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The final, benedictory stanza of the play may refer to Emperor Chandra·gupta II (reigned c. 376–415 BCE). Other than this clue to the time during which the author lived, all we know about him is that he came from a princely family, and would have had political experience.

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The aristocrat who wrote this vigorous political play eschewed sentimentality in favor of realistic characterization and forceful action. Rákshasa, incorruptible minister of the deposed king, flees abroad and plots his vengeance, while Kautílya, the new king’s subtle minister, seeks to win him over.

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ACT IV
DISSENSION
tatah praviñaty adhvañga/velah puruñah.

puruñah: 'hī māñahe,

'joñasañ samahiasm
ko nāma ga'āgaṁ karejja jaño
aṭṭhānaigailañagarū
pahuṇo āna jai ṯa hojja,

tā jāva amaccab Rakkhasassa jeva gehaṁ pavisāmi, (pariśrā-

ntavat parikrṇmya) 'edam bhaṭṭino amaccab Rakkhasassa
gehaṁ. ko ettha dovāriānam? nivededha dāva bhaṭṭino
amaccab Rakkhasassa: eso kkhuk Carahao Carahao via tu-
varanto Pāḍaliuttād ādo tti,

4.5 pravīya dauvārikaḥ: 'bhadda bhadda, mā uccaṁ mantehi.
eso kkhuk bhaṭṭa amaccab Rakkhaso kajja/cintā/jaṇideṇa
jāreṇa samuppanāṣa(s)=jāvaṇa aṣa vi ṯa dāva saññāda-
lam muñcadi. tā ciṛtha muhuttaaṁ jāva se laddh'āvasaro
bhavia bhavado āgamaṇaṁ nivedemi,

puruñah: 'bhadda/muha, jadhā de roadi,

tatah praviñati āyana/gata āsana/gatena Śakaṭadāsena saba
sa/cinto rākṣasaḥ.

rākṣasaḥ: (ātmāgatam)
mama v'imṛṣataḥ kāry'jārāmbhe
Vidher āvidheyaṭāṁ
sahajakutiḷāṁ Kautilyaṣya
pracintayato matim
api ca vihite taṅkritṛyānāṁ
nikāmaṁ upagrahe
'katham idam iḥ' ēty' unnidrasya
prayānty anīśaṁ niśaḥ.

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Enter someone dressed as a traveler.

TRAVELER: Oh, heavens above!
A thousand miles or more there and back!
Who would ever make such journeys?—
Except when his master’s orders
Mean more than the discomfort of travel.

So now I have to call on Minister Rākshasa. (walking about wearily) Here is my master the Minister Rākshasa’s house. Ho there, doormen! Tell your master that Kārabhaka has come like a camel* from Pātali-putra!

Enter a doorkeeper: Hey, good sir, not so loud! Our master Minister Rākshasa has a headache brought on by overwork and insomnia, and he hasn’t yet left his bed. Wait a minute while I pick the right moment to let him know you’ve come.

TRAVELER: Right you are, then.

Enter, in his bed with Shākata-dāsa seated beside him, Rākshasa, careworn.

RĀKSHASA: (to himself)
When I think how little Fate has been my ally in the struggle
And how devious has been the plotting of Kautūlya,
For all my successful winning of his subordinates,
My nights pass in sleepless bewilderment.
Rākṣasa’s Ring

4.10 api ca: kāryā’ōpakṣepam ādau tanum api racayaṁ
tasya vistāram icchan
bijānāṁ garbhitaṁ phalam atigahanaṁ
gūḍham udbhedaṁś ca
kurvan buddhyā vimarṣaṁ praśṛtam api puṇaḥ
saṁpharan kāryajātaṁ
kartā vā nāṭakānāṁ imam anubhavati
kleśam asmad/vidho vā.

tad api nāma duśrtāṁ Cāṇakya’vātkah—
(upaśṛtya dauvārikah) jaadu jaadu—
Rākṣasaḥ: abhisamdhūtaṁ śakyah syāt.
Dauvārikah: amacco,

