Diwakar Acharya is Visiting Lecturer at the Department of Indological Studies, Kyoto University, Japan.

Partha Chatterjee is not only a distinguished Subaltern Studies and Postcolonial scholar (Professor of Political Science at The Centre for Studies in Social Sciences in Calcutta, as well as Professor of Anthropology, University of Columbia), but is also celebrated for his Bengali poetry, and as a Calcutta playwright and actor. His most recent books are "Politics of the Governed: Considerations on Political Society in Most of the World and A Princely Impostor: The Strange and Universal History of the Kumar of Bhawal."

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Packed with action, love, humor, courage, and intrigues, The Little Clay Cart is the most widely performed Sanskrit play in recent times. Ancient Indian urban life is enacted here by realistic characters whose words translate smoothly into modern language. This is a work whose dramatic possibilities outshine the poetic qualities valorized in all other Sanskrit drama.

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Translated by DIWAKAR ACHARYA
With a Foreword by Partha Chatterjee

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY PRESS & JJC FOUNDATION

The Little Clay Cart
by Shûdraka

The Little Clay Cart is, for Sanskrit theater, atypically romantic, funny, and thrilling. This most human of Sanskrit plays is Shakespearean in its skillful drawing of characters and in the plot's direct clarity. One of the earliest Sanskrit dramas, The Little Clay Cart was created in South India, perhaps in the seventh century CE. The plot unfolds in the city of Ujjain, but so secular and universal is the story that it can be situated in any society in any period, and it has, including in Bollywood film and by the BBC.

Charu-datta, a bankrupt married merchant, is extramaritally involved with a wealthy courtesan, Vasánta-sena. The king's vile brother-in-law, unable to win Vasánta-sena's love, strangles her, and accuses Charu-datta. The court decides the case hastily, condemning Charu-datta to death. Fortunately, our heroine rises from the dead to save her beloved, and all applaud their love. At this climax, the regime changes, and the rebel-turned-king makes Charu-datta lord of an adjacent city.
THE LITTLE CLAY CART

by ŚÜDRAKA

TRANSLATED BY

Diwakar Acharya

WITH A FOREWORD BY

PARTHA CHATTERJEE

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY PRESS

JJC FOUNDATION

2009
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ACT EIGHT

VASÁNTA·SENA STRANGLED
8.1 (tataḥ praviśaty ārdra/cīvara/hasto BHIKSUḤ.)

BHIKSUḤ: "ajjā, kaledha dhamma|śaṃcaam.

śaṃjammadha ṅia|potaṁ,
ṇiccam jaggedha jhāṇa|paḍahena.
viśamā india|colā
halanti cila|śaṃcidaṃ dhammam. [1]

avi a, aṃniccadā pekkhia ṇavalam dāva dhammāṇaṃ ṭalaṇa mhi.*

8.5 ṭaṃcāljaṇa jena mālidā, itthia mālia gāma lakkhide,
aṃbale a caṇḍāla mālide, avaśaṃ se ṇala śagga gāhadi. [2]

śila muṇḍide, tuṇḍa muṇḍide,
citta ṇa muṇḍide, kīśa muṇḍide?
jaḥa uṇa a citta muṇḍide,
śāhu śuṭṭhu śila tāha muṇḍide. [3]

gihida|kaśā'|odae ese cīvale jāva edaṃ laṣṭīa|śālakāha ke-
lake ujjāne paviśīa pokkhalinīe pakkhālia lahuṃ lahuṃ avakkamiśsam. (parikramyā tathā karoti.)

nepathye ŚAKĀRAH: "cīṣṭa, le duṣṭa|śamaṇakā, cīṣṭa!"

BHIKSUḤ (drṣṭvā sa/bhayam): "hī avida mānahe! ese se lāa|
ṭala|Śaṃthāne āade. ekkeṇa bhikkhuṇā avalāhe kide
aṇṇaṃ pi jahiṃ jahiṃ bhikkhuṃ pekkhadi tahim tahiṃ
goṇaṃ vva ṇasam vindha ovāhedi. tā kahiṃ a|ṭalaṇe
gamiśsam? adha vā bhaṭṭālale jjeva Buddhhe me ṭalaṇe."
(Enter a monk with a wet robe in his hand.)

MONK: You ignorant people, accumulate merit!

Keep your belly under control, stay ever awake with the drum of meditation!
The hostile senses are thieves who rob merit accumulated over time.

Well then, upon realizing the fleeting nature of the world,
I sought refuge in virtuous deeds.

