CHAPTER – I
INTRODUCTION

Bhāsa:

Bhāsa, the famous dramatist, can be regarded as the father of Indian drama. Among the Indian dramatists whose work has been preserved to us, probably Bhāsa is the earliest. Kālidāsa refers to him as a famous and popular dramatist in the prologue of his drama thus –

“Prathitayaśasāṁ bhāsasaumillakaviputraśādināṁ
prabandhānatikramyavarṭamānacakaveh kālidasasya kriyāyāṁ kathāṁ
parisadā’asyāṁ bahumānāh.” (Mālvikagmitra)

Bhāsa is mentioned at the first place among the three dramatists viz. Bhāsa, Saumilla and Kaviputra mentioned above. We know very little about Saumilla and Kaviputra whose works are not available to us. Bāna the author of the great prose romance Kādambarī has paid very high tribute to Bhāsa in the introductory verses of the Harṣacarita written by him in the following way –

“Sutradhārakṛṭtāṁbhaināṭakairbahubhūmikaih
Sapatākairyasyo lebhe bhāso devakulairiva.”

We may know from this reference that Bhāsa wrote many plays with a good variety of subject matters and different characters. Critics
like Abhinavagupta, Rāmachandra, Rājaśekhara and others have quoted many verses from Bhāsa’s plays and have mentioned his best work Svapnavāsavadattam by name. Rājaśekhara speaks of this play thus –

“bhāsanāṭakacakreasmin cekaih kṣipte parīkṣītum. svapnavāsavadattasya dāhakoabhūnna pāvakaḥ.”

All these references may perhaps lead us to presume that Bhāsa was a popular dramatist of ancient India highly honoured by poets and critics alike.

**Date of Bhāsa:**

It is rather difficult to say about the date of Bhāsa. Like Kālidāsa and many other ancient writers Bhāsa is silent about his identities. We do not know where and when Bhāsa lived. We have very little informations about the personal history of this ancient Indian poets. Kālidāsa mentioned his name as an earlier and famous dramatists in the prologue of his drama *Mālavikāgnimitram*. So it is clear that Bhāsa was earlier than Kālidāsa. Bhāsa refers to king Rājasingha in the Bharatavākya of Svapnavāsavadaitā. But we do not know who the king Rājasingha is and where he lived and reigned. The references to his kingdom extending from the Vindhya to Himālaya mountain is too vague for identification.
Some scholars say that Chandragupta Maurya is the king referred to here and some of his successor assumed this title rajasinha. We may perhaps say that Bhāsa has never followed the rules of Bharata’s Nātyaśāstra. He has described the death of the hero on the stage in one of his plays which is prohibited in the Nātyaśāstra (na kārya maraṇāṁ range nātyadharma Vijānata)\(^2\) This indicates that he must have lived earlier than Bharatamuni of the second century B.C. The grammatical irregularities and archaic forms found in Bhāsa’s works point to a date when Pāṇini’s grammar had not been universally accepted.\(^3\) Bhāsa in his Pratimānātaka refers to the Arthaśāstra of Brhaspati and not to that of Kautilya.\(^4\) He does not seem to be aware of the existence of Cāṇakya’s Arthaśāstra. The Mahābhārata (Śāntiparva – 59) tells us Brhaspati was the author of one Arthaśāstra who epitomized the original Daṇḍanāti composed by Brahmā. Kautilya too acknowledges Brhaspati as his predecessor as a writer on Arthaśāstra. It follows, therefore, that Cāṇakya’s Arthaśāstra was not so popular and recognized by people in Bhāsa’s time. So it may perhaps be concluded that Bhāsa could not have been late than 370 B.C.

European scholars trace three stages in the development of the Mahābhārata. The first stage consisted about eight thousand verses describing the eighteen days battle between the Kurus and the Pāṇcāla
heroes. The Kurus were represented as virtuous men who were treacherously defeated by the Pāṇḍavas with the help of Kṛṣṇa. This stage must have been completed before the 5th century B.C. From the manner in which Bāṣa has treated the character of Duryadhana in a favourable light in the Urūbhangam and Paṅcarātram and of Karna of Karṇabhāram, it may be assumed that he lived at a time when the first stage of the epic was called Jayam was in vogue and the second stage glorifying the pāṇḍavas has not become popular. This also points to the assumption that the dramatist must have lived not later than the 4th century B.C.

Patanjali, the author of the Vyākaranamahābhāṣya refers to two dramatical works in which the binding of Bāli and killing of Kaṁsa were represented on the stage – “Pratyakṣaṁ Kaṁsaṁ ghatayanti, Bālin ca vandhayanti.” This shows that there was a time before Patanjali of the 3rd century B.C. when death was represented on the stage in a dramatic performance and Bharatamuni’s prohibition of the same was not known to the authors. Bhāsa describes the death of the hero Duryodhana on the stage in Urūbhangam and the death of Daśaratha in Pratimānāṭaka. Considering all the facts mentioned above, Bhāsa’s date may be placed some where in the 4th century B.C. or earlier than that.
**Authorship of the plays:**

The discovery and publication of the thirteen plays ascribed to Bhāsa in the Trivandrum Sanskrit series will go down to posterity as the most epoch-making landmark in the history of Sanskrit drama. Mm. T. Ganapati Shastri in his tour for search of manuscripts found some palm leaf manuscripts in 1909. The manuscripts consisted of 105 leaves in Malayalam characters. He found these manuscripts near Padmanabha Puram. The manuscripts were more than 300 years old, and was found to contain the following ten rupakas:

