CHAPTER ONE

FEMALE FIGURES IN ANCIENT INDIAN SCRIPTURES

Men and women constitute a whole. Both are equal part of the society. From time immemorial this concept of equality of man and woman have been recorded in the great scriptures of ancient India. The Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad says - 'Before the creation of this phenomenal universe the first born Lord of all creatures divided his own self into two halves, so that one half should be male and the other half female'. This is indicative of the fundamental equality of man and woman. The development of a society depends solely upon the mutual relationship between man and woman. So, if the female figures, the half part of the society are not given required importance in developing a society, then the society cannot develop at all in true sense. Looking from this angle, it may not be out of point to say that the status of the female figures can be one of the judging factors in determining the quality of a society.

Indian women have a glorious past. The Vedic literature, the Epic literature, the Dramatic literature, the Dharmaśāstras, the Purāṇas etc. are furnished with invaluable information regarding the position held by the female figures in the society in those periods. It is

1. sa vai naiva reme tasmādekañī na ramante sa dvitīyamaicchat/
   sa haitāvānāsa yathā strīpumāṁsaṁ sampariśvaktuṁ sa imāmevaṁānaṁ
   dvedhāpātayat tataḥ pātiśca pātīṁ cābhavatāṁ //
   Br. U, 1.4.3.
a matter of fact that the status of the female figures has not been found same in all the periods. It has been changing time to time. If in one particular period it is found very high, in the next period it is found to be of degraded nature. This is perhaps because of the changing nature of the society. The society cannot become static, it is always changing: new structure, new beliefs, new outlook and attitude are a continuous process in the society, which naturally have an impact on the position of the people living in the society. It is perhaps, due to this reason that the female figures in ancient India are not found to enjoy equal treatment with men in the different ages. So, the status of the female figures in a particular period reflects the social system of that particular period. Though it is undeniable that the female figures in ancient India, in all the ages, are not seen as holding satisfactory position, yet the position of the female figures, as depicted in ancient Indian scriptures as a whole, presents a remarkable bright picture of Indian women. Regarding the female figures in ancient Indian scriptures we shall confine our study within the Vedic literature, the Epic literature and the Dharmasāstras.

IN THE VEDIC PERIOD

Let us first have a glimpse over the position of the female figures in the Vedic age. During the Vedic age, women enjoyed a very exalted status in various fields of the society, which, perhaps, the female figures in this twenty first century is yet to reach. The Vedic society was mainly a patriarchal society. Though the people longed for sons, yet the people of the Vedic society always welcomed
the birth of a daughter. It is also found that, parents not only desired the birth of a learned son, but they had also longing for the birth of a learned daughter. The Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad enjoins some rituals for fulfilling such purpose. It is stated that if any one wishes to get a learned and long-lived daughter, then both the husband and wife should cook rice with sesame and eat this after adding some ghee. This doubtlessly proves the realistic view of the people for the all-round development of family as well as society. It also proves a very developed system of female education existed at Upaniṣadic period. That the women in the Vedic period were highly learned is evident from the fact that a good number of female seers like Viśvavārā, Ghoṣā, Lopāmudrā, Sikatā, Nivāvari etc. composed Vedic hymns. Vāgāmbhrī, the female seer, realised Herself as indifferent from Paramāsakti and Parabrahman and described the nature of Brahman in the famous “Devīśūkta”. During the Vedic age, female figures belonging to Brāhmaṇa, Kṣatriya and Vaiśya castes were initiated with the holy thread, recited the Gāyatrī mantra, set up the holy fires (ādhāna) in home and they used to study the Vedas and other books for ascertaining knowledge. In this context, Prof. Jogiraj Basu while quoting the Smṛti writer Yama says, “In ancient times women were initiated with sacred thread at the upanayana ceremony, and they had the right to recite the Veda and the Sāvitrī mantra”.

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2. atha ya icchedduhitā me paṇḍitā jāyeta sarvamāyuṇādirītī /
tilaudanam pācayitvā sarpsimtamāṇīyātāmsvārau janayitavai //
Br.U, 6.4.17.