He who has slain the five men, protected the town by slaying the woman,
And has also slain the feeble pariah—that man will surely attain heaven.*

Your head is shaved, your face is shaved, but your soul is not shaved; why do you shave at all?
Again, if one’s soul is shaved, one’s head is truly shaved.

I’ll go in this garden of the king’s brother-in-law and wash this wet red-dyed gown in the lotus pond, and then quickly be off. (He goes around and sets to work.)

VOICE (offstage): Stop, you wretched monk, stop!

MONK (looking up with fear): Heavens! Sansthánaka is coming—the king’s brother-in-law! Once a monk offended him, and now, whenever he sees one, he pierces his nose as though he were a cow and chases him off. So where can I take refuge, helpless fellow that I am? But the Lord Buddha alone is my refuge.
8.10 (praviṣya sa|khaḍgena viṭṭena saha)

Śakāraḥ: ‘ciṣṭa, le duṣṭa|sāmaṇakā, ciṣṭa! āvāṇa|majjha|
paviṣṭaśsa via latta|mūlaaśsa śiṣaṁ de moḍaśīśam. (iti
tāḍayati.)

Viṭṭaḥ: kāṇelī|mataḥ, na yuktāṁ nirveda|dhṛta|kāṣayaṁ
bhikṣuṇ tāḍayitum. tat kim anena? idam tāvat sukh’|
ōpagamyam udyānaṁ paśyatu bhavān.

a|saraṇa|saraṇa|pramoda|bhūtair
vāna|tarubhīḥ kriyamāṇa|cāru|karma,
hṛdayam iva dur|ātmanāṁ a|guptaṁ
navam iva rājyaṁ a|nirjīt’|ōpabhogyam. [4]

Bhiṣuḥ: ‘śādam! paśīdadu uvāśake._

8.15 Śakāraḥ: ‘bhāve, pekkha pekkha! ākkośadi mam!_

Viṭṭaḥ: kim bravīti?

Śakāraḥ: ‘uvāśake tti maṁ bhaṇādi. kim hagge nāvide?_

Viṭṭaḥ: Buddh’|ōpāsaka iti bhavantaṁ stauti.

Śakāraḥ: ‘thuṇu, sāmaṇakā, thuṇu!

8.20 Bhiṣuḥ: ‘tumaṁ dhāṇṇe! tumaṁ puṇṇe!

Śakāraḥ: ‘bhāve, «dhaṇṇe, puṇṇe» tti maṁ bhaṇādi! kim
hagge śalāvake koṣṭake kombha|kāle vā?_
(Enter Shakára accompanied by the Libertine bearing a sword.)

Shakára: Stop, you wretched monk, stop! I’ll smash your head like a radish at a drinking party! (He beats him.)

Libertine: Bastard, it’s not proper to beat a monk who’s renounced everything and taken the ochre robe. Why bother with him? Look, sir, this garden is worthy of visiting.

The trees are performing the happy task of pleasing and protecting the unprotected. The garden is exposed like the heart of evil men; Like a new kingdom, its pleasures have yet to be enjoyed.

Monk: Welcome! Be appeased, servant.

Shakára: Look, Sir, look! He’s insulting me!

Libertine: What’s he saying?

Shakára: He’s calling me a servant. Am I a barber?

Libertine: He’s praising you by calling you the Buddha’s servant.

Shakára: Praise me, monk, praise me more!

Monk: You are blessed! You are righteous!

Shakára: Sir, he’s calling me “corny” and “stuffed!” Am I a bin, a pot or a potter?*
विताहः: कानेलिमाताह, नानु धन्यस त्वाम पुण्यस त्वम इति भवान्तम स्ताति।

शकराहः: "भावे, तृ किसा एसे इधा अगदे?"

भिक्षुहः: "िदां चिवलां पक्खालिदु।"

8.25 शकराहः: "अले दुष्टा|सामनाकाः, एसे मामा बाहिनी|वदिना साव्य|उज्जानानां पवाले पुप्पहकालां|उज्जाने दिनेज्ञ हि दावा सुनहाका शिळा पानिम पिवांटि। हाग्गे विं पबाल|पुलिसे मानुस्साके ना न्हाआम। ताहिम तुमां पुक्क्हालिँई पुलाना|कुलुठ्ठा|जुसा|सावन्नाईं दुस्सा|गंधिहाईं चिवलाईं पक्खालेसी। तृ तुमां एक्कां पहालिम कलेम।"

विताहः: कानेलिमाताह, ताथा तरकायामि याथ” अनेन’ ा|चिरा|प्रवराेजितेना भवितावयम।

शकराहः: "कदहांम भावे जानादी?"