4.15 Rākṣasaḥ: (vāṁ’/ākṣi/spandaṁ sūcayītāṁ ātma/gatam) Cā-
ṇakya’vātkah jayati. abhisamdhūtaṁ śakyah syād amātya
iti. (prakāśam) bhadra, kim asi vaktujākah?
Dauvārikah: amacco, eso kkhu Karahao Pāḍaliuttado āa-
do icchadi amaccaṁ pekkhidum,
Rākṣasaḥ: bhadra, āvīlambitaṁ pravaśaya.
Dauvārikah: jāṁ amacca ānavedi, (iti niśkramya puru-
śam upaśṛtya) bhadda, eso amacco ciṣṭhadi. uvasappehi
nāṁ,
iti niśkrānto dauvārikah.

4.20 Karabhakaḥ: (Rākṣaśam upaśṛtya) jaadu jaadu amacco,
Rākṣasaḥ: (nātyen’/āvalokyā) bhadra Karabhaka, svāgatam.
upaviśyatāṁ.

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ACT IV: DISSENSION

Contriving the first faint outlines of a plot, and then elaborating,
Causing the hidden seeds to germinate unsuspected,
Cleverly managing the crisis, drawing together all the sprawling threads—
In these painful anxieties of creation I am working like a playwright.

I pray, then, that Kautilya may know—
DOORKEEPER: (approaching) Victory—
RÁKSHASA: —the bitterness of defeat!
DOORKEEPER: —be yours, Minister!
RÁKSHASA: (indicating an inauspicious throbbing of his left eye, to himself) Must Kautilya, then, know victory, and the bitterness of defeat be mine? (aloud) What do you want to tell me?
DOORKEEPER: Minister, Kárabhaka has arrived from Pátaliputra and is asking to see you.
RÁKSHASA: Show him in at once.
DOORKEEPER: Yes, sir. (withdrawing and approaching the traveler) There is the Minister, friend. You may approach him.

He goes out.
KÁRABHAKA: (going up to RÁKSHASA) Victory, sir, victory!
RÁKSHASA: (seeing him) Good Kárabhaka, welcome! Sit down.
Rākṣasā's Ring

Karabhakaḥ: ṇaṁ amacca ṣaṅvediḥ (iti bhūmāv upaviṣṭah)

Rākṣasāḥ: (svaṅgatam) atha «kasmin prayojane maniḥ āyaṁ praṇāḥdhiḥ prahita iti» prabhūtavāt prayojanāṇāṁ na khalv avadhārayāmi. (cintāṁ nāṣayati)

tataḥ pravilati verraṇāṁir aparāḥ puruṣāḥ

4.25 puruṣāḥ: ṇosaladha ayyā oṣaladha. avedha, māṣahe, avedha. kiṃ na peskadha—

"dūle paccāsattī daṃśāṇam avi dullaṃḥ aḍhaṅghehiṇḥ kallaṇāmanḍapahalaṇaḥ devaṇa va bhūmiṇdevaṇaḥ,"

(ākāśe) ayyā, kiṃ bhaṇāḥda? kiṃ niṃittatē cā oṣalaṇā kaḷiḍi triḥ ayya, eṣe kkhū kumale malaṅkṛti tiṃpuṇāṇaḥ śiśāṭeṇaḥ amaccaḷaḥkaṇāḥ śuṇia peskiṇum ido yyeva āāṣadhi. tā ediṇā kalaṇcena oṣalaṇā kaḷiḍi, (iti niṣkrāntaḥ puruṣaḥ)

tataḥ pravilati bhāgurāṇeṇa saba kaṇcukinaḥ ānugam-yamāno malaṇketuḥ.