3. VP, P- 197
Another Smṛti writer Hārita has quoted the same verse inserting the word - ‘purākalpe tu nārīnāṃ’ in place of ‘purākalpe kumārīṇāṃ’. From this view of Hārita it may be observed that at the period there were two types of female figures, viz., Brahmavādinī and Sadyavadhū. The initiation ceremony was existent among the Brahmavādinīs. They used to protect the holy fire. The Sadyavadhūs were given marriage after initiating with the sacred thread- “sadyavadhūnām tu upasthite vivāhe kathañcit upanayanaṁ kṛtvā vivāhaḥ kāryaḥ”. This statement may be a proof of the fact that female figures of the three upper classes were given equal treatment with men with regard to initiation with the holy thread.

Panini, while explaining the derivation of some words like Kaṭhi, Kalāpī, Vahvrchī etc., has composed some sūtras. Woman, learned in the Kaṭha recension of the Veda is known as Kaṭhi; similarly women who have studied the Vahvrca and Kalāpa recension are known as Vahavṛcī and Kalāpī respectively. So, from the above sūtras of Pānini it is indicated that, female figures in ancient India, had full right to study the Vedas.

In the Vedic age, a large number of lady teachers also were there. This can be known from the fact that while differentiating the two pairs of words Āchāryyā and Āchāryyyāṇī, and Upādhyāyā and Upādhyāyāṇī Pānini gives the meaning of Āchāryyā and Upādhyāyā as lady teacher, the later two words as the wife of a teacher. Later on, Patañjali in his Mahābhāṣya has mentioned the names of Apiśāli and Auḍamedhā, while giving the instance of the two words
Achāryyā and Upādhyāyā. A woman who has studied and learnt a special branch of grammar composed by the Apiśāli family was known as Apiśalā. Likewise, the girl students of a lady teacher Audamedha were called Auḍamedhī.

In the whole field of Vedic Saṁhitā, Brāhmaṇa and Upanisadic literature, references of numerous erudite ladies are there. The name of Vācaknavī Gārgī stands prominent among such learned women. She has become immortal for her scholarly debate with Yājñavalkya on the highest knowledge of the Brahman recorded in the Brhadāraṇyakopaniṣad. At the court of king Janaka there used to occur discussion and debate on the highest truth in which large number of scholars and sages used to participate. Once there happened the famous discourse between Yājñavalkya and other sages. When other learned sages were defeated by Yājñavalkya, Gārgī challenged him: and consequently began a scholarly debate between them. In their philosophical discussion, both Gārgī and Yājñavalkya were proclaimed as equally competent.

In the Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad another erudite lady viz., Maitreyī is met with. She was the wife of Yājñavalkya. At the moment of renouncing this world Yājñavalkya wished to divide his wealth between his two wives, Maitreyī and Kātyāyanī. Here Maitreyī’s reply was “yenāhaṁ namṛta syāṁ tenāhaṁ kiṁ kuryām”? Maitreyī was

5. Br. U, 2.4.3.
not satisfied with the material wealth which does not give her immortality; she rather enquires about the ultimate truth, the knowledge of which will give her immortality. Yājñavalkya was very much pleased with the spiritual inclination of Maitreyī, his dear wife and accordingly enlightens her on the highest knowledge of the Ātman.

In later age, we have also the reference of Ubhaybharatī, the wife of Maṇḍanmiśra, who had a scholarly debate with Śankarācārya, the great founder of the Vedānta school of philosophy.

Besides studying and teaching, women also proved their proficiency in dancing, vocal music, instrumental music etc. It is stated repeatedly that music and dance were the works of women – “nṛtyāṁ gītāṁ strīnāṁ karma.” In the thirtieth chapter of the Śukla Yajurveda, nearly seventy profession of that period is mentioned. Eight out of seventy professions were reserved for female figures. These were cloth-washing, wicker making, making scented material, preparing collyrium, making sword sheath, puppet making, dying and embroidery which undoubtedly proves the efficiency of the female figures of the period in extra curricular activities.

