CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The study of Society is of great interest to the students of Indian culture. The literary works of different writers supply us with much information for the construction of socio-cultural history of India.

Bhāsa is the eminent dramatist in Sanskrit literature. The recent discovery of number of dramas attributed to poet Bhāsa, is one of the most important events in the domain of Indology, comparable only to the discovery of Kautilya’s Arthaśāstra.

Bhāsa has to his credit thirteen plays. These plays are discovered and published by Pandit T. Ganapati Śāstri from Trivandrum between 1912 and 1915. These plays are – Dūtavākya, Dūtaghatotkaka, Madhyamavyāyoga, Karnābhāra, Bālacārita, Pañcarātra, Abhiśekanātaka, Urubhangā, Pratimā - Nātaka, Abhimāraka, Cārudatta, Pratijñā and Svapnavāsavadattā. There is a great deal of controversy regarding the authorship of these plays and the date of the author. But after a Careful examination of different similarities lying in these plays Ganapati Shastri came to the conclusion that these plays are from the pen of Bhāsa. Similarities are put forward by G. Shastri in the following manner-

(a) There is a similarity in techniques like in the use of various addressive terms like Bhoh, Aryaputra etc. in almost all these thirteen plays. The entry of a king is announced with the words like ‘utsarata āryah utsarat’ (Svapna Act I, p10;
Pratijñā, Act IV, p121). In almost all these plays oracles are found. The use of curse and promise can be witnessed in these plays. On many occasions to express the depth of the plot elephant is used by the author. But in the use of these techniques the author has discarded the rules of dramatic devices but it has become obvious that these are the works of a same author.

(b) In these dramas the researcher has tried to find a similarity in the use of community of ideas. ‘A particular author takes fancy to a particular idea and can not help repeating the same in more than one place’ (A.D. Pushalkar, Bhāsa a Study, p8). These ideas are- (i) Nārada is described as an expert at lute and fond of instigating quarrels. Tantriṣu ca svaraganan kalahanśca loke; (Abhim, Act VI, sl 11, p167); Aham hi vṛdadhyāyān-antareṣu tantriṣca vairāni ca ghattayāmi (Bāla, Act I, p4). (ii) In each of these plays one can find good friendship among the hero and Viduṣaka, viz, Cārudatta, Abhimāraka, Svapna.

(c) There are similarities in the presentation of the social system. Brāhmanas are given immense importance by the other members of the society.

(d) There are other similarities like the use of metres, language, dramatic personae, dramatic devices, scenes etc. prove that these dramas are composed by a single author. All the play begin with ‘nāndyante tatah praviśati sūtradhāra’.
(e) In all these plays prologue is called **Sthāpanā** instead of **Prasthāvanā** and it is regarded as a remarkable departure from the Classical drama in general.

(f) The **Bharatvākyas** of these plays are almost same being variations of the line, ‘imāmabi mahim kṛtsnām rājasimha praśastu na’

(g) In **Pratijñā** and **Dūtavākya** the name of the Chamberlain is **Badarayana** and in **Svapna, Pratijñā, Abhiṣeka** and **Pratimā** the name of portress is **Vijaya**.

(h) The opening verse of almost all the plays contain what is called **Mudrālambkāra**, a device by which the principal character of the dramas are hinted at.

(i) In almost all these plays the use of the unusual meters like **Daṇḍaka, Suvadana** etc. is very common.

(j) In none of these plays the name of the dramatist is mentioned and the name of the dramas are found at the end of the plays.

(k) Music has taken a prominent position in these dramas.

(l) Generally in Sanskrit dramas ‘Āpastāvat’ is used whenever a person wished to have water for any cause but in these thirteen plays it is stated as ‘imā āpah’.

(m) The prakṛta used in these dramas are very old and unpaninian form of grammar is also found in these plays.

In order to establish the authorship of these plays, Ganapati Śāstri has advanced these following arguments.