1. Svapnavāsavadattam
2. Pratijñāyaugandharāyaṇam
3. Pañcarātram
4. Cārudattam
5. Dūtaghaṭotkacam
6. Avimārakam
7. Bālacaritam
8. Madhyamavyāyogam
9. Karṇabhāram
10. Urūbhangam
Two more nātakas viz., Abhiṣekam and Pratimā were discovered later on. A complete copy of another play was found at puttiyal revealing its name as Dūtavākyam. All these manuscripts were in Malayalam characters and over 300 years old. The learned discoverer ascribed the dramas to Bhāsa on the testimony of Bāṇa and Rajasekharā and placed his researches before scholars in 1912 in his introduction to the Svapnavāsavadattā. It is seen that all the total 13 dramas were discovered by the learned scholar.

Works of Bhāsa:

In addition to the 13 Trivandrum plays already mentioned, Kavi ascribes the authorship of Dāmaka and Travikrama to Bhāsa. S. Narayana Sastri adds Ghaṭakarpara to the same list. While Krishnamachariar mentioned Kiranāvali and Udātta Rāghava. We shall try to discuss the 13 plays published by Mm. T. Ganapati Sastri.

The plays have been variously grouped and classified according to their subject matters.

1. Historical or Udayana plays – Svapnavāsavadattā,
   Pratijñāyugandharāyaṇa.
2. Fictional plays – Avimāraka and Cārūdta.
3. **Rāmaṇya plays** – Abhiṣeka and Pratimā.

4. **Mahābhārata plays** – Dūtaghaṭotkacā, Karnaṣṭhāra, Madhyamavyāya and Urūbhanga.

5. **Kṛṣṇa legend** – Bālačarita.

Traditionally most of the scholars agree that all the 13 plays were written by one and the same person. All the plays can be isolated from the classical Sanskrit dramas on account of their techniques. The reasons of the common authorship of the plays may briefly be stated in the following points.

(i) All these plays begin with the stage direction nāṇḍyante tatah pravisati sutradhāraḥ, whereas the classical dramas begin with the nāṇḍi verse.

(ii) The word sthāpanā is used in these plays for the prologue, whereas in the classical dramas the word Prastāvanā is used. Only the Karnaṣṭhāra employs the term Prastāvanā.

(iii) In none of these plays the name of the dramatist is mentioned, whereas in the classical plays the name of the dramatist and his family are given.

(iv) The names of the chief dramatist persons in most of these dramas are mentioned in the opening verse. This is technically called Mudrālaṅkāra.
(v) The epilogues (bharatavākṣy) are almost identical in all the plays by using the verse:

"Imāṃ sāgaraparyantāṁ himavadvindhyakunḍalam
mahimekatapatrāṁkam rājasimhah prāṣāstu nah. (Sv)

The Cārudatta and the Dūtaghatotkaca have no epilogues at all.

(vi) Striking similarity of language and style of the plays. The use of the same imagery, the repetition of the same peculiar words as ko kalo, ka gatiḥ, badam, prathamah kalpah etc. are found in most of the dramas.

(vii) Grammatical solecisms or archaisms (ārsaprayogas) as Tuvam (skt tvam), amhan (asmākam), Khu (khalo) Karia (skt-krtva) etc. are very common in these plays.

(viii) There is monologues (ākāśabhāṣita) where in one person only speaks repeating the speeches of other persons not on the stage and answers them is usual. This device is employed in the Dūtavākya, Avimāraka, Abhiṣeka, Cārudatta, Pratijñāyugandharāyaṇa etc.

(ix) The entry of a person of high rank such as king, a princess or a minister is announced with the identical words “Ussaraha! Ussaraha! Ayya! Ussaraha.” This is found in the Svapnavāsavadautam, Pratijñāyugandharāyaṇam, Pratimānātakam and Ürūbhangam.
A dramatic device called Patākāsthānaka (i.e. sort of dramatic irony) is used in most of the plays. The definition of Patākāsthānaka is given under:

"Yatrārthe cintiteanyasmistallingoanyah prayojyate. āgantukena bhāven patākāsthānakam tu tat."

Close similarity in the above points leads one to infer the common authorship of all these plays.

We may be excused to refer the principal arguments advanced by Mm. Ganapati Shastri in support of his Bhāsa theory in brief:

(i) The techniques of all these plays, such as the commencement of the drama made by the Sūtradhāra, the non-mention of the poet of the introductory part of the dramas etc. shows that the poet lived at a time before the practice of the beginning of the drama with the nāndi and the mentioning of the poet’s name came to be used.

(ii) The numerous grammatical archaisms (ārṣaprayogas) show that the author of these plays should have lived long before Pāṇini.

(iii) Some rules of the Nātyaśāstra are not adhered to in some of the dramas show that the author of these plays was an ancient scholar.

(iv) These plays are characterized by an intensity of Rasa and by a marvelously exquisite flow of language and an all-round grace of poetical elegance common only to the archaic compositions of the sages like
Vālmiki and Vyāsa. These show that the author of these plays was an archaic of renown and lived in times when Sanskrit was the popular language.

(v) Tradition ascribes the authorship of the Svapnavāsavadattā, one of these thirteen plays, to Bhāsa. Therefore, the author of the Svapnavāsavadattā and other closely similar plays should be of Bhāsa himself who has been extolled by Kālidāsa and Bāṇa.