That the system of bestowing military education among the women was current at that age is clearly proved by some Rgvedic
hymns. In the Rgveda the heroic deeds of Viśpalā, the wife of king Khela is really astonishing. Once upon a time while she had a fierce battle against the enemy soldier then she experienced serious injury on her thigh. As a result her injured thigh has been cut off and an artificial iron-made thigh was replaced in her body by the doctors, but her injury could not stop her from battle. Another brave, fighter woman was Mudgalānī, who had been capable to defeat her husband’s enemy in a fierce fighting. Her courage and heroic battle has been beautifully depicted in the Rgveda.

Thus, from the above discussion, it is seen that an advanced and all-round female education system was prevalent during the Vedic age. The female figures in the Vedic age will remain a source of inspiration to Indian woman forever.

Marriage, which is regarded as one of the ten major duties by the Hindu lawgivers, was recognised in the Vedic age. The Vedic people regarded marriage as an important socio-religious duty. From the Rgvedic marriage hymns the depth and purity of marriage and an exalted position of the female figures at the home and in the society may be comprehended. Addressing the bride it is stated in this sūkta, “Be an empress over your father-in-law, be an empress over your mother-in-law, be an empress over your husband’s sister, be an empress over your husband’s brother.” In the Vedic society it is

9. RV, I, 116.15.
10. RV, X, 102.2.
11. RV, X, 85.45.
considered that a man is not fully born and incomplete until he is not married. An unmarried person had no right to participate in Vedic rituals. Again the sacrificer had to perform the sacrificial duties along with his wife. The importance of a wife in the sacrifice is clearly mentioned in the following statement “The wife is half of the sacrifice.” In every sacrifice a performance termed “patri saṃyāja” was held, in which the wife of the sacrificer had to recite Vedic mantras and there she is found to occupy a very significant position.

The role of female figure as a housewife was really appreciating in the Vedic age. According to a Vedic passage, the wife is the companion friend of a man. The husband and the wife are the compliments of each other. In this context, a dictum of the Atharvaveda may be cited which enjoins that whatever the husband or the wife does separately should be combined together so that they may create a single world of their own through joint effort. The wife was considered so much indispensable and important that in a Rgvedic hymn it is stated that she herself is the home and dwelling.

Though marriage was regarded as an important socio-religious
task in the Vedic period, still references also are there which show that it was not obligatory on the part of the female figures. The name of Vācakanavī Gārgī may be cited in this context, who remained unmarried and led her life as a Brahmacārini. It seems that child marriage was not current at that period. Girls were given marriage at a matured age. This is evident from a Rgvedic hymn, which described a maiden as blooming with youth and pining for a husband. Monogamy appears to have been the ideal, but instances of polygamy are also there. Yājñavalkya, the great seer had two wives viz, Maitreyī and Katyāyanī.

Regarding the law of inheritance, it is laid down in the Śāntahitās that the female figure had no right to inherit the property of her father. But this is applicable only when a woman had brothers. A brother-less maiden had the right to inherit the property of her father.

Thus, the above-mentioned brief study of the various aspects regarding female figures in the Vedic age reveals that women occupied an exalted status in the Vedic period. They enjoyed considerable freedom at home and in the society as well.

IN THE EPIC PERIOD

Coming to the epic period it can be observed that the great

18. RV, X, 85.22.
19. tā strīyāḥ nātmanaścāistā na dāyasya caśātā - S. Br, 4.4.2.13.
20. RV, I, 124.7.
tradition of the status of the female figures remains almost the same. In the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata, the two immortal national epics, a galaxy of female figures are seen who attained perfection in domestic life as well as in social life. The following may be cited as an example in this regard-

“ahalyā draupadi kuntī tārā mandadarī tathā/
apāñcakanyā smaret nityam mahāpātakanāśanam”//

What a great ideal had been set up by these women due to which their names are remembered with high regard till today and will be remembered forever also.

Let us first have a look over the position of female figures in the period of the Rāmāyaṇa. In that age, daughters, like sons, were treated with great affection. The childless king Lomapāda adopted king Daśaratha's daughter Śānta and nourished her with affection and attention.

Regarding the education of female figures it is seen that like the Brahmavādinīs of the Vedic age, ample instances of Brahmavādinīs in the Rāmāyaṇa are also found. The name of Anasūya may be cited as a magnificent example of Brahmavādinī. Anasūya, the wife of the great sage Atri, spent her whole life in deep meditation and attained high spiritual perfection21. Another celebrated female ascetic is Śramaṇī Śabari, a low-caste woman.