During 7th century **Bānābhatta** in his **HarṣaCārita** has complimented **Bhāsa**

(*Sūtradhūra-kṛtārambhaih-nātakai-bahubhūmikai*/
All the characteristics referred to in the mentioned verse as belonging to Bhāsa's dramas are found in these plays. Kālidāsa has borrowed some expressions and ideas from some of these plays. He has also mentioned Bhāsa, Soumillya, Kaviputra as his predecessors in his Mālavikāgnimitra. (Prathitayaśaṣām Bhāsa-saumillya-kaviputrādānam prabhandaḥ-ātkramya vartamānakaḥ kālidāsasya kṛtau katham bahumānah. (Malavikāngimitra of Kālidāsa)

Other references are found in the works of many genius like Daṇḍin (c.6-7th century A.D.). 'Limpatīva tama-āṅgāni vārṣāṭāvājām nabhāh' is also found in Bālacarita and Cārudatta. Vākpati (c.8th century), in his Gauravaha says that he finds pleasure in Bhāsa, friend of fire, the author of Raghuvamsa, Subandhu and Harichandra. (Bhāse jvalanamātīre kuntideve ca yasya raghukare. Saubāndhave ca bandhe harichandre ca ānandah) (Vākpati in Gauravaha)

At about 900 A.D. Rājasekharā mention about Bhāsa.

'Bhāsa-Nātaka -chakre-api chhekai kshitpe parikshitum/ svapnavāsavadattāsyā dāhokokabhunna pāvaka//.'

Thus Bhāsa’s authorship of Svapna is well-known to different scholars. Abhinavagupta has mentioned Bhāsa in many of his works like Dhvanyālokalocana, Abhinavabhārati (‘kvacit krida yathā svapnavāsavadattāyam’). There are others scholars like bhojadeva, Sāradātanaya, Rāmachandra, Gunachandra, Vākpatirāja and lot more who have referred to Bhāsa in many of their immortal works.
Again there are two groups of scholars one group supporting and another refusing to support the discovery. A. Banerjee Śāstrī, K.H. Dhruva, S.M. Paranjape, Dr. Sukthankar, K.P. Jayaswal, J.Joly, M.R. Kale, A.D. Pusalkar, A.B. Keith, M. Wintenitz and others belong to the first group while C.R. Devadhar, K.R. Pisharati, Kuppawami Śāstrī, P.V. Kane, C.K. Raja, Barnette, and others have refused to accept this.

According to the opposers these plays are adaptations or later compositions by other poet. They have put forward some arguments to prove their view. According to them the use of dramatic techniques in these plays are common with any other south-Indian play. They have also mentioned about HarṣaCārita’s commentary where it is mentioned that the specific stage direction ‘nāndyante tatah praviśati suradhrā’ is a peculiarity of South Indian MSS and not a characteristic of Bhāsa alone. To them some of the verses as found in these thirteen plays are not available in Trivandrum Sanskrit Series.

Some have said that these dramas belong to the Chakyars, the actors of the theatre of Kerala. On this they have mentioned that if these DRAMAS are from the pen of Bhāsa than in both Sthāpanā and Prasthābanā the dramatist’s name may come but it is absent so these cannot be the works of the same author. Again they have commented that why these manuscripts are available only in Kerala and not at other parts of the country.

According to Barnette, the eminent scholar, these plays are written by the court poets of the Pandyas or the Pallavas because some rulers of these dynasties have addressed themselves with the title of ‘Rajasimha’.
Some other learned scholars have pointed out that the dramatic personae as used in the character of Duryadhana in the two Mahābhāratian plays viz, Dūtavākya and Pañcarātra are not similar in characteristic.

There are again some scholars who have accepted that some dramas amongst these thirteen are written by a single author and some are other’s composition. Dr. Sukthankar has approved Pratijñā and Svapna to be the composition of Bhāsa and later are not. Dr. Thomas, Dr. M. Lindenau, C.R. Devadhar and others have only accepted Pratijñā, Svapna and PAṆCARĀTRA to be the works of Bhāsa.

After examining all the similarities and arguments both in the support and opposition of the Bhāsa theory it may be said that as some of these dramas belong to Bhāsa than the rest may also be his composition.
(i) **THE DATE OF BHĀSA**

Bhāsa’s date is a vexed question for the students of Sanskrit dramaturgy. Scholars have different opinions regarding the date. According to the scholars, as most of the dramas of Bhāsa are influenced by the two great Epics. Most probably during the 6th century B.C., these epics are practiced by the authors in their compositions. Thus they established Bhāsa’s dramas not much earlier or later than 6th century B.C.

As we all know that Kaytilya’s Arthaśāstra, has served to push the lower limit upto the 4th century B.C. In this Kautilya has quoted one verse from Bhāsa's drama ‘Pratijñā’.

\[
\text{Nabam sarvam śalilai susamskṛtam darbhakṛta-uttariyam/}
\text{Tat-tasya mā bhut-narakam sa gacchet yo bhartr-pindasya}
\text{kṛte na yuddhet}/ (Pratijñā, Act IV, p114, sl 2)
\]

In that particular verse the poet has tried to exhort the soldiers to be true to their salt and fight heroically for their master cause.