(vi) Kālidāsa has borrowed some expressions and ideas from some of these plays. A poet like Kālidāsa could imitate only a great poet like Bhāsa, who he has highly praised and placed at the head of the ancient poets.

These arguments are on the whole sound, only an exception may be taken to the assertion that Bhāsa is prior to Pāṇini.

Now we propose to discuss in detail, the evidences that have been adduced in favour of and against the authenticity of these thirteen plays.

(i) The great poet Bāṇa (7th century A.D.) pays compliments to Bhāsa in the following verse -

"Sutradhāraṅkṛtārambhaimāṭakairbahubhūmikaih
sapatākairyaśo lebhe bhāso devakulairiva."

Mm. Ganapati Shashtri argues that Bāṇa by using the expression "Sūtradhāraṅkṛtārmbhaiḥ" points out the distinguishing characteristics of
Bhāsa’s plays that they are begun by Sutradhāra. But the opponents of the Bhāsa theory contend that Bāṇa uses the expression Sutradhārakṛtārāmbhaih, because it applies also to temples (devakulaih) to which Bhāsa’s plays are compared. The expression is not used to point out any distinguishing quality of Bhāsa’s plays. Again if the Trvandrum group of thirteen plays answer the description sutradhārakṛtārāmbhaih they do not answer the test indicated by the expressions bahuhūmikaih (with many roles) and sapatākaih (rich in episodes). Again these features of these plays that begun with sutradhāra does not belong to them alone. As Dr. Barnett has pointed out that the Mattavilāsaprāhasana by Mahendravikramavarman (620 A.D.) begins with sūtradhāra. Other plays like the Tapatisahvarana and Subhadrādhananjaya by Kulaśekharavarman (11th century A.D.) also begin in the same way. Hence this particular feature of these plays if not a proof of its antiquity.

(ii) Daṇḍin (6th century A.D.) in his Kavyādarśa quotes the line “Limpatīva tamoangāni varṣatīvānjananan nabahah” which is found in the Bālācarita and Cārudatta.

“limpativa tamoangani varṣatīvānjananī nabahah, asatpuruṣāseveva drṣṭīrīṃsāfalāṇi gata (Bāla-Ist, act slok-14 and Cārudatta 1st Act, sloka-19)

(iii) Vakpati (800 A.D. in his Gaudavaho says that the finds pleasure in Bhāsa, the author of the Raghuvaramśa, Subandhu and Harichandra
“bhasasmi jalanieitte kuntideve a Jasya raghuare saubandhave a 
bandhammi hariyande a ana.ndo (bhasa jvalanamiette kuntideva ca Jasys 
raghuare saubandhave ca bandhe harichandre ca anandah). Herevakpati 
calls Bhasa “friend of fire” and his epithat is significant in many of the 
Bhasa’s plays a conflagration or a fire incident is mentioned.

(iv) Bhamaha (800 A.D.) in his Kavyalankara (chap. IV) illustrates 
Nyayavirodha by describing the incidents in the life of Vatsaraaja. The 
subject of Bhamaha’s criticism is found in the Pratijnatikā. Moreover the 
Prakṛt sentences “āneṇa mama bhādā hado, āneṇa mama pīdā, āneṇa 
mama sudo” in the first act of pratijnatika are in the form of a verse 
“hatoanena mama bhṛata mama putrāh pīṭā mama” by Bhāmaha in his 
discussion on Nyayavirodha. Bhāmaha neither mentions the play nor the 
writer of the play. The subject of Bhāsa’s criticism is also found in the 
Bṛhatkathā. Hence the opponents of the Bhāsa theory argue that Bhamaha 
might have in his mind the Bṛhatkathā when he illustrated Nyayavirodha. 
The passage “hatoanena” etc. might have occurred in the Bṛhatkathā. But 
this argument of the opponents has very little strength or meaning in it.

(v) Vamana (900 A.D.) in his Kavyalankarasutravṛtti (adhi, V. chap. 3) 
quotes an instance of vyajokti in the following verse :-

“Sracaasankagautena Vaṭāvidhena bhāmini 
Kāsapaśpalavenedāṇi sāṣrupaṭi mukhaṇi mama”
This verse occurs in the Svapnavāsavadattā, Act IV. In the same work Vamana quotes “Yo bhatṛpindasya krte na yudhyet.” It is the 4th line of a sloka in Pratijñānātika. Again Vamana in the same work (Adhi. V. Chap. 1) quotes the verse,

“Yāsāri balirbhavati madgrhadehatena
hamsaiścā sārangagaṇaiścā viluptapuravaih
tāsveva pūravabarūḍyayavāṅkuraśu
bījanjaliḥ patati kītmukhāvalidah.”

This verse occurs in the carudatta Act 1 sloka 2 and Mṛcchakaṭīka, Act-1, sloka – 9. The opponents of the Bhāsa theory say that this verse is quoted from the Mṛcchakaṭīka and not from the carudatta, because Vamana also quotes the passage “dyutaṁ hi nāma puruṣasyāśinḥāsan rājyam” which occurs only in the Mṛcchakaṭīka.

(vi) Rajasekhara (9th century A.D.) refers to Bhasa plays in the following verse:

“bhāsanātakacakreapi cchekaih kṣiptaih parikṣitum.
Svapnavāsavadattasya dāhakoabhunna pāvakah.”