Śabarī, the ascetic, has been depicted in the Rāmāyaṇa as having reached the highest upliftment and was being honoured by great ascetics also\(^\text{22}\).

At the age of the Rāmāyaṇa female figures, like their male counterparts regularly used to offer their Vedic prayers in both morning and evening. For example, in many places, in the Rāmāyaṇa, Sītā is delineated as offering her daily Vedic prayers\(^\text{23}\).

According to the system of the Vedas, an unmarried or a widower had no right to perform a sacrifice. A man had to perform Vedic ritual along with his wife. This system was current at the time of the Rāmāyaṇa also. It is stated in the Rāmāyaṇa that during Sītā's banishment, Rāma, desirous to perform the Rājasūya sacrifice, built the golden image of Sītā for attaining the status of sacrificer\(^\text{24}\).

It is also seen that in the domestic life the husband and wife equally worked as a unit. Mutual love and respect between the couple was the base of their relation. The wife was a true partner of her husband in prosperity as well as in adversity. Such a relationship is found between Rāma and Sītā. When Rāma is determined to go into exile for fourteen years in keeping the promise of his father Daśaratha, he exhorts Sītā to stay in the royal palace. But Sītā

\(^{22}\text{Rām,3.73,26-27.}\)

\(^{23}\text{Rām,5.15, 48.}\)

\(^{24}\text{Rām,2.27,7.}\)
expresses her firm resolve to go with Rāma claiming that the wife alone is entitled to share the fortune of her husband. This speech of Sītā reminds us of the Vedic ideal of inseparable conjugal relation.

Lakṣmaṇa, will remain in the heart of Indians as an ideal obedient younger brother, who sacrificed all earthly pleasure, only to perform the duty of a true brother. But, on the other side, he has failed to give justice to Urmilā, his wife, who spent the long fourteen years, the great part of her life, being separated from her dearest one. Here Rabindranath Tagore, has aptly described ‘Urmilā’ as ‘Kavye Upeksita’, who never found to express her grievance to her husband regarding this. Here, Urmilā has been able to prove herself as an ideal wife, who can sacrifice herself for the cause of greater interest and represents the eternal sacrificing nature of Indian womanhood.

During the period of the Rāmāyaṇa, monogamy appears to have been the ideal though instances of polygamy also are there. Dasaratha, the king of Ayodhyā had three spouses viz., Kauśalyā, Kaikeyī and Sumitrā.

In the Mahābhārata also, various references can be met with, which give a true picture about the status of female figures in the contemporary society.

25. Rām, 2.27,4-6.
It appears that in the period of the Mahābhārata, people used to welcome the birth of a daughter. Moreover, she was regarded as the goddess of prosperity of the householder.  

As regards the existence of female education it is observed that female figures got equal opportunity in the field of education like that of men. In this connection, the names of Sulabhā, Vidulā, Draupadī etc. may be cited. Sulabhā, a princess belonging to the clan of Rājarṣi Pradhāna, was a Brahmavādinī. She was a great scholar in various branches of learning such as yoga, samādhi, mokṣa etc. The Udyogaparvan records the fiery discourse of queen Vidulā to her son Sañjaya. Being defeated by the Sindhus, he was leading a miserable life with his wife and mother. Then Vidulā reproached him for his cowardice and inaction and reminded him of the duties of Kṣatriya. Her famous statement "muhurtam jvalitāṁ śreyah, na tu dhūmāyitaṁ ciram" reminds us of the story of a great heroic mother.

In the third parvan of the Mahābhārata, the discussion between Draupadī, Yudhiṣṭhira and Bhīma is found, where Draupadī quotes a conversation between Bali and Prahlāda, and Bṛhaspatinītī.

The system of initiation of female figures, which was a regular
feature in the Vedic period, seems to be in vogue in the age of the Mahābhārata also. Here a famous authority may be quoted - “It is mentioned in the Vanaparvan of the Mahābhārata that a brāhmaṇa initiated Kuntī, the mother of the Pāṇḍavas with the Atharvavedic Gāyatrīśirasamantra, after adorning her with the holy thread.