As Kautilya belonged to Mauryan era i.e., 4th century B.C. So it may be assumed that Bhāsa may also be belonged to on or before 5th century B.C.

On the other hand, some scholars who establish Bhāsa during Gupta Age i.e., 2nd or 3rd century A.D. and has made this problem more troublesome because then the presence of Bhāsa’s verse in Arthaśāstra is an ambrassing one. According to some scholars the source of Kautilya’s one is not Bhāsa but possibly some smṛtis or Purāṇas those were lost. They have declared that Bhāsa may have taken this verse either directly from Arthaśāstra or from some other source of texts.
Dr. Pushalkar has placed Bhāsa between 5th and 4th century B.C. in Mauryan Age. According to him Bhāsa lived during the reign of Mahāpadmānanda, who was an up starter of Śisunaga dynasty. On this Pushalkar has put forward more instances. According to him the ethos of the Brāhmanical system, glorification of sacrifices and the contemptuous attitude towards the Buddhist and Jains point to a period far off from the origin of the later religious systems. Buddhism and Jainism do not seem to obtain a sway either over the ruling princes or over the public when these plays were written. This places Bhāsa at a point very near the sixth century B.C. (Pushalkar A.D. Bhāsa- A Study, p70).

Some scholars have placed Bhāsa in 400 A.D. as he is prior to Kālidāsa. (Keith A. B- The Sanskrit Drama, p 93). Belief in black magic is found in Abhimāraka. In Kautilya's Arthaśāstra one finds the similar practice (Artha). In the Jātakas one finds reference to the practice of Gambling as it is mentioned in the plays of Bhāsa (Cārudatta, Dūtavākya, Dūtaghatotkaca and Urubhanga).

In the Pratimā-Nātaka of Bhāsa, Rāvana boasts of his learning and enumerates the various sacred texts and scriptures he has read. He mentions the names of Bārhaspatya Arthaśāstra which was studied and used by Kautilya. Thus not only does Bhāsa precede Kālidāsa but Kautilya also.

Some says that Bhāsa is prior to Aśvaghosa, whose date is also under confusion. Scholars have placed him in 2nd century A.D. In his BuddhaCārita there is a verse which is identical with a verse presented in Pratijñā by Bhāsa. Though there are controversies on this that Bhāsa might have taken this from
BuddhaCārita but Scholars like Dr. Śāstri has refused this view and declares that the verse presented in Pratijñā is the original one.

*(Keith A.B. – The Sanskrit Drama pp 95-96).*

According to Dr. Sukhthankar the prākṛt of the CĀRUDATTA is more archaic than that of theśūdraka's Mṛchakatika, in so far that the former contains a number of old prākṛt form that are not found in the later. So from this also it may be assumed that Bhāsa is an old dramatist.

Vakpati the poet of the ‘Prākṛta Ganda’ mentions Bhāsa as among his favorite poets. Pt. Krisnaprasad ascertains that Bhāsa flourished in the 1st century B.C. being the court poet of king Nārāyana of the Kava dynasty Pt. T. Ganapatī Śāstri has placed him before Chanakya (4th century B.C.). Keith and Winternitz placed him a century or two earlier than Kālidāsa (i.e. 4th or 3rd century A.D.) and nearer to Asvaghosa. They said so because of the similarities in language and style of the dramas. The later may belong to 1st or 2nd century A.D. and Kālidāsa probably belonged to 5th century. So Bhāsa may have flourished in between 3rd and 4th century A.D.

In the Indian Theatre by H.N. Dasgupta we can find that he is in favor of Ganapatī Śāstri and has approved Bhāsa's authorship on these dramas.

In almost all these dramas the Nāndī is started with the praise of Lord Biṣṇu. So it can be easily said that he was a strong follower of Biṣṇu. In almost all these dramas he has created a Brahmin character and tried to establish his characters in a proper way. From this it is assumed that he was
also a Brahmin by birth and during his time Brāhmmins enjoyed all the comforts of society (Cārudatta, Abhimāraka).

Some scholars placed him before 7th century A.D. because according to them the Sanskrit plays published recently in Trivandrum as Bhāsa’s were abridgement made during this period.

