā put both the Purohita and the Vidūṣaka in one and the same play,²³ should have been a warning against such an assumption. For, artistically it is not possible that the original and the caricature could exist side by side on the stage, except if the caricature were of a very broad type representing the general class.

It appears that the term Purohita came to denote only an 'officiating or family priest' in later days and lost its connection with active political affairs. Brahmin priests came to be appointed in royal families; they were called Purohita; sometimes, it may be presumed, they performed the function of managing the religious affairs of the king as well as of advising and entertaining the king. It is in this way that we can understand how Rājasekhara's Vidūṣaka acts as an officiating priest at the wedding of the hero in *Viddhaśālabhañjikā*, and how Mahodara in *Adbhutadarpaṇa*, who is a family-priest, is appointed by Rāvaṇa as a 'minister of love-affairs'. It is a combination of two roles in one person. One is not a caricature of the other.

²³ In Śāk., for instance. The play *Kaumudīmahotsava* of Queen Vijayabhāṭṭārikā has the Vidūṣaka and the Purohita present in a single identical scene in the fifth act.

That the Vidūṣaka happens to be a Brahmin and speaks in Prakrit are questions which, as a matter of fact, need not be mixed up with the explanation of the name. A separate explanation of those questions can be very plausibly furnished.²⁴ An explanation of this nature, it is true, can be very helpful and suggestive. But to regard it as a positive proof for the origin of this dramatic character is apt to be hasty, unless there were independent corroborative evidence to prove the same.

Hence, it appears to me quite unnecessary to look upon the name Vidūṣaka as a back-formation from Prakrit, although it may be philologically possible. But I suspect an anachronism here. The recent studies tend to prove that the Sanskrit drama originally must have been in Sanskrit, and it gradually made increasing use of the Prakrit which was fast becoming the spoken language of the general mass of people. The Vidūṣaka in the original plays could not have but spoken in Sanskrit; and this is proved by the character of the Vidūṣaka in the Javanese drama which is an adaptation from the Indian drama.²⁵ Further, the name Vidūṣaka appears in *Paumacariya* as Vidūsaga,²⁶ where it is obviously a Prakritisation from the original Sanskrit. But the *Kathāsaritsāgara* has a story of a Brahmin, whose name is Vidūṣaka, and who is represented as a very courageous, obliging and noble Brahmin.²⁷ This is at least an indication that the name Vidūṣaka has, socially speaking, no connotation of a stupid Brahmin boasting of his uncertain learning or of the privileges of his caste.

²⁴ See Chapters IV and VI, entitled CASTE and LANGUAGE. See also Ch. II.

²⁵ See note (34) and (35) to Ch. I.

²⁶ *Paumacariya*, I. 19. See Note (29) to Ch. III.

²⁷ *Kathā*, Lāvāṇaka Lambaka III, Taraṅga iv. See esp. vv. 109-110 :

रटसु तेषु तत्रैको निर्जगाम ततो मठात् ।
विदूषकाख्यो गुणवान् धुर्थः सत्ववर्ता द्विजः ॥
यो युवा बाहुशाली च तपसाराध्य पावकम् ।
प्राप खड्गोत्तमं तस्माद् ध्यातमात्रोपगामिनम् ॥

The explanation of the name must, therefore, be sought not in a social context but in the context of the drama only.

In the particular item of the *Pārvaraṅga* known as *Trigata* (literally, the talk of the three, the three being, the Sūtradhāra, his Assistant and the Vidūṣaka), the Vidūṣaka holds conversation with the Assistant, which Bharata describes as '*Vidūṣaka-vidūṣitaḥ*.'²⁸ M. Ghosh translates this as 'The jester who finds fault (with his words)...'.²⁹ An alternative reading is '*virūpitaḥ*', which should mean 'spoiled'. Obviously, the explanation of the name is suggested here. The word is to be derived from the root '*dūṣ*' with the preposition '*vi*': *dūṣ* has the sense of 'to blame, find fault with, spoil'. This nature is attributed to the actor Vidūṣaka because he turns the entire conversation into a different key and evokes a smile from the Sūtradhāra: In other words, the fault-finding etc. is intended only for laughter; and this particular *humorous mode* that the Vidūṣaka adopts for his speech is what is denoted by the preposition *vi*, which thus means *viśeṣeṇa*. The word *Vidūṣaka*, therefore, means, 'one who has a characteristic mode of fault-finding, or spoiling, with a view to evoking laughter'; and this fits with the role that the Vidūṣaka is expected to play in the *Pārvaraṅga*.

In the play itself, the speech and action of the Vidūṣaka have the same characteristic mode and purpose. Among the later theorists, Rāmacandra³⁰ tells us that, "The Vidūṣakas are

²⁸ पारिपाथिकसञ्जल्यो विदूषकविदूषितः । (v. 1. विरूपितः)
स्थापितः सूत्रधारेण त्रिगतं संप्रयुज्यते ॥

NS. GOS, V. 141; not found in KM and KSS.

²⁹ M. Ghosh's translation is, "In the Three Men's Talk an Assistant talks with the Jester who finds fault with his words which are, [however] supported by the Director."—*The Nāṭya-śāstra*, p. 94.

³⁰ Read: एषां वियोगिनां विप्रलम्भशङ्कारवतामौचित्यानतिक्रमेण लिङ्ग्यादयो यथासंभवं सन्धि विग्रहेण विग्रहं सन्धिना च विशेषेण दूषयन्ति विनाशयन्ति, विप्रलम्भं तु विनोददानेन विस्मारयन्तीति विदूषकाः ।

ND. GOS, Comm. on IV. 168, (p. 199).

so called because the ascetic and other types of them, spoil peace by conflicts, conflict by peace, in a particular manner, as the occasion demands, in the case of heroes in separation of love and when they are alone; that is, they remove them (viz. peace and conflict); the separation, however, they cause to be forgotten by affording diversion." Rāmacandra thus confirms the etymological explanation, '*Viśeṣeṇa dūṣayanti...iti Vidūṣakāḥ*' and his paraphrase of *dūṣayanti* by *vināśayanti* and *vismārayanti*, lays bare the purpose of the Vidūṣaka's speech, which is satirising any situation with a view to evoking laughter or providing diversion. He is not a mere *Dūṣaka*, a fault-finder; he does it in his characteristic humorous manner, *viśeṣeṇa*; and hence, the name.

Socially speaking, the role of the Vidūṣaka is critical. The author of the *Kāmasūtra* informs that the Vidūṣaka, as a companion of the Courtesan and the Nāgaraka and enjoying their affection and confidence, criticises their conduct when he finds them going wrong; and in virtue of this chastising, he is known as the 'Vidūṣaka'. But he is also a sport; and he moves about in public houses and in literary clubs provoking many-sided laughter; he is, therefore, known by another name 'Vaiḥāsika', the jester.³¹

These explanations leave no doubt about the meaning of the name: The Vidūṣaka is a critic, a jester; 'a spoiler for fun'. He combines in his role humorous laughter as well as a critical attitude towards the incongruities of life. The root *dūṣ* indicates the latter and the preposition *vi* the former.

³¹ Read: 'स च वेश्यां नागरकं वा क्वचित् प्रमाद्यन्तं लब्धप्रणयत्वादपवदत इति विदूषकः, क्रीडनत्वाच्च वेशे गोष्ठ्यां च विविधेन हासेन चरतीति वैहासिकः, इत्युभयनामा ।'
Kā. Sū. Comm. on I. iv. 46. See Note (28) to Ch. II.

Trigatam

vi-rūpita

vi-dūṣ

Kāmasūtra