At the age of the Mahābhārata the role of female figure as a housewife was praiseworthy. It is depicted that a house without the housewife is not a house indeed and consequently it appears like a forest for the householder. Moreover, both the husband and wife shared their happiness as well as sorrow. The wife was a true partner of her husband in every walk of life. In this context, the name of Gāndhārī may be cited, who for the sake of her blind husband Dhṛtarāṣṭra covered her eyes for the whole life and remained deprived of enjoying the beauty of the universe willingly, which is undoubtedly unparallel and remarkable. Another great lady was Sāvirī, who does not hesitate even to approach the God of Death (Yama) for the life of her dead husband Satyavān and ultimately her irresistible desire wins over the God of Death. Sāvitrī will remain, forever, to us, as a source of great inspiration in overcoming the most challenging problems.

30. “tatāstām anavadyāṅgīṁ grāhāyāmāsa sa dwijaḥ/
mantra grāmaṁ tadā rājan atharvaśiras śrutam//
Mahā, vanaparvan, 305, 20, quoted in the Veda Paricay,
P. 198.

31. na grhaṁ grhaṁ ityāhur grhiniṁ grham uchyate/
grhaṁ tu grhiniṁ-hēnam aranyasaḍsṛsaṁ matam//
Mahā, Śāntiparvan, 144,6.

During that period, polygamy was a common custom; but polyandry was exceptional. Here, the rare example of Draupadī is met with, who had been married with the five Pāṇḍava brothers. But this happened only in order to obey the words of Kuntī, the mother, who commanded her sons saying ‘Enjoy all of you, that which you have obtained’.

The custom of ‘sātī’ was there at the time of the Mahābhārata. Mādevī, the second wife of Pāṇḍu died in the funeral pyre of her husband. But at the same time enough evidences of widows surviving after their husband’s death also are met with. The names of Kuntī, Uttarā, the wife of Abhimanyu, and the wives of Ghaṭotkaca and Droṇa may be referred to in this connection. Thus, it appears that the custom of ‘sātī’ was not obligatory for female figures in the period of the Mahābhārata.

The system of widow remarriage was in vogue at that time. It can be gathered from the statement that if a widow remarries, her sons, from the second marriage, will be considered to be fully entitled to offer oblations to the Gods and manes.

Thus from the above discussion about the position of female figures in the society during the period of the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata it appears that female figures enjoyed more or less an

33. kutīgatā sā tvanavekṣyā putrān provāca bhuṅkteti sametya sarve/
    paścāca kuntī prasamikṣya kṛṣṇām kaṣṭam mayā bhāsitamityuvāca//
    Mahā, 1,206,2.

34. ‘punarbhurapi sā kanyā saputrā havyakavydā’ - Mahā, 13,55.7.
IN THE SMRTI PERIOD

During the period of the Smrtis, the position of female figures in society in comparison with the Vedic and epic period, seems to have been gradually deteriorated. During that period, it appears that, female figures were denied the right to study the Vedas, to utter Vedic mantras and to perform Vedic rites. Manu has given the verdict against a woman’s authority of holding sacrifice independently. According to Manu-“There is no separate sacrifice for the female, no vow or no fast. By serving their husbands only they can attain heaven”\(^{35}\).

It seems that the female figures were not given expected freedom at that period. Here, the well-known dictum of Manu - “A woman is protected by her father during childhood, by her husband during youth, and by her sons during old age. She is never fit for freedom”\(^{36}\). In another verse it is stated that neither the girls, nor the maiden, nor the old woman should perform the domestic works independently\(^{37}\). But here, it is also to be remembered that centuries intervened between the Rgvedic age and the period of Manu. So, it