विताहः: किम अत्र ज्ञेयाम? पास्या!

ady’ अप्य अस्य तथ” ावे केसा|विराहाद
gauri लालाताच्छविह
kālasyा अलपताया चाचिराक्र्ताह
skandhe नाजाता हिनात,
n’ अभ्यास्तुा काशा|वस्त्राचा|रचानाचा
dūrāं निगुढां|ंटतरो
vastr’|ंतासा का पा|ोच्चरायात प्रासिथिलां
skandhe ना साम्तित्थाते। [5]

8.30 भिक्षुहः: "उवास्के, एव्वम। अ|चिरा|पव्वाजिदेह हाग्गे।"
LIBERTINE: Bastard, he is praising you and saying you are blessed and you are righteous.

SHAKÁRA: Sir, why's this man come here?

MONK: To wash this robe.

SHAKÁRA: Oh, you wretched monk! My brother-in-law has given me this Pushpa-karándaka garden, the best of all gardens, where dogs and jackals drink water; I don’t bathe here, eminent and manly though I am. But you’re washing your horrible smelling robes, the color of stale black bean soup, in this pool! Why, I’ll kill you with one blow!

LIBERTINE: Bastard, I guess that this man must have quite recently renounced.

SHAKÁRA: How, sir, do you know?

LIBERTINE: What’s there to know? Look!

Even now the glow of his forehead is the same old pale color, though no hair shades it.

There’s no callus on his shoulder, for his robe has been worn for a very short period.

Nor is he practiced in wearing red robes, for his loins are wide open to view.

And the robe’s edge is much too loose: the cloth inches up, and does not clasp his shoulder.

MONK: It’s true, servant! I’ve quite recently renounced.
śākāraḥ: "tā kīśa tumaṃ jāta|mēttaka jjeva ṇa pavvajide? (iti tādayati.)

bhikṣuḥ: "ṇamo Buddhaśśa!

vīṭaḥ: kim anena tāditena tapasvinā? mucyatām, gacchatu!

śākāraḥ: "ale, ciśta dāva jāva śampadhālemi.

vīṭaḥ: kena sārdham?

śākāraḥ: "attaṇo haḍakkeṇa.

vīṭaḥ: hanta, na gataḥ!

śākāraḥ: "puttakā haḍakkā, bhaṣṭake puttake! ese śamaṇake avi ṇāma kim gacchadu kim ciśṭadu? (sva/gatam) "ṇ’ āvi gacchadu ṇ’ āvi ciśṭadu (prakāśam) "bhāve, śampadhā-lidaṇ mae haḍakkeṇa śaha. ese maha haḍakke bhaṇādi.

vīṭaḥ: kim bravīti?

8.40 śākāraḥ: "mā vi gacchadu mā vi ciśṭadu, mā vi ūśaśadu māvi ṇīśaśadu. idha jjeva jhatti paḍia maledu.

bhikṣuḥ: "ṇamo Buddhaśśa! śalāṇ’|āgade mhi!

vīṭaḥ: gacchatu!

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shakára: Well, why didn’t you renounce the moment you were born? *(He beats him.)*

monk: Homage to the Buddha!

libertine: What will you gain by beating this poor chap? Release him and let him go his way!

shakára: Well, just wait a moment! I’ll do some consulting!

libertine: With whom? 8.35

shakára: With my own heart!

libertine: Ah, he’s still here!

shakára: Oh laddie, my heart, my little master! Tell me, should this monk go or stay? *(to himself)* He should neither go nor stay. *(aloud)* Sir! I’ve consulted my heart. My heart says that…

libertine: What does it say?

shakára: He should neither go nor stay, breathe neither in nor out, but fall down here and die on the spot. 8.40

monk: Homage to the Buddha! I take refuge in you!

libertine: Let him go!
śakārah: "nāṃ sāmaenaᵢ

vitāḥ: kīḍśaḥ samayaḥ?

8.45 śakārah: "tadhā kaddamaṇ pheladu jadhā pāṇiam pāṅk’| āilaṃṇaḥ hodi. adha vā pāṇiam puṇjiṅ|kadua kaddamaṇ pheladuᵢ

vitāḥ: aho mūrkhatā!

viparyasta|māṇaś|ceṣṭaiḥ
śilā|śakala|varṣmabhiḥ
māṃsa|vrkṣair iyaṃ mūrkhair
bhār’|ākrāntā vasuṃ|dharā. [6]

(bhikṣur nātyen’ ākroṣati.)

śakārah: "kiṃ bhaṇādiᵢ?

8.50 vitāḥ: stauti bhavantam.