In this verse Rājaśekhara clearly remarks that the Svapnavāsavadattā was the best and most popular among Bhāsa’s plays in his time. Hence it can be concluded that the author of the Svapnavāsavadattā is Bhāsa, and the whole group of the 13 plays is the
production of the one and the same author namely, Bhāsa is proved to be the author of the other 12 plays.

(vii) Abhinavagupta (10th century A.D.) in his Bharatanātyavedavivṛti refers to the Svapnavāsavadattā in the passage “Kvacit kridā yathā svapnavāsavadattāyām.” In our svapnavāsavadattā Padmāvatī is showed to play with a ball (Act III). So we can conclude that Abhinavagupta referred to our Sv. (Trivandrum series).

(viii) Bhojadev (11th century A.D.) in his Śṛṅgāraprakāśa refers to the Sv. in the following passage :-

"Svapnavāsavadatte padmāvatīmṛtāśyam draśṭum raja samudragrahakaṁ gatah. Padmāvatīrahitam ca tadavalokya tasyā eva sāyane suśvāpaḥ vā svāsadattām ca svapnavadavāvpe dadarśaḥ svapnāyamānśca vāsvadattābhāvābhāse svapnaśabdena ceha svāpo va svapnadarśanam va svapnāyitam va vivakṣitam."

This is an exact summary of the incidents described in the fifth act of the Svapnavāsavadattā of the Trivandrum group.

(ix) Sarvananda (1159 A.D.) in his commentary on Amarakośa comments on the śṛṅgāra rasa and divides it into three classes and refers to the Svapnavāsavadattā in the following passage thus :-

“trividhā śṛṅgāraḥ dharmārthakāmabhinnah / tatrādyo yathā nandayantyāṁ brahmaṇābhojanam / dvitiyāḥ
In this passage Sarvananda says that the theme of the Svapnavasavadatta is the marriage of Udayana with Vasavadatta. But the theme of svapnavasavadatta of the Trivandrum series, is the grief of Udayana for his wife Vāsavadatta and his marriage with Padmāvatī and not his marriage with Vāsavadatta. Bhattanath Swami argues on this ground that the svapnavasavadatta mentioned by Sarvananda is a play different from that published in the Trivandrum series. It is however possible to answer Bhattanath Swami’s contention. In Sarvananda’s passage, Arthaśṛṅgāra and Kāmaśṛṅgāra is not illustrated by the mention of any play, as Dharmasṛṅgāra and Kāmaśṛṅgāra are. This may happen owing to some mistake in the order of the words in the passage. It may, therefore, be contended that Sarvananda has illustrated both the Arthaśṛṅgāra and Kāmaśṛṅgāra by the same play. For both the varieties of Śṛṅgāra are illustrated by the present Svapnavasavadattā.

(x) Sharadatanaya (12th century A.D.) in his Bhāvaprakāśā defines praśānta nāṭaka and mentions the Svapnavasavadattā as belonging to this class and proceeds to point out the stages in the development of the action corresponding to the five Sandhis mentioned by Subandhu7:
We have seen that five things are mentioned in the Svapnavāśavatattā was rescued and entrusted to the care of Padmāvati, this is the first stage called Nyāsa (we find this in Act 1 of our Sv.) 2. That vatsarāja came to know from the beautiful tilaka on Padmāvati’s face that Vāsavadattā was alive. This is the second stage called Nyāsasamudbheda (this does not correspond to the second Sandhi in our play act – V). 3. That the king exclaimed in deep sorrow “come vāsavadattā, come”. This is the third stage called Viṣṇokti. (This is also found in our play in Act V). 4. That the king having obtained the Lute Ghoṣavatī searched for Vāsavadattā, its beloved companion and talked about her. This is the fourth stage called bijadarsanam (this as well the sloka “ciraprasuptakāmo me” etc. quoted in illustration of the Sandhi is found in our play Act VI). 5. Such words as “kim te bhūyaḥ priyaṁ kuryām” are not mentioned at the close of the drama. This is the fifth stage called Anuddiṣṭasarāhara. (This peculiarity is also found in our play).

The opponents of the Bhāsa theory say that the Trivandrum svapnavaśavatattā is not same as the svapnavaśavatattā mentioned by Sharadatanayya, because there is no correspondence between the second sandhi of the one and the second sandhi of the other. We think that this argument of the opponents is not quite sound. If all the sandhis described by Sarvananda correspond to those in the Trivandrum except only one,
we can reasonably conclude that the play reviewed by the commentator is the same as the one in our possession.

(xi) In a work on dramaturgy called *Nātyadarpana* by Ramachandra and Gunachandra (12\textsuperscript{th} century A.D.) there is a reference to the *Svapnavāsavadattā* with an explicit mention of its author. The reference is as follows:

\begin{quote}
\textit{Yathā bhāsakṛte svapnavāsavadatte śefalikāśilātalamavalokya}
\end{quote}

Vatsarāja :-

\begin{quote}
"Pāḍakrāntani puṣpāni soṣma cedāṁ sītātalam
nūnam kāciddhāśīnā mām drṣṭvā sahaśā gata."
\end{quote}