(Tripathi. R.- History of Ancient India, p 454)

Mostly it can be assumed that Bhāsa belonged to Ujjaini. As he has mentioned this part in almost all these plays and it is assumed that how he is fond of Udayana’s character because, in his Svapna and Pratijṇā he has tried to establish the historicity of Vatsarāja Udayana. Generally, it is found that Udayana gets married to Padmāvati, King Darśaka’s daughter, who belonged to 475 and 450 B.C. (Kale M.R.- SVAPNAVASAVADATTĀ of Bhāsa) than it can also be said that Bhāsa may flourish during these period or may later than that but definitely not prior to this.

Bhāsa has mentioned the inhabitants of Avanti, Magadha, Sauvira as mixed origin in his dramas Pratijṇā, Svapna and Abhimāraka. On the other side Baudhyayana, who flourished during 7th century B.C. has also mentioned this. From this it can be inferred that Bhāsa may belong to 4th or 5th century B.C.

Marriage between maternal and paternal aunt’s side is found in our dramas. In Mahābhārata also it is seen that Arjuna is married to his maternal sister. In the drama Abhimāraka one finds Kuruṅgi’s father who has given much importance to proposals came from her maternal side. So it is assumed that this is an ancient practice, though Manu, the great Dharmasastraṅkāra has denied this view. Manusmriti’s date falls
approximately between 2nd century B.C. and 2nd century A.D. *(Pushalkar A.D.-Bhāsa- A Study, p70)*

Though it can be clearly said that Bhāsa did not belong to the Age of Buddhism but it may be assumed that in very later period Buddhism came into its existence. As the mention of Baudhāya mendicant is found in Cārūdatta. *(Ahām khālu tāvat kartavya-karastri-kṛta-sanketa iva sakya-śramanako nidrām na labhe vamam khālu me-aksi-spandante,Cār, Act III, p81)*. This matter places Bhāsa at a age very near to 6th century B.C.

In these thirteen plays one finds the reference to women education. In the earlier date women could take both vedic and literary lessons but during Bhāsa’s time women were only entitled to take non-formal education. Jātakas refer to dancing girls, courtesans and fallen women as one finds Vasantasenā and Madanikā in the drama Cārūdatta. So it can be assumed that Bhāsa may be placed parallel to Jātakas.

Generally it is said that Südraka’s Mṛcchakatika is based on Bhāsa’s Cārūdatta because there are some uncommon similarities among these two plays. Now if it is assumed that Bhāsa’s Cārūdatta is earlier to Mṛcchakatika then the play must have been written sometime after 350 A.D.

In Pratijñā there are some territories which are defeated by Chandragupta Maurya during 4th century B.C. So from this view point it may be inferred that Bhāsa may flourished during thid period. Professor Keith has also placed Bhāsa on 3rd century B.C. and this date of Bhāsa was supported by most of the critics.

Dandin cites about the merits of Bhāsa’s poetics in his ‘Avanti-sundari kathā’

*Suvibhakta-mukhādyā-āṅgai-vyakta-lakshna-vṛtibhih/*
Pareta-api sthito Bhāsaḥ śarirai-iva Nātaka ih/.

Abhinava Gupta has also mentioned about the Svapnavāsavadattā in Nātyaśāstra ‘kvacit-kṛdā/ yathā vāsavadattāyām/’

In support of the discussions, there is further the evidence of the Epic-sloka, while the deviations from Panini’s grammar and a peculiarities of the prākṛt an unmistakably prove that these plays are pre-classical. Dr. Max Lindenan emphasizes the deviation of these plays from the Nātyaśāstra of Bharata as a further indication of their high antiquity. Against the teaching of these text books on dramaturgy which the classical drama follow, the author of these plays does not hesitate to describe death, and even frightened death scene on stage. This is only one of the several infringements of the rules of Bharata which have been pre-classical epoch.

According to Dr. C.R. Devadhar these thirteen plays are not attributed to Bhāsa, they are a heterogeneous group and therefore can not be regarded as the work the poet of the Svapna i.e, Bhāsa.

Bhāvaprakaśa of Śaradātanaya gives us a passage where he gives a synopsis of Svapna. It reveals that he knows Svapna but it was not the same with TSS.

Ganapati Śāstri and other noted scholars are of the opinion that Bhāsa flourished between 6th and 4th century B.C. On the other side it can be mentioned that Bhāsa may have been flourished during 4th and 3rd century B.C. because during this period our present day epic compilations was highly in practice and as some of Bhāsa’s dramas are based on these two great
Epics i.e., the Rāmāyana and the Mahābhārata. (Winternitz – History of Indian Literature)

Mr. A.S.P. Ayyar placed Bhāsa during 4th century B.C. He sees a number of allusions in these thirteen plays and he was also compared Yaugandharāyaṇa with Čānaka.