Malaṇketuḥ: (niśvaye ṛṭmaṅgatam) adya daśamo māsas tātasyā āparamatāya na c' āṃśāhir vṛthāḥ puruṣaḥ 'ābhimāṇam udvahadbhiḥ tam uddhiṣya toṣ'āṅgalir apy āvarjitaḥ. pratijñātātma etat purastāt:

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ACT IV: DISSENSION

KÁRABHAKA: Yes, sir. (*He seats himself on the floor.*)

RÁKSHASA: (*to himself*) I have so many affairs on hand I can't remember what it was I sent this agent to do. (*He acts anxious thought.*)

Enter a man bearing an official staff.

MAN: Make way, sirs, make way! Be off, you people, be off! 4.25
Do you not realize—

Like the fair lords of the heavens,
The fair lords of this world
Are hard for those less fortunate
Even to see, let alone come near to.

(*addressing the air*) What's that you say, sirs? Why are we clearing the road? Sirs, His Highness Prince Málaya·ke·tu is coming this way, to see Minister Rákshasa, having heard that he has a headache. That's why we're clearing the road. (*He goes out.*)

Enter, with BHAGURÁYANA and attended by his CHAMBERLAIN, MÁLAYA·KETU.

MÁLAYA·KETU: (*with a sigh, to himself*) It's ten months now since father died, and in a vain act of manly pride I have not offered even a handful of water in his memory. I have sworn an oath that first:

---

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4.30 vakṣaṣṭādanaḥbhinnajratnajvalayayām
ḥhraṣṭ ‘ottarīyām ‘āṃśukaṃ
«hā h” ēty uccari’t āraṇādakaruṇaṃ
bhūrenuṛūṣā ‘ālakam
yādṛṅ mātrōjanasya śokajanitaṃ
ṣampraty avastha’āntaraṃ
śatrūṣtriṣu mayā vidhāya gurave
deyo jalasy āṇjaliḥ.

tat kim bahunā?
udyaccata dhuram ajāpurusā ‘āṇurūpāṃ
gantavyam ājīvihitena pītul pathā vā
āchhidya vā sva janaṇijanaḥlocanēbhya
neyo mayā ripuḥvadhūnuṇyānāni bāśpāḥ.

(prakāśam) ārya Jājale, ucyantām asmadvacanād anuyāyino
rājānaḥ: «eka ev aham amātyaḥ Rākṣasasy ātarkit āga-
manena prītim utpādayitum icchāmi. atah kṛtam anu-
gamanāklesen’ ēti.»

KāŚCUKI: yad ājñāpayati kumāraḥ. (parikramy ākāśe) bho
bho rājānaḥ, kumāraḥ samājñāpayati: «na khalv ahaṃ
kena cid anugantavya iti.» (vilokya sa/haras) kumāra,
ete kumārasya ājñānantaraṃ eva pratiniśśraḥ sarva eva
rājānaḥ. paśyatu hi kumāraḥ—
My enemies’ wives shall beat their breasts till their bangles break and their garments fall apart, piteous in their cries of woe, dust roughening their hair, and they shall know all the grief my mother knows before I make the offering of water to my sire.

In short,

I must bear the hero’s yoke, and either tread my father’s fatal path in battle or snatch the tears from my mother’s eyes and put them in the eyes of the enemy’s womenfolk.

(aloud) Noble Jájali, tell the princes in my name that I want to go on alone and give Minister Rákšasa the pleasure of a surprise visit. So they need not trouble to attend me.

CHAMBERLAIN: Yes, Your Highness. (walking about and addressing the air) Princes! His Highness states that he does not wish you to attend him! (looking, with pleasure) See, Your Highness: they have all turned back as soon as they learned of Your Highness’s command—
RÁKHAŚAŚAŚ RING

4-35  s’ôtsedhaiḥ skandha[desaiḥ kharajakavikākaś]at- karṣan’ātyarthabhugnaiḥ āśvāḥ kaiś cin niruddhāḥ kham iva khuraipuṭaiḥ khaṇḍayantaḥ purastāt ke cin mātaṅgamukhyair vihatājavatayā mūkaghaṇtairementīṇvratāḥ maryādāṁ bhūmipālā jalaṭd haya iva te deva n’ōllaṅghayanti.