This verse is not found in the Trivandrum *Svapnavāsavadattā* and therefore Prof. Sylvan Levi concludes that the author of the Trivandrum plays is not Bhāsa. But the absence of a verse or passage in a work cannot be taken as a proof of the work is not authentic. For a verse or passage might be left out by the oversight of a copyist. The verse that is omitted in the Trivandrum *svapnavāsavadattā* has a proper place for it in the play in the first scene of the fourth act. In our present edition the verse is thus inserted after the stage - direction *ubhāvupavisātah*, occurring after the third verse. It may as well be inserted immediately after the stage direction, *tathā kurvanti*, occurring after the second verse.
(xii) Sagarananda in his work on dramaturgy entitled \textit{Nāṭya\lakṣanaratnakośa}, while discussing the manner of transition from the prologue to the main scene makes the following reference to the \textit{svapnavāsavadatta}:

"Yathā svapnavāsavadatte nepathyē sutradhāraḥ utsāraṇam śrutvā pathati aye kathaṁ tapovaneapyutsāraṇā / (vilokya) katham mantri yaugandharāyaṇo vatsarājasyarājyapratyānayanam padmāvatiyajenotsāryate / ityutsāraṇaḥ-śabdo’tra purvakaprayogamutsārya nātakārthasūcaka iti prayogātisayah."

The extract from the \textit{Svapnavāsavadatta} in the above passage does not exactly agree with the introductory portion in the Trivandrum \textit{Svapnavāsavadatta}. Hence Prof. Levi and other opponents of the Bhāsa theory conclude that the Trivandrum \textit{Svapnavāsavadatta} is not the authentic work of Bhāsa. We do not think that this conclusion is acceptable by all. For the two passages are identified in sense though there is some differences in language. Sagarananda does not seem to be a summary of the introductory portion of the \textit{Svapnavāsavadatta}. The passage in our \textit{Svapnavāsavadatta} is fuller in details and written in a more elegant language than the extract in Sagarananda’s work.

(xiii) Abhinavagupta in his commentary on Dhvanyāloka quotes the following aryā as occurring in the \textit{Svapnavāsavadatta} -
“sāncitapaksmakapatam nayanadvāram svarupataḍanena
udhātya sā praviṣṭā hṛdayagṛham me nṛpatanūja.”

This verse is not found in the Trivandrum Svapnavāsavadattā. Therefore the opponents of the Bhāsa theory conclude that there must be another Svapnavāsavadattā of which the Trivandrum Svapnavāsavadattā is altered version. Now it must be admitted that the verse quoted by Abhinavagupta can not have a place in the present edition of our Svapnavāsavadattā because the verse expresses the feeling of a lover when he first sees his beloved. There is no occasion for such an emotion in the present play, inasmuch as its main theme is the sorrow of Vatsarāja for his wife Vāsavadattā with whom he had enjoyed many years of conjugal felicity. It is not, however, necessary to, assume the existence of another Svapnavāsavadattā. The commentator might have made a mistake in mentioning the source of the verse.

Viswanatha Kaviraja (1500 A.D.) in his Sāhityadarpana (Ch. VI) quotes the following verse as occurring in the Bālacarita:

“Utsāhātisayam vatsa! tava balyam ca pasyatah.
mama harsavisadābhyaṁkṛśantam yugapanmanah.”

This verse is not found in the Trivandrum Bālacarita. The commentator of the Sāhityadarpana says that the verse is addressed by Parasurāma to Śrī Rāma. The play referred to in the Sāhityadarpana
evidently deals with the life of Śrī Rāma. The Trivandrum play deals with the childhood of Śrīkṛṣṇa and therefore is a different play from the former. There is no evidence to prove that the Bālacarita from which this verse is quoted was the work of Bhāsa.

In Sanskrit anthologies there are 13 stanzas ascribed to Bhāsa. None of these stanzas is found in the Trivandrum plays attributed to Bhāsa. Ramavtar Sarma and other opponents of the Bhāsa theory make this an argument for denying the authorship of Bhasa to these plays. But this argument is not acceptable. Though none of these stanzas are found in any of the thirteen plays hitherto discovered. Again in these anthologies the names of the authors are often wrongly quoted. The verses attributed even to Kālidāsa and other well-known dramatists are not found in their works. One of these thirteen stanzas that are ascribed to Bhāsa is:

"Peyā surā priyatamamukhamīkṣaṇiyam.
grāhayah svabhāvalalito vikataśca veśaḥ.
yenedamīdrṣamadrṣyta mokṣavartma
dīrghāyurastu bhagavān sa pīnakapāṇih."

This is found in the Mattavilāsaprahasana of Mahendratrivikramavarman, who lived in the earlier part of the 7th century A.D.
Cārudatta, one of the Trivandrum group of plays, has been a subject of sharp controversy among scholars. The close similarity between the Cārudatta and the Mṛcchakatika and many identical and analogous passages in the two plays indisputably establish a genetic relationship between the two plays. This has raised the question which of the two dramas are original. Dr. Sukthankar, Dr. Belvelkar, Dr. Keith and other scholars have dealt with this question and come to the conclusion that the Cārudatta is prior to the Mṛcchakaṭika and is the original on which the later is based. Kane, Reddy, Shashtri, Bhattanath Swami and others take the opposite view and maintain that the Cārudatta is the original, which has been worked up into the magnificent play of the Mṛcchakaṭika by Sudraka. It is difficult to conclude which of the two plays is earlier.