Bhāsa has taken source of his dramas from the Mahābhārata, Rāmāyana, Purāṇas and the great legendary stories of India. As Bhāsa has referred to the names of famous historical characters like Udayana, Darśaka, Pradyota etc. in the plays like Svapna and Pratijñā so it is not possible on the part to Bhāsa’s date to exceed 6th century B.C.

These dramas have differed from the rules of Panini. Frequent use of Parasmaipada in place of Atmanepada and transitive and intransitive roots, use of compounds proves that till the composition of these plays Panini’s grammatical rules had not come into its original existence. So it can be again pointed out that Bhāsa is a old dramatist.

After examining all these up-to date facts, it may be assumed that Bhāsa may have flourished about 5th and 4th century B.C. But it is better to leave the question open, till further definite clues are obtained.
(ii) THE WORKS OF BHÄSA

Bhäsa, the eminent dramatist in Sanskrit literature has to his credit thirteen plays. The names of these thirteen plays are- MADHYAMAVYÄYOGA, DÜTAVÄKYA, DÜTAGHATOTKACA, PAÑCARÄTRA, URUBHAÑGA, KARÑÄBHÄRA, BÄLACÄRITA, ABHIŠEKA, Pratimä -Nätaka , PratiJÑÄ, SVAPNAVÄSAVADATTÄ, ABHIMÄRAKA and CÄRUDATTA.

Out of these thirteen plays mentioned t the outset first six are based on the epic Mahäbhärata. BÄLACÄRITA is on the Kṛṣṇa legend; source of ABHIŠEKA and Pratimä have drawn from the great Epic Rämâyana ; PratiJñä and S vapna are based on Udayana legend and most probably during the days of Bhäsa this legend has become more popular. The source of ABHIMÄRAKA and CÄRUDATTA can not be traced definitely. Again Bhäsa’s PratiJñä, S vapna, ABHIMÄRAKA and CÄRUDATTA are based on secular theme.

Bhäsa explores these epic themes with great insight born out of profound understanding of epic characters and situations. In these plays the epic characters have flashed with great dramatic force and an eternal question of peace and war and their relevance to humanity is also shown in these plays. There the dramatist has underlined the terrible consequences of war, its devastating effect on human emotions, values and stresses the importance of peace in human life.

In the chapter III of this proposed dissertation, a discussion has made on these dramas along with the details of their sources, plots, derivations etc.
(iii) STUDIES CONDUCTED ON BHĀSA

Bhāsa, the oldest dramatist of Sanskrit literature has to his credit thirteen plays and in times scholars have made researches on these dramas.

A.D. Pushalkar’s work ‘Bhāsa-A Study’ is the most important one in this field. This book has touched almost all the spheres as found in the dramas of Bhāsa. In this book the researcher has found details about the Bhāsa problem including the date and authorship of these thirteen profound plays. There all the summarized version of the works of Bhāsa is also available.

The book II of this work includes Sociological conditions as revealed in the dramas of Bhāsa. There discussion about the caste-system, geographical areas, marriage-system, rites and rituals, social life, religion etc. So in short it can be easily assumed that this work has done a lot in the domain of Sanskrit dramaturgy to know more about Bhāsa.

Sociology of Sanskrit Drama is another work on Bhāsa by Dr. Bhagirathi Biswas. Though this work is not only based on Bhāsa’s dramas but has has undertakensūdra ka, Kālidāsa, Bhavabhuti, Bhattārāyana and Viṣākhādatta into account. This work is divided in six chapters and in these chapters the researcher has discussed the nature and classifications of Sanskrit drama, which includes the evaluation of Sanskrit drama, its divine origin, religious origin, dialogue, sacrificial rites etc. This work has also discussed about the social aspects like the family, religion, caste, marriage, way of life, culture, language, philosophy and customs etc.
In this respect Dr. Sukhamaya Bhattacharjee's work is also applicable. The name of this work is *BhāsaparikRāma*. It has also touched all the spheres. It has not only touched the sociolocal sides but also other sides like the uses of Prākṛt, upamā, Alamkāra, Rasa, Dhvani etc. in these dramas. He has also discussed the legal system, the social rites and rituals, position of women etc. in this book.

There is another book written by Pt. Chandrasekhara Upadhyaya and Anil Kumar Upadhyaya named *Bhāsa ke Nātaka*. Basically it is BhāsaNātaka cakra and in this book an humble attempt is seen to show the socio-cultural aspect as found in these dramas like caste, marriage etc.