KAŅČUKI: yad ājñāpayati kumāraḥ. (iti saṇipījano niskrāṇ-taḥ)

MALAYAKETUḤ: sakhe Bhāgurāyaṇa, vijñāpito ’ham ih’ āga- cchadbhir Bhadrabhaṭa|prabhṛṭbhīr yathā «na vayam amāyai|Rākṣasa|dvāreṇa kumāram āśrayāmahe. kiṃ tu kumārasya senā|patiṃ Śikharasenaṃ dvārit|kṛtya duṣṭ’| amāyai|parighṛhitak Candragupta|aparaktah kumāram ābhigāmika|guna|yogad āśrayanīyam āśrayāmaḥ iti.» tan maya su|ciram api vīcārayata teṣaṃ vāky’|ārtho n’ āvadāhatāḥ.

BHĀGURĀYAṆAḤ: kumāra, n’ āiv’ āyaṃ durbodhaḥ, paśya. «vijñāṣur ātma|guna|saṃpannah paiyaḥita|dvāreṇ āśra- yanīya iti» nanu nyāyam ev’ ēdam.

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ACT IV: DISSENSION

Some, pulling hard on the reins, have checked their steeds,
Which rear with necks arched back, breaking thin air with their hoofs.
Others turn their stately elephants about, bells faltering into silence.
These princes respect your command as the sea respects the shore.

MÁLAYA-KETU: Noble Jájali, you too go back with my servants. No one but Bhaguráyana need attend me.

CHAMBERLAIN: Certainly, Your Highness. (He goes out with the servants.)

MÁLAYA-KETU: Bhaguráyana, my friend, when Bhadra-bháta and his companions arrived here, they said to me, “We are not seeking asylum with Your Highness through Minister Rákshasa: it was Your Highness’s general Shikhara-sena who, when we sickened of seeing Chandra-gupta in the clutches of an evil minister, enabled us to take refuge with Your Highness, as your amiable qualities had made us long to do.” I have been turning their words over in my mind for a long time, but I can’t decide what they were getting at.

BHAGURÁYANA: It is simple enough, Your Highness. It is natural, surely, to wish to turn to a master who is both determined and talented, and to do so through a dear and good friend of that master.
4.40 MALAYAKETUH: sakhe Bhāgurāyaṇa, nanv asmākam amātya|Rākṣasah priyatamo hitatamaś ca.

bhāgurāyaṇaḥ: kumāra, evam etat. «kiṁ tu amātya|Rākṣasāḥ Cāṇakye baddhayairo na Candragupte. tad yadi kada cica Candraguptaś Cāṇakyaṃ arjita latinaṇāṃ āsahamānaḥ sācivyād avarpayet tato Nandakula|bhaktīyā -Nand'ānvaya ev' āyaṃ iti: saṃjñatasuhṛjjan'āpekṣayā c' āmārya|Rākṣasāḥ Candraguptena saha saṃdadhīta. Candragupto 'pi pitṛparyāy'āgata ev' āyaṃ ity angīkuryāti. evam saty asmāv api kumāro na viśvased' ity āyaṃ eṣaṃ vāky'ārthaḥ.

MALAYAKETUH: yuṣyate. amātya|Rākṣasasya grham ādēśaya.

bhāgurāyaṇaḥ: iti itaḥ kumāraḥ.

iti ubhau parikrāmataḥ.

4.45 bhāgurāyaṇaḥ: kumāra, idam amātya|Rākṣasasya grham. praviśatu kumāraḥ.


pravelanāṃ nātayataḥ.

rākṣasah: āṁ śrītām. (prakāṣam) bhadrā, api dṛṣṭas tvayā Kusumapure vaitālīkaḥ Stanakalaśaḥ?

karabhakhaḥ: "amacca, adha imāṃ.