\begin{align*}
35. & \text{nasti strīṇām pṛthag yajño na vratam nāpyupasitam /} \\
& \text{patiṁ śūśrūṣaṇe yena tena svargye mahīyate // Manu, 5,155.} \\
36. & \text{pitaḥ rakṣati kaumāre kartā rakṣati yauvane/} \\
& \text{rakṣanti sthāvire putrāḥ na strīsvātantram arhati// Manu, 10,3.} \\
37. & \text{Manu, 5, 147.}
\end{align*}
may be that the above injunction was made from the point of security of woman. Because references also are there in the Manusmṛti which show that female figures were treated with due honour at that period. In the Manusmṛti it is also stated that, where the women are honoured, there the Gods rejoice, but where they are not honoured, all religious acts become fruitless. Mutual relationship between the husband and the wife also has been given importance. It is stated that, the family where husband and wife are mutually happy, auspiciousness always will be there. In another occasion while enjoining the duty of a husband, Manu says that a husband must be true to his vow of conjugal fidelity-the violation of which is the greatest sin he can commit. The recognition of a large variety of marriages and different kinds of sons and provisions for them, show the practical and liberal attitude of Manu and his consideration for the female figures in general.

Regarding the right of property or inheritance of the female figures in the period of the Smṛtis, it may be said that female figures had full right over the strīdhana. According to Manu strīdhana consists of six kinds of gifts received by the woman- (1) adhyāgni-gifts given before the nuptial fire, (2) adhyāvāhanika-gifts given on the bridal procession, (3) prītidatta-gifts given by the husband as token of love, and (4-6) gifts received from her brother, mother or

38. yatra nāryastu pujyante ramante tatra devatāḥ/yatraīstastu na pujyante sarvāstāraḥpāhalāḥ kṛyāḥ // Manu, 3.56.
39. Manu, 3.60
father. In another stanza it is stated that the property earned by woman, excluding the strīdhana, would belong to her husband. This statement hints at the lower position of the wife in that period compared to the husband. Regarding the right of property of women, many Hindu law-givers, especially Yājñavalkya has dealt with in details, which reveals that the rights of property or inheritance, with regard to the female figures were given a great importance and Hindu law-givers of that period were well-concerned with the fact that economic stability of the female figures is a great factor for the all-round development of the society.

It appears that in the Smṛti period, the status of female figure, as a mother was really appreciating. The mother had been regarded with high esteem in the society. Here, a famous verse from the Manusmṛti can be cited as an example - “One Āchāryya is ten times more venerable than a Upādhyāya, a father a hundred times more than the Āchāryya, but the mother a thousand times more than the father.

Thus, a review of the status of female figures as recorded in the Smṛti period, reveals the mixed attitude of the Smrtikāras towards the female figures. Though the female figures were treated with honour, still to some extent, their liberty had been reduced.

41. adhyagnyadhyavāhanikaṁ dattaṁ ca prātikarmaṇi/ bhrāṭr maṁś pitṛprāptaṁ śāḥvīdharaṁ strīdhanaṁ smṛtam// Manu, 10.194.
42. Manu, 8.416.
43. upādhyāyān daśācāryya āchāryyaḥ śataṁ pitā/ sahasrantu pitnmattā gauravaṁ bāṁcirente // Manu, 2.145.
CONCEPT OF SANSKRIT DRAMA WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO WOMAN

The present part is intended to focus on the concept of Sanskrit drama with special reference to woman.

The 'Drama' is termed as 'Rūpaka' in Sanskrit dramaturgy. Rupakas are of ten types. 'Nāṭaka' is one of the ten varieties of 'Rūpaka'. Viśwanātha, the famous rhetorician states that 'Rūpaka' is termed so, as because here the particular character, which is to be performed, is attributed on the actor and actress.

Regarding the origin of Sanskrit drama, various divergent views are there among the Indian and Western scholars. The Nāṭyaśāstra of Bharata probably records the most ancient view in this regard. The Nāṭyaśāstra is the earliest known work on Sanskrit dramaturgy. The generally accepted date of the Nāṭyaśāstra is the second century B.C. In the Nāṭyaśāstra the divine origin of Sanskrit drama is met with. It is stated here that Brahmā created drama by taking passages for recitation from the Rgveda, songs from the Sāmaveda, gestures from the Yajurveda and emotions from the Atharvaveda. The drama has been created by taking materials from the four Vedas; hence, it is called the Fifth Veda or the Nāṭyaveda. This description about the origin of the Sanskrit drama is undoubtedly a legendary story. But probably, it can be inferred from

44. tadrūpāropāt tu rūpakan-SD, Chap.VI.
this that in the third or second century B.C the idea of composing the
drama or performing the drama has taken a well-furnished form in
India.