Two Malayalam scholars, A.K. Pisharodi and K.R. Pisharodi have propounded a theory that these thirteen plays are compilations made from different sources by the Cakkyars of Kerala to meet the demand for dramas suitable for the reformed Kerala stage. These Cakkyars are a class of hereditary actors, who stage Sanskrit plays on occasions of temple festivals. Select scenes and acts from these thirteen dramas are reported to have been staged by these Cakkyars. The principal arguments by which the Pisharodies base their theory are – that there was a large demand for
dramas suitable for the reformed Kerela stage. That dramas were compiled to meet this demand. That there is a tradition that such compilations were made in ancient times and that select acts from some of these thirteen plays were staged by the Cakkyars. But where is the evidence to prove that the Trivandrum group of plays are compilations made by the Cakkyars? The above arguments prove nothing regarding the thirteen plays except that select acts from some of them were staged by Cakkyars.

We have thus examined the evidence adduced and the arguments set forth by the protagonists and opponents of the Bhāsa theory. We maintain that the evidence in favour of the Bhāsa theory is much stronger and we are led to the conclusion that the author of the Sv. Group of plays is the ancient poet Bhāsa of great fame in Sanskrit literature.

**Type of Sanskrit drama:**

Sanskrit dramas are classified into ten main types which are known as Daśarūpakāṇi. They are nāṭakam, prakaraṇam, bhāṇa, prahasaṇam, dīma, vyāyoga, samavakārah, vīthi, ihāmrgah and ankhah or utsṛṣṭikāṅka. These types differ from one another in the nature of the hero and other characters, the plot, the length of the play and the sentiments
developed. Nāṭaka and prakarana are fully developed plays with a minimum of five acts while dima and samavakāra with three and four acts respectively. Prahasāṇa has no restriction of acts. Vyāyoga, viṭhī, bhāṇa and utsrṣṭikāṅka are one act plays.

**Plot, Hero and sentiments:**

The most important factors of a Sanskrit drama are the story or the plot, hero and the sentiments. These three have many sub-divisions which contribute for the development of the drama. The story or the plot of the drama may be historical, pauranika and legendary or fiction. The hero may be noble calm and magnanimous (dhīroḍātta) or violent (dhīroḍdhatah) or graceful (dhīralalita) or calm and peaceful (dhīrāśānta). The heroine may be mugdha (shy) and prauda (forward). The sentiments are nine-erotic (ṣṛṅgāra), heroic (vīra), pathetic (karuṇa), furious (raudra), humourous (hāsya), frightful (bhayānaka), loathsome (bībhatsa), marvelous (adbhuta) and quietism (śānta). The nature of these three factors are main criterion of the dramas. We find the description and discussion of characters in the Sāhitya darpana ch. VI.
Srngaarah:

Srngaḥ hi manmathodbhedastadāgamanahetukah
Uttamprakṛtiprayo rasah srnga arena śyate
Paroḍān varjayitvā tu veśyāni cānanurāginim
ālambanāṁ nāyikah syurḍakṣinādyasca nāyakah
Candracandanarolambrotadyuddīpanaṁ mataṁ
bhruvikṣepaktākṣadiranubhāvah prakirttah
tyaktvaugyaṃaraṇālasayajugupsā vyabhicarinaḥ
sthāyibhāvo ratih syāṃvānaḥ viṣṇudaivatah

Again srnga has two divisions:

Vipralamboṣtha sambhoga ityesa dvividho mataḥ.

Hāsyah:

Vikṛtākāravāgveṣacestādeh kuhakadbhavet
hāsyo hāasathāyibhāva śveḥ prathamadaivaḥ
Vikṛtākāravākcestaṁ yamalokyā hasejjanaḥ
 tadatralambanaṁ prāhustaccestoddipanaṁ mataṁ
 anubhāvoaksisankocavadanasmereśadayah
 nīdrālasayāvahitthādyā atra syurvyābhicāraṇaḥ

Hāsyā has six sub-divisions, they are

Smita, hasita, vihasita, avahasita, apahasita and atihasita.
Jyeṣṭhānāṁ smitahāsite madhyānaṁ vihasitāvahasite ca.

ṛṇcānāṁmapahasitāṁ tathātihasitan tadeṣa śādbhedah.

**Karuṇa rasa :**

Iṣṭānaśādaniṣṭāpteh karuṇākhyo raso bhavet l
dhīraiḥ kapotavarṇo’yaṁ katnito yamadaivatah ll

**Raudraḥ :**

raudraḥ krodhaṁstihāyibhāvo rakto rūdrādhidaivatah l
ālambanamaristatra taccestoddipanan matur̄ ll
muṣṭiprahaṁrāpaṁtaranvikrtacchedāvadarāṇaiścaiva l
sangrāmasanbaramādyairasyoddīptirbhavetprauḍa ll

**Vīraḥ :**

uttampraṅṭirvīra utsāhaṁstihāyibhāvakah l
mahendradeivato hemavarnao’yaṁ samudahṛtah ll
ālambanavibhāvastu vijetavyādayo matāh l
vijetavyadicestādyāstasyoddīpanarupiṇāh l
anubhāvastu tatra syuh sahaṁyanveṣanādayah ll
sancarinastu dhṛtimatigavasmṛtātarkarōmāṇcāh l
sa ca dānadharmayoddhairyayāṁ ca samanvāscaturdhiḥ syeṣā ll
Bhāvaṃakah:

Bhayaṃako bhayasthāyibhāvaḥ kālādhibhāvataḥ
strīṇīcaprakṛtīn kṛṣṇo matastattvavrīśāradaiḥ
yasmādutpadyate bhūtīstadarālambanāṁ matam
ceṣṭā ghoratarāstasya bhaveduddīpanāṁ punaḥ
anubhāvo’tra vaivanyagadagadasvarabhāsanām
Pralayasvedaromāṇīcakampadikprekṣāṇādayāḥ