4.50 MALAYAKETUH: sakhe Bhāgurāyaṇa, Kusumapura|vṛtt'ān-
taḥ prastutāḥ. tatas tāvan n' āpasarpāvah. śṛṇuvas tāvat. kiṁ kāraṇam iti.
ACT IV: DISSENSION

MÁLAYA-KETU: But Bhaguráyana, Minister Rákshasa himself is the dearest and best of friends.

BHAGURÁYANA: No doubt, Your Highness. But their reasoning is as follows. Minister Rákshasa is fighting Kautílya, not Chandra-gupta. Suppose by some chance Chandra-gupta were to find Kautílya’s arrogance impossible to bear, and were to dismiss him from his post. Out of his loyalty to the House of Nanda, since Chandra-gupta is after all of Nanda stock, or else for the sake of his friends in prison, Minister Rákshasa might come to terms with Chandra-gupta—who for his part might accept him, as being his minister by family tradition. Now, in such circumstances Your Highness might suspect their own loyalty as well.

MÁLAYA-KETU: Yes, I see what you mean. Lead the way to Minister Rákshasa’s house.

BHAGURÁYANA: This way, Your Highness.

They both walk about.

BHAGURÁYANA: Here is the house. Enter, Your Highness.

MÁLAYA-KETU: I do so.

They act entering.

RÁKSHA: Ah, I remember! (aloud) Did you see Stana-kálasha the bard in Pátali-putra, my dear man?

KARABHAKA: Certainly, sir.

MÁLAYA-KETU: Bhaguráyana, my friend, they are discussing events in Pátali-putra. Let’s not interrupt, but simply listen.
sattvaḥbhangaḥbhayād rajñām
kathanyanty anyathā puraḥ
anyathā vivṛttārtheṣu
svaiḥjālāpesu mantriṇaḥ.

bhāgurāṇaḥ: yad ajñāpayati kumāraḥ.

rākṣasah: bhadra, api tat kārayaḥ siddham?

karabhakah: "amaccassa paśeṣa siddham."

4.55 malayakeṭuḥ: Bhāgurāṇa, kim tat kārayam?

bhāgurāṇaḥ: kumāra, gahanah khalu saciva vṛttāntaḥ.
n'aitattata paricchettum śakyaite. avahitas tāvac chrotum
arthi kumāraḥ.

rākṣasah: bhadra, vistarena śrotum icchāmi.

karabhakah: "sunādu amacco. atthi dāva aham amacceṣa un
ātatto jadhā: "Karaha, Kusumataṁ gacchā mama
vañeṇa bhāṣīdavvo tace vedālio Thānaalaso jadhā Cāna-
kkhaḥadaena tesaṁ tesaṁ anābhangesuṁ anucīṭṭhiamā-
ṇesaṁ Candaūtto tae samutteṇaḥ/samatthehim siloehīṁ
uvasiloādavvo tti."

rākṣasah: bhadra, tataḥ tataḥ.

karabhakah: "tado mae Pāḍaliuttaṁ gacchā suṇāvido
amaccaṣamdesaṁ thanajalaso."

rākṣasah: bhadra, tataḥ tataḥ.

karabhakah: "erṭh' antare Ṛṇanda | kula | viṇasa | dusidas-
sa pora|jaṇassa paridosam uppādaanteṇa Candaūttena
āḥosido Kusumatiśe komudijmah'ūsavo. so a cira|āla|
pavattāna|jaṇida|paridoso ahimada|bandhu|jaṇa|samā-
gamo via saśiineham bahu|māṇido ṇāra|jaṇena."
ACT IV: DISSENSION

For fear of destroying his resolve
Ministers say one thing to a prince’s face,
And quite another when they are speaking freely
And saying what they mean.

BHAGURAYANA: By all means, Your Highness.

RAKSHA: Was your mission successful, my dear man?