The Western scholars on the other hand, ordained different
theories about the origin of Sanskrit drama. Some of these theories
are the theory of Greek origin, origin of Sanskrit drama connected
with vernal festivities, Ridgeway’s theory of dead worship, Piśchel’s
theory of puppet play, the theory of shadow play etc. But, perhaps,
none of these theories can adequately indicate the earliest source of
Sanskrit drama.

Further, it may be mentioned that many oriental and western
scholars have found the Indian source, while giving their opinions on
the origin of Sanskrit drama. According to this view the Ṛgvedic
Saṁvāda - hymns are the earliest sources of Sanskrit drama. A total
number of twenty Saṁvāda-hymns are met with in the Ṛgveda, which
have been composed in the style of dialogue. Some of these hymns
viz, Yama-Yamī Saṁvāda, Purūravas-Urvaśī Saṁvāda etc. are full of
dramatic sentiment. In the opinion of Maxmuller, Keith etc. these
dialogue hymns are the parts of a full-shaped ancient drama, and
probably these types of dramatic performance were connected with
some ritualistic observance. The reference of dramatic performance is
also traced in the Brāhmaṇa literature, where a dialogue between the
Adhvaryu and the seller of soma creeper in connection with the
description of soma sacrifice is found.
The mention of the word ‘Sailuṣa’ denoting an actor is found in the Rāmāyaṇa, where Sītā rebukes her husband Rāma by saying that just as a Sailuṣa gives away his wife in the hand of other person, likewise Rāma is wishing to bestow Sītā to another’s hand. Pāṇini has mentioned the root ‘naṭa’, having the meaning of Nāṭya. It appears that this nāṭya has gradually become the rūpa, i.e., rūpaka of the dramaturgy.

Bharata is the pioneer who gives a comprehensive idea about the Sanskrit rūpaka and different types of rūpakas along with their characteristic features. After Bharata, many rhetoricians of the later ages have given their opinions in this regard and attempted to establish their own views. Some say that there are ten rūpakas, while some others opine that the number of rūpakas is twelve. But the opinion of Bharata about the types of rūpaka has been unanimously accepted in the field of Sanskrit dramaturgy. Bharata classifies rūpaka into ten varieties viz., Nāṭaka, Prakaraṇa, Anka, Vyāyoga, Bhāṇa, Samavakāra, Vīthī, Prahasana, Dima and Ihamṛga. Bharata also deals in detail about the characteristic features of these types of rūpakas. Let us have a look on the characteristic features of these rūpakas as found in the Nāṭya-śāstra of Bharata.

45. Sailuṣa iva māṁ rāma pare dātumicchatī-Rām, Ayodhyākāṇḍa, 30.8.
46. nāṭakaṁ saprakaraṇāhko vyāyoga eva ca/
   bhāṇa samavakāraścā vīthī prahasanaṁ dimah//
   ihamṛgaścā viṁśeyādaśeṁa nāṭyalaksane - Nāṭya, 18,2-3.
Nāṭaka is a kind of rūpaka, the plot and hero of which should be famous. The hero of nāṭaka should be born of cultured family, endowed with good qualities, belong to the dhīrodātta group, powerful and desirous of fame. There should be aṅka, praveśaka, avasthā, kārya and vindu in a nāṭaka, and also different types of rasa and bhāva⁴⁷.

While giving the characteristic features of prakaraṇa Bharata says that, the plot of the prakaraṇa should be imaginary and the life story of a merchant or a minister or a brāhmaṇa may be interwoven in it. The heroine of the prakaraṇa may be a veśāstrī or a kulastrī. There are also slaves, viṭās, and rogues of various kinds in the prakaraṇa⁴⁸.

Aṅka is the third variety of rūpaka. It is also termed as utṣṛṣṭīkāṅka. It is an one act rūpaka, the subject matter of which is to be renowned. Two types of saṁdhis are there in the aṅka viz, mukha and pratimukha. The predominant sentiment of this rūpaka is karuṇa (pathetic)⁴⁹.