śakārah: "thuṇu thuṇu! puṇo vi thuṇuᵢ

(tathā kṛtvā niṣkrānto bhikṣuḥ.)

vitāḥ: kāṅnelī|mātaḥ! paśy’ odyānasya śobhām!

amī hi vrkṣāḥ phala|puṣpa|śobhitāḥ
kaṭhora|niṣpanda|lat”|ōpaveṣṭitāḥ,
nṛp’|ājñaya rakṣiljanena pālītā
narah sa|dārā iva yānti nirvṛtim. [7]
shakāra: All right, but on one condition!

libertine: What condition?

shakāra: That he throw away mud in such a way that its water is not soiled. Or else that he heap up the water and throw away the dirt.

libertine: What stupidity!

The earth is groaning under a load of fools:
Trees of flesh, absurd in mind and deed, and with stones for bodies.

(The monk abuses shakāra with gestures.)

shakāra: What does he say?

libertine: He’s praising you.

shakāra: Praise me! Praise me! Praise me again!

(The monk, continuing his antics, exits.)

libertine: Bastard, look at this garden’s splendor!

These trees, glorious with their fruits and flowers,
Embraced by vines tight and breathless,
And protected by guards under royal decree,
Attain delight, like men with their wives.
8.55  ŚAKĀRAḤ: Ṛṣuṣṭu bhāve bhaṇādi.‌

bhau|kuśuma|vicittidā a bhūmi,
kuśuma|bhaleṇa viṇāmidā a rukkhā,
duma|śihala|laḍ’|āalambamāṇā
paṇāśa|phalā via vāṇalā lalanti‌ [8]

VIṬĀḤ: kāṇelī|mātaḥ, idaṃ śilā|talam adhyāsyatām!

ŚAKĀRAḤ: Ṛṣe mhi āside‌ (iti VIṬENA saḥ’ ṭpaviśati.) bhāve,
ajja vi tam Vaṣantašeṇiaṇ śumalāmi. dujjaṇa|vaaṇaṃ via
haḍakkādo na oṣaladi‌.

VIṬĀḤ (sva|gatam): tathā nirasto ’pi smarati tām. atha vā,

8.60  stribhir vimānītanām
kā|puruṣāṇāṁ vivardhate madanaḥ,
sat|puruṣasya sa eva tu
bhavati mṛdura n’ āiva vā bhavati. [9]

ŚAKĀRAḤ: bhāve, kā vi velā Thāvalaka|ceḍāśa bhaṇidaśśa
pavahaṇaṇaṃ geṇhia lahuṃ lahuṃ āacch’ ētti. ajja vi ṇa
āacchadi tti cilāṃ mhi bubhukkhide. majjhānhe ṇa śak-
kiadi pādehiṃ gantum. tā pekkha pekkha‌.[

 ṇaha|majjhagle śule
dupekkhe kuvida|vāṇalā|śaliche,
bhūmī daḍhā|saṃtattā
hada|putta|śade vva Gandhālī‌ [10]

VIṬĀḤ: evam etat.

\[1\] The wife of Dhrita·rashtra and the mother of Duryódhana and his brothers
shakāra: Well put, sir!

The ground is colored with many flowers,
And the trees bow under their weight of blossoms.
Hanging from vines at the top of trees,
The monkeys dangle like jackfruits.

libertine: Please sit down on this flat rock!

shakāra: I’m seated. *(He sits with the libertine.)* Good sir,
I still remember Vasánta·sena. She fills my mind like the
words of a knave.

libertine *(to himself):* He still dreams of her, though re-
fused in such a way. Or is it that,

A base man’s passion increases if women despise him,
while a good man’s passion reduces or vanishes.

shakāra: Sir, it’s been quite a long time since I asked Sthá-
varaka to come here with the carriage as fast as possible,
but he hasn’t come. I started feeling hungry long ago.
And I can’t walk at noon. Look! Look!

The sun in the midst of the sky is, like an enraged ape,
hard to gaze upon.
The earth is sorely inflamed, like Gandhārī\(^1\) when
her hundred sons were killed.

libertine: So it is!
Diwakar Acharya is Visiting Lecturer at the Department of Indological Studies, Kyoto University, Japan.

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Charu-datta, a bankrupt married merchant, is extramaritally involved with a wealthy courtesan, Vasánta-sena. The king’s vile brother-in-law, unable to win Vasánta-sena’s love, strangles her, and accuses Charu-datta. The court decides the case hastily, condemning Charu-datta to death. Fortunately, our heroine rises from the dead to save her beloved, and all applaud their love. At this climax, the regime changes, and the rebel-turned-king makes Charu-datta lord of an adjacent city.

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