KARABHAK: Quite successful, if it pleases Your Honor.

MALAYAKETU: What mission, Bhagurayana?

BHAGURAYANA: A minister’s affairs are complicated, Your Highness. This is hardly enough to go on. Just listen attentively.

RAKSHA: Tell me in detail what happened.

KARABHAK: You had instructed me, sir, to go to Patali-putra and tell Stana-kalasha the bard in your name that when the accursed Kautilya infringed some command or other of the Emperor he should address inflammatory stanzas to the Emperor.

RAKSHA: Yes?

KARABHAK: So I went to Patali-putra and gave Stana-kalasha your message, sir.

RAKSHA: Go on.

KARABHAK: At this point, to dispel the gloom that the destruction of the House of Nanda has cast over the city, Chandra-gupta proclaimed that Patali-putra should celebrate the Full Moon Festival. The return of this festival after so long an absence delighted the people and they greeted it as affectionately as a long-lost relative.
Rākṣasah: (saḥṭapam) hā deva Nanda!

Kaumudī kumudāṇande
jagadāṇandaḥetunā
kidṛṣṭi sati candre 'pi
nṛpaṇandra tvayā vinā?

4.65 bhadra, tatas tataḥ.

Karabhakaj: "amacca, tado so loaṃ'āṇanda|bhūdo anīc-
chantassa jeva nārāṇaṇa śivārdo Cānakaḥadaeṇa
komudi|mahaḥ|ūsavo. etth' antare Thānaalaseṇa paūttā
Candauṭṭaṃmutteṇaṃsamathā sīloa|parivādiṭṭa,"

Rākṣasah: (saḥ/haṛsam) sādhv, sakhe Stanakalaśa, sādhv!
kāle bhedābijam uptam avasyaṃ phalam upadarśayati.
kutāḥ:
sadyaḥ kṛṣadhrasa|ccchedaṃ
prākṛto 'pi na maṛṣayet
kim u lok'ādhikam dhāma
bibhṛṇāḥ prthivī|bhuhajah?

Malayaketuḥ: evam etat.

4.70 Rākṣasah: bhadra, tatas tataḥ.

Karabhakaj: "tado Candaūṭteṇa aṇāḥ|bhāṅga|kalusida|hīae-
ṇa sujīraṃ amacaguṇaṃ pasamsia niśbhacchido ahiārā-
do Cānakaḥhadado,"

Malayaketuḥ: sakhe Bhāgurāṇa, guṇa|praśamṣayā dar-
śitaś Candraguptena Rākṣase bhaktipakṣapātaḥ.

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ACT IV: DISSENSION

rākṣasa: (weeping) Alas, Nanda, my emperor!
What Full Moon Festival can there be today
Though the moon shine never so full?
For it was you, great king,
Who were the full moon of this world.
Go on, my dear fellow, go on.

kārabhaka: Then this glorious spectacle was canceled by
the accursed Kauṭīlya against the Emperor’s wishes.
Upon which Stana-kālasha addressed two inflammatory
stanzas to Chandra-gupta. (He repeats the two stanzas of
the second bard (Act 3.98 and 3.99).)

rākṣasa: (delightedly) Bravo, Stana-kālasha, my friend!
This seed of dissension so opportunely sown is sure to
bear fruit:
When his pleasure is rudely shattered,
Even a common man will not endure it—
What then of emperors, lords of the earth,
Men of no common splendor?

mālava-ketu: He is right there.

rākṣasa: And what then?

kārabhaka: Then Chandra-gupta, furious at being dis-
obeyed, praised Your Honor’s ability at some length and
stripped Kauṭīlya of his powers.

mālava-ketu: Friend Bhagurāyana, if he praised his ability,
it shows that Chandra-gupta is sympathetic toward Rā-
ksha.
bhāgūrāyaṇaḥ: kumāra, na tathā guṇajpraṣaṁsaya yathā
cāṇakyaḥ vaḥ tor nirākaraṇena.
rākṣasaḥ: bhadra, kim ayam ev’āikāh Kaumudīmah’ōt-
savajpratisedhāḥ Candraguptasya Cāṇakaṃ prati kopā
kāraṇam ut’ānyad apy asti?

