



## BHASHA'S STYLE OF INDIAN DRAMA

Dr. C. Venkatesan

M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D, Asst. Prof. The Rajah's College of Sanskrit and Tamil Studies, Thiruvaiyaru - 613204.

## KEYWORDS :

**The Indian Theory of Drama**

Strictly as per the compliance and regulations of: Abstract The source of the Indian theory of drama is the Natyasastra of the sage Bharata, an encyclopedic treatise on all the aspects of dramaturgy. Bharata the instaurator and codifier of the Indian tradition of drama postulates theories of drama, music, dance, and poetry, construction of stage, the concept of rasa and the mimetic role of drama, etc. While neither Aristotle or Plato applies to any form of Western dance style, in India, everyone goes back to Natyasastra to find the source of various styles of Indian classical and regional dances and music. Metaphysically, the Indian theory of drama is based on Karma unlike the Greek theory of drama based on fate.

**Study of Indian Dramaturgy**

Ancient Sanskrit literature is perhaps the oldest literature in the world. Sanskrit poetics is Indian poetics; it is an epitome of theories and laws related to poetry and drama. Like Aristotle's Poetics, Sanskrit poetics also focuses on the drama. Bharata's Natyashastra is a milestone in ancient Sanskrit poetics. Mahakavi Kalidasa occupies a unique place not only in Sanskrit but also in World drama. Bhasa, Bhavbhuti, Harsha, Shudrak and Ashvaghosha are some of the noted dramatists.

**Classical Theories of Drama**

Comparative criticism of texts irrespective of their socio-cultural, linguistic, idealistic, stylistic and artistic divergence has become a productive form of literature as it allows national literatures to gain worldwide recognition. The researcher in Comparative Literature could be restrained solely by the texts in translation. Because, claiming originality to the texts in translation is impossible as they bear the dominance of the translator and the limitations of both the Source Language (SL) and Translated Language (TL) to some extent. But the translation done in accordance with translatology assures that the adopted script bears all the key concepts of original text. Moreover, the classics of all literature have come down to the readers only through translation.

**Bhasa Plays and the Vedic Tradition**

The Sanskrit plays brought out by MM T. Ganapati Sastri raised a controversy. He ascribed the authorship of the 13 Sanskrit plays to Bhasa. Some people called them Trivandrum Plays, denying the authorship of Bhasa. Some scholars opine that only the Swapnavasavadattam and Pratigyayaugandharayanam, can be taken as authored by Bhasa. The paper discusses some interesting aspects of Vedic tradition reflected in some of the "Bhasa Plays". Indications are that the author/s of Trivandrum plays were not even aware of some prime aspects of the Vedic Tradition. Some pointers to show the later origin of the plays are shown. Points out the ignorance of the author regarding the Vedic customs and practices.

**The Dramatic Structure of Bhasa's Swapnavasavadattam**

Bhasa (A.D.300) is a remarkable dramatist of Sanskrit literature who introduced various structural devices to drama that were followed by most of Sanskrit dramatists. He contributed about 13 important dramas to Sanskrit literature which are based upon Indian mythologies and epics. He

became a major influence on the later playwrights due to his use of Sutradhara (stage director), Vidushaka (fool), and innovations like patakasthana (irony induced astonishment), rasa (sentiment) and aarshprayoga (archaisms) which were unique in their quality and much ahead of his time. The present paper analyses his dramatic style through an analytical study of Swapnavasavadattam, one of his most notable plays, with an interest to make writers of other languages know the uniqueness of Bhasa's style.

Bhasa is a very well known dramatist who has about 13 Sanskrit plays to his credit. These are

1. Madhyamvyayog
2. Pancharatra
3. Dootavakya
4. Dootaghatokacha
5. Kambhaar
6. Urubhanga
7. Pratima
8. Abhishek
9. Baalcharit
10. Pratigyayaugandharayan
11. Swapnavasavadattam
12. Avimarak
13. Chaarudattam

Out of these Vasavadattam was discovered in 1909 and the rest in 1911 by Archeological Survey of India. Though their arrival on the literary space was very late in comparison to the other authors of Sanskrit literature, the plays have established Bhasa's reputation among the very revered dramatists of Sanskrit dramatic tradition. The authorship of some of these works is controversial due to unverified claims by various critics; most of them are accepted to be written by Bhasa due to striking similarities among them. The first six are inspired by tales from the Mahabharat, Pratima & Abhishek are based upon the Ramayana, whereas Pratigyayaugandharayan and Swapnavasavadattam emanate from the time of contemporary king Vatsaraja. None of these plays had the name of itsn writer except Swapnavasavadattam, so the only way left for the critics was to draw a similarity to establish their authorship.

**Bhasa's Style**

As a dramatist Bhasa is unique in Sanskrit literature. He knows the technique of the drama and like an expert of it he utilizes it properly. The plot of each drama of Bhasa is unfolded in a few effective situations that follow each other in their natural sequence and are calculated to bring out the sentiment in hand.

An essential dramatic merit in Bhasa is that his expression is far easier to follow than in much of the later dramatic poetry. He possesses in fact that clarity, which is theoretically a merit of the Kavya-style, which is signally neglected by the average Kavya-writer in his anxiety to display the complete familiarity which he possesses with every side of the art of poetry.

Bhasa is an accomplished master of the art of poetry, but one whose good sense and taste preserve him from adopting in

drama the artifices which are permitted in the court-epic and lyric which were intended to be studied at leisure. The simple and sententious is beloved of Bhasa.

The necessities of the drama saved Bhasa from one great defect of the epic style, the lack of measure, which permits the Ramayana to illustrate by twenty-nine similes the sorrows of Sita in her captivity, while in the *Abhishekanatakam*, Bhasa is satisfied only with one. On the other hand he owes to it the relative simplicity of his diction, and his freedom from the excesses of the poetic equivalent of the nominal style, which comes to dominate later Sanskrit literature.

Bhasa's style is very simple, sweet and clear. The words are simple and easily understandable. He avoids long compounds and elaborate figures of speech common in the later Sanskrit literature.

Bhasa's style is sometimes obscure; sentences are sometimes elliptical and it is difficult to get at their meaning unless we supply the ellipsis. Sometimes the connection between sentences is left by the poet to be found out by his readers. It is his compressed style that makes some part of Bhasa's writing obscure and the reader in order to clear up the obscurities must have recourse to a comparison with his original, the Ramayana and Mahabharata as well as his own works.

Bhasa's power of depicting irony is especially prominent in *Svapnavasavadattam*, where it is used to intensify the (rasa) sentiment of *vipralambhaṣṅgara* (love-in-separation). A striking example is where Vasavadatta is asked to weave the garland for the marriage of her husband to Padmavati.

#### REFERENCES

1. Kireet Joshi Repository
2. M. R. Kale, *Svapnavasavadatta of Bhasa*