Bibhatsa:

jugupsasthāyibhāvastu bhātsah kathyate rasaḥ
nīlavarṇo mahākāladaivato’yamudāḥṛtaḥ
durgandhamāṇīsudhiramedāṃsyālambanāṁ matam
tatraiva kṛmipātādyamuddīpanamudāḥṛtam

Abdhūtah:

Abdhūto vismayasthāyibhāvo gandharvadaivataḥ
pītavarno, vastu lokātiganālambanāṁ matam
guṇānāṁ tasya mahimā bhaveduddīpanāṁ punaḥ
stambhah svedo’tha romāṇīcagadgadasvarasaṅbhramāḥ
tathā netravikāśadyāḥ anubhāvāḥ prakīrtitāḥ
The heroine or Nayika plays an important part of the drama similar to that of the hero. She must be the wife of hero (Svīyā) or belong to another (anyā) or be a Sādhāraṇā.

“atha nayikā tribhedā syāt svānyā sādhāraṇā strīti l
nayikāsāmānyagunārbhavati yathāsambhavairyuktā” ll

(SD. III)
Vidūṣaka:

The characteristics of Vidūṣaka is—

"Kusumavasantadhyabhidhah karmavapureṣabhāsādyai
hāsyakarah kalaharatirviduṣakah syatsvakarmajnyah" II

Viduṣaka is the hero’s confident and devoted friend, a Brahmīṇī, ludicrous in dress, speech and behaviour, baldheaded, with projecting teeth and red eyes and his greed for food.

Viṣa:

Another important, common and interesting character is Viṣa. The characteristics of Viṣa should be given here—

"sambhoginasampadvitastu dhurtah kalaiakadesajnyah.
vesopcārakuśalo vāgni madhuroath bahumato goṣthyam."

He is skilled in the arts, music, and fond with ways of prostitute.

Minister (Amātya):

Amātya is one of most important character in Sanskrit drama. The amatya as of good family of hight intelligence, skilled in affairs human and divine and devoted to the interests of the country.
Kañcukīya :

Kañcukīya is an old Brāhmin, worn out in the service of the king, but still mentally alert and skilled in his business of conveying the royal orders in the palace. The characteristics of Kañcukīya is —

"Antahpuracaro vṛdho vipro gunagananvītah.

Sarvakāryathkuśalah kañcukiyetyabhīdhiyate.” (S.D. VI

There are some characteristics of Sanskrit dramas. They are Nāndi, Sutradhāra, Sthāpanā and bharatvākyam.

Nāndi :

Every Sanskrit plays begin with a benedictory verse technically called Nāndi. The dramatist invokes the blessings of his favourite deity, and prays for the removal of all obstacles on the way of performing the play and protect the actors, actresses and the audience. The word nāndi is derived thus — “nandanti devah asyāni prayuktyānī eti nāndi.” It is defined as —

“āsirvacana-sanyuktā stutiryasmāt prayujyate.

deva-dvija-nṛpādinam tasmannāndīti samjñītā.”

This is purely a prayer and does not form a part of the plot of the play. The Sutradhāra recites the nāndi, leave the stage and enters again to introduce the play “Sutradhārapathenādhiṁ”. All the dramas of Bhāṣa,
the stage direction “nāndyante tatah pravisati sutradhārah” occurs first and then a verse which resembles nandi is recited by the Sutradhāra. It is implied that Bhāsa regarded some kind of prayer or worship offered behind the screen before the entry of Sutradhār as nāndī. This verse in his plays usually mention the names of some main characters and sometimes refer to some incidents in the plot suggesting the source of the play.

**Sutradhāra:**

Sutradhāra is the stage manager who is well-versed in the rules of dramaturgy. He is capable of training the actors and conducting the performance.

Sutraṅ dharati dhārayati ca iti sutradhāra,

or sutraṅ prayogānusthānāṁ dhārayati

nirvāhayati iti sutradhārah.

He comes to the stage only to recite the Nāndī and introduces the play to the audience.

**Sthāpanā:**

Every Sanskrit play there is a sthāpanā or prastāvanā conducted by the stage-manager. This is also called Āmukh. The sthāpanā or āmukha has been defined thus –
Generally the sutradhara mentions the names of the plays and the author but Bhāsa does not mention them. Sūtradhāra simply introduces the characters who are to enter the stage first. He also hints to the purpose of their coming to the stage.

**Svagatokti:**

Svagatokti is in which one person only speaks—

"Asrāvyāṅ khalo yad vastu tadiha svagatam matam."

**Bharatvākyam:**

Every Sanskrit drama ends with a verse expressing a general wish for the welfare of the people and the king under whose patronage the play is first staged. This verse is called Bharatvākya. It is recited by one of the actors on the stage. The name Bharatvākya is given after the name of Bharata, the founder of Indian dramaturgy.
We have not seen the Prastāvanā in the dramas of Bhāsa instead he has used the word sthāpanā which is to some extent different from the Prastāvanā.