4.75 malaẏaketuḥ: sakhe Bhāgūrāyaṇa, Candraguptasya kopā
cāraṇ‘āṁveṣaṇe kim phalam eṣa paśyati?

bhāgūrāyaṇaḥ: kumāra, etat phalāṃ paśyati. matimāṃś
Cāṇakyas tucche prayaśjane kim iti Candraguptaṃ ko-
payaśyaḥ? na ca kṛtavedi Candragupta etātāt gauravam
tullaṃghayaśyati. sarvathā Cāṇakyaṃ Candraguptayoh pu-
śkalat kāraṇād yo viśleṣa utpadyate sa ātyanti ko bhavat’
itī.

karaḥakaḥ: ṭamacca, arthi aññāṁ pi Candaiuttassa ko-
va kāraṇāṁ Cāṇakke. uvekkhido aneṣa avakkamanato
kumāro Malaakedū amacca|Rakkhasa a,
rākṣasaḥ: (sat harṣam) sakhe Śakaṭādāsa, hastā tala|gato
me samprati Candragupto bhavaśyaḥ. idāṁni Canda-
nadāsasya bandhanān mokṣas tava ca putrajāreṇa saha
saṃgaṃaḥ.

malaẏaketuḥ: sakhe Bhāgūrāyaṇa, «hasta|tala|gato me
samprati Candragupta iti» vyāharataḥ ko ‘yam asy’ āb-
hipaśyaḥ?

4.80 bhāgūrāyaṇaḥ: kumāra, kim anayat? Cāṇakyaḥ apakahṣa-
ya Candraguptasya’ oddhaṇaṃ saukaryam avasyaṃ paś-
yati.
rākṣasaḥ: bhadra, hṛt’āḍhikāraḥ kva sāṃpratam asau va-
tuḥ?
ACT IV: DISSENSION

BHAGURÁYANA: Yes, but not so much because he praised him, Your Highness, as because he dismissed Kautílya.

RÁKSHASA: Tell me, was this cancellation of the Festival the sole reason for Chandra-gupta’s displeasure at Kautílya, or was there something else as well?

MÁLAYA-KETU: Bhaguráyana, what point does he see in looking into the reasons for Chandra-gupta’s displeasure?

BHAGURÁYANA: I will explain, Your Highness. Since Kautílya is a sensible man, why should he anger Chandra-gupta over such a trivial matter? And since Chandra-gupta knows what he owes him, why should he offer Kautílya disrespect just over this? At all events, if there is rich cause for their estrangement, it will then be lasting.

KÁRABHAKA: Yes, Minister, Chandra-gupta does have other grievances against Kautílya. He allowed Prince Málaya-ketu and yourself to escape.

RÁKSHASA: (delightedly) Dear Shákata-dasa, now I know I have Chandra-gupta in the palm of my hand! This means Chándana-dasa’s release from prison, and your own reunion with your wife and children.

MÁLAYA-KETU: What does he mean, Bhaguráyana—he has Chandra-gupta in the palm of his hand?

BHAGURÁYANA: He must think it will be easier to defeat 4.80 Chandra-gupta now that he is without Kautílya, Your Highness—I’m sure it can’t be anything else.

