

# Political Intrigue and Governance in Mudrarakshasa: A Reflection of Ancient Indian Political Thought

Ipsita De<sup>1</sup> and Dr. Sunil Kumar Chaturvedi<sup>2</sup>

Ph.D. Research Scholar, Department of Sanskrit<sup>1</sup>

Assistant Professor, Department of Sanskrit<sup>2</sup>

Singhania University, Jhunjhunu, Rajasthan, India

**Abstract:** Vishakhadatta's *Mudrarakshasa* (The Signet Ring of Rakshasa), a Sanskrit political drama set in the aftermath of Chandragupta Maurya's ascent to power, offers a profound exploration of ancient Indian political thought. The play portrays the Machiavellian strategies employed by Chanakya (Kautilya) to consolidate the Mauryan empire by neutralizing opposition and securing Rakshasa, the minister of the fallen Nanda dynasty, through a web of diplomacy, deception, and psychological manipulation. Drawing upon the principles of Arthashastra, *Mudrarakshasa* demonstrates the pragmatic and often ruthless aspects of statecraft in ancient India. The play highlights key political concepts such as *saam*, *daam*, *dand*, *bhed* (persuasion, monetary inducement, punishment, and division), the use of espionage, and the strategic co-optation of adversaries. This study analyzes *Mudrarakshasa* as a reflection of ancient Indian political philosophy, emphasizing its relevance in understanding governance, power dynamics, and ethical dilemmas in the exercise of state authority.

**Keywords:** Mudrarakshasa, Chanakya, Chandragupta Maurya, Ancient Indian Political Thought, Arthashastra, Statecraft, Political Intrigue, Governance