Fotenote:

Dima:

Māyaendrajālasaṅgrāmakrodhodbhrāntādicesṭitaih 1
uparāgaśca bhūyiṣtho ṇimah khyātetcivattakah 1
angī raudrarasastatra sarvairangani raśāh punah 1
catvāroankā mata neha viśkambhakapravesākau 1
nāyaka devagandharvayaksaraksomahorangāh 1
bhūtapretapiśācdadyāh sādasyatyantamuddhatah 1
vṛttyah kaiśikīhīnā nirvimarśāśca sandhayah 1
dīptāh syuh śaḍrasāh śanṭhāsyasṛngāravarjītāh 1

Ihamrgah:

Ihamṛgo misravṛttascaturankah prakṛtitah 1
mukhapratimukhe sandhi tatra nirvahanaṁ tatha 1
naradivyāvaniyamau nāyakapraitīnāyakau 1
khyāto dhiroddhatāvanyār gūḍbhāvādādayuktākṛta 1

Vithi:
Vithyāmeko bhavedankah kaścidekoatra kalpyate l
akāśabhāṣitairūktaścitraṁ pṛtyuktimāśritah ll
sucayed bhūriśṛṅgarāṇi kincidanyān rasānprati l
mkhanirvahano sandhi arthapraṅtayoakhilāh ll

**Prahasana:**

Bhāṇavatsandhisandhyaṁlāsyamāṅgāṅkairvinirmitam l
bavetprahasanaṁ vṛttan nindyaṁānī kavikalpitam ll


mahimekatapatraṅkāṁ rājāsiṁha Prāṣastu nah” ll

(SV Act VI, sloka 19)

2. Urūbhang (page 498 by C.R. Devadhar) (shows the death of Duryodhana)

3. Gramatical irregularities from Sv. –
   a) Ṣlisyate – page 10
   b) Pratijānim – page 20
   d) The prākṛt dialects used by Bhāsa are also very ancient.

4. “bhoh kāsyapagotroasmi sāṅgopāṅgaṁvedamadhyye, mānavīyaṁ
dharmaśāstraṁ, māheśvarāṁ yogāśāstraṁ bārspatyamarthaśāstraṁ,
prācetasaṁ śrādhakalpaṁca”. In this passage, which is addressed by Rāvana to Rāma, the Nāṭyaśāstra of Medhatithī is mentioned.

5. Kiṁ vaksyatiti hṛdayam pariśankitaṁ me – this repetition is found in sv. – Vi, 15 and Abhi, IV, 7.

6. gacehati purah śaṁṛāṇa dhāvati paścādsāṁsthitāṁ cetāh.
   cīnāi śukamiva ketaḥ prativātaṁ niyamānasya.” is an echo of –
   “hṛdayencha tatrangaṁdvidhābhuteva gacehati l
   yathā nabhasi toye ca candralekāṁ dvidhākṛtā” lī (Bāla – Act – I,
   śloka 16

7. Svapnavāsavadatfākhyamudāharanamatra tu l
   ācchidya bhūpad vyasanāṁ devī bhāgadhikākare ll
   nyastā yatastato niyāsāṁ mukhasaṅdhirayaṁ bhavet l
   niyāsasya ca pratimukhe samuddheda udāhṛtam ll
   padmāvatyaṁ mukhaṁ viśksya viśeṣakavibhūṣitam l
   jīvatyāvantiketyetad jhyātaṁ bhūmibhujā yathā ll
   utkanthitenā sodvegaṁ bijoktirnāmakīrtaṁ ll
   ehi vāsavadatteti kva yāsītyādi dṛṣyate ll
   sahāvasthitayorekaṁ pṛāpyānyasya gaveṣanam ll
   darśanasparśanālapairetatsyad bijadarśanam ll
   (atrodāharanam) ciraṃprasuptah kāmo me bīnayaṁ pratibodhitah l
   tāṁ tu devīṁ na paśyāmi yasyā ghoṣavaṁ priyā ll
kin te bhūyah priyaṁ kuryāmiti vāgyatra nocyate II

Tamanuddīṣṭasahāramityāhurbharaṇādayaḥ II

8. Nātakamatha prakaraṇaṁ bhānavyāyogasamavakāraḍīmaḥ I

ihāmṛgankvithyaḥ prahasanamiti rūpakāni daśa II

9. Nātakaṁ khyātavṛtttaṁ syātpancasandhisamanvitam I

vilāśāddharyādiguṇavadyuktaṁ nānāvibhūtibhiḥ II

sukhaduḥkhasamudbhuti nānārasanirantaram I

paṃcādikā daśaparāṣṭratāṅkaṁ parikūrtitaḥ II

prakhyātavasvāno rajarśirdhirodāttaḥ pratāpavān I

divyot‘ha divyādivyo vā guṇavānprāydo mataḥ II

Prakarana – bhavetprakarane vṛtttaṁ laukikaṁ kavikalpitaṁ I

śṛṅgāroṅgī nāyakasto vipro’mtyo’thavā vanjik II

sāpāyadharmakāmārthapra dhīrapraṣāntaḥ II

nāyika kulajā kvāpi, veśyā kvāpi dvayaṁ kvacit I

Bhāṇah – bhāṇah syād dhūrtacarito nānāvasthāntarātmakaḥ.

Vyāyogah – khyātetyārtto vyāyogah svalpastrījanasaṁyutaḥ I

hīno garbhavimarśābhyāṁ narairbahubhirāśrītaḥ II

ekāṅkaśca bhavedastrīnimittasamarodayaḥ I

kaisikivṛttirahitaḥ prakhyātastatra nāyakaḥ II

Samavakārah – vṛtttaṁ samavakāre tu khyātaṁ devāsuraśrayam I

sandhayo nirvīmarṣāstum trayo’nkastatra cādime II