RÁKSHASA: Now that the fellow’s lost his post, where is he?
Rākṣasās Ring

Karbhaṅkaḥ: "macca, tahim jeva Pāḍalūtte paḍīvasadi,
Rākṣasāḥ: (tāvegam) kim tatr' āiva pratīvasati? na tapo'va-
naṃ gataḥ, pratijñaṃ vā na punaḥ samārūḍhavān?
Karbhaṅkaḥ: "macca, "tavo'vanam gamissadi" tti suṇiadi,

4.85 Rākṣasāḥ: (tāvegam) sakhe Śakaṭadāsa, n' ēdam upapad-
yate. paśya:
devasya yena pṛthivītala-vāsavya
s'āgr'asan'āpanayaajā nikṛtir na sodhā
so 'yaṃ svayaṃkṛtana'jādhipater manvasvī
Mauryāt kathāṃ nu pariḥūtim imāṃ saheta?

Mālayaketuḥ: sakhe Bhāgurāyaṇa, Čaṇākyasya tapo'vanam
gamane punah'pratijñā"ārohaṇe vā k" āsa sv'ārthāsidd-
dhiḥ?

Bhāgurāyaṇaḥ: kumāra, n' āyaṃ atyanta'durbodho 'ṛ-
thāḥ; yāvad yāvac Čaṇākyo nirapekṣa' Candraguptād
dūrijbhavati tāvat tāvat asya sv'ārthāsiddhiḥ.

Śakaṭadāsaḥ: amātya, alam anyathāsaṃbhāvitaṇa. upapa-
dyata ev' āitata. paśyatv amātyaḥ:

4.90 rājñām cūḍamaṇ' āndīdyutigacitaśikhe
mūrdhaṁ viṇyaṣtapādaḥ
svair' ev' oṭpādāmaṇān kim iti viṣhate
Maurya ājñāvighātaṃ
Kauṣṭhyā kośita pi svayaṃ abhicaraṇaṃ
jñātaduḥkhaṇaṇa'pratijñāṃ
daivāt pūrṇaṇa'pratijñāḥ punar api na karota
āyatiṣyānti bhūtaḥ.
ACT IV: DISSENSION

KÁRABHAKA: He is still living in Páta-li-putra, sir.
RÁKSHASA: (in disquiet) Still living there? Hasn’t he retired to a hermitage, or sworn a second oath?
KÁRABHAKA: It’s said, sir, that he is going to retire to a hermitage.
RÁKSHASA: (still disquieted) Shákata-dasa, this doesn’t make sense:
How can he, who could not endure the insult of dismissal
By His Majesty the Emperor Nanda, god on earth,
Possibly in his arrogance endure this slight
From the Mauryan, the king that he himself has made?
MÁLAYA-KETU: Bhaguráyana, how will it help him if Kautílya retires to a hermitage or enters on a second vow?
BHAGURÁYANA: Simple enough, Your Highness. Anything will help him that keeps Kautílya away from Chandragupta.
SHÁKATA-DASA: Do not trouble yourself, Minister: it does make sense. Consider—
Now that the Mauryan has set his foot upon the gleaming crowns of princes,
He will never let one of his own people flout his rule,
And Kautílya, even in his anger recalling the painful discipline of a vow,
Having been lucky once, will not risk a future failure.
Here is a new Clay Sanskrit Library translation of Vishákha-datta’s Rákshasa’s Ring.

This political drama is set just after Alexander’s invasion of India (c. 325 BCE) when the first Emperor Chandra-gupta seized the throne and founded the Maurya dynasty.

The exemplary Rákshasa is the loyal exiled chief minister of the deposed dynasty. But his opponent, far from being the villain of the piece, is a kind of superhero—the inhumanly competent ascetic Kautílya, to whom is ascribed India’s famous handbook for rulers, a precursor to Machiavelli’s. Kautílya struggles not to destroy Rákshasa but to win him over to be his successor as Chandra-gupta’s chief minister, so that Kautílya himself can retire from politics.

The final, benedictory stanza of the play may refer to Emperor Chandra-gupta II (reigned c. 376–415 BCE). Other than this clue to the time during which the author lived, all we know about him is that he came from a princely family, and would have had political experience.

The play is elegantly and serenely told. Its skilful blend of gentleness, grace and fantasy with a calm maturity and insight places it at the summit of Sanskrit literary achievement.