The plot of vyāyoga is to be drawn from a famous story and the hero may be a divine being or a king. It is an one act play in which the heroic sentiment predominates⁵⁰.

⁴⁷. Nāṭya, 18, 10-13.
⁴⁸. Nāṭya, 18, 48-59.
⁴⁹. Nāṭya, 18, 94-100.
⁵⁰. Nāṭya, 18, 90-92.
Bhāṇa is of two types, where the hero is describing his own experience and where the hero is describing the experience of others. Ākāśabhāṣita is also there with the gestures. The number of act is one, and characters like vita and dhūrta are also there in the bhāṇa.\[51\]

Samavakāra is a three act rūpaka, the plot of which is based on the story of the Gods and demons; and the hero should be renowned and udātta. Here the number of hero is twelve. Difficult metres is to be used in this type of rūpaka.\[52\]

Vithī is another type of rūpaka in which the number of character may be one or two. There are thirteen types of vithyaṅgas in this variety of rūpaka.\[53\]

Prahasana may be of two types viz., śuddha and prakīrṇa. In the śuddha prahasana, humorous speeches of brāhmaṇas and ascetics are met with. In the prakīrṇa type there are the characters like courtesan, servant, viṭa, saṭṭha etc. The plot of the prahasana is based on a famous story, which is full of pride. Vithyaṅgas are also there in the prahasana.\[54\]

Dima is a kind of rūpaka in four acts, the plot of which is to be

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52. Nāṭya, 18, 63-76.
53. Nāṭya, 18, 112-114.
54. Nāṭya, 18, 103-106.
famous. The hero is renowned and udātta. Here all types of rasas excepting the śṛṅgara and hasya can be met with. Two types of vr̥ttis are there in this rūpaka viz., sāttvati and ārabhaṭṭī.\(^55\)

The tenth and the last variety of rūpaka is ṭhāmṛga, where the hero is a divine personage, and the heroine also is a divine lady. In ṭhāmṛga, heroic sentiment and vr̥tti are there, and the story ends with the union of the hero and the heroine.\(^56\)

Dhanañjaya, the author of Dasarupa is of the view that, vastu, neta and rasa are the three differentiating elements, which distinguish the ten rūpakas from one another.\(^57\) Vastu is the plot of the drama, neta is the hero and rasa is the sen constituent parts of a drama. But th important in the development of the

HEROINES IN SANSKRIT DRAMA

The Nāṭyaśāstra of Bharata presents a comprehensive and full treatment about the various types of heroines and other female characters, which can be met with in the different types of rūpakas.

\(^{55}\) Nāṭya, 18, 84-88.
\(^{56}\) Nāṭya, 18, 78-82.
\(^{57}\) vastu netā rasasteṣām bhedaḥ- Dr, 1.11.
While mentioning the characteristics of the nāṭaka Bharata does not clearly highlighted on the type of heroine that may appear in a nāṭaka. But as the plot of the nāṭaka should be based on a well-known story, so naturally a historical connection comes with regard to the heroines of the nāṭaka also. Besides, a careful observation of the famous Sanskrit nāṭakas reveals the gentle, calm and quiet and highminded nature of the heroines of the nāṭaka.

According to Bharata’s Nāṭyaśāstra two types of heroines are there in a prakaraṇa viz, Kulīṇā and Gaṇīkā. In some prakaraṇa, only the housewife is the heroine; while in some other, the prostitute alone may be the heroine. There are also some prakaraṇa, where both the housewife and the courtesan may also be met with as the heroine. Viswanātha, the author of Sāhityadarpana also follows the views of Bharata.

As regards the heroine in the bhāṇa no reference is found in the Nāṭyaśāstra. But according to Viswanātha, the description of courtesan is naturally intended in the bhāṇa.

Regarding the heroine of the prahasana, Bharata holds that both the maid servant and the courtesan may be the heroine in the prahasana.

58. Nāṭya,18,50-52.
59. SD, VI,226.
60. SD, chapter-VI, P.512.
61. Nāṭya, 18, 105.
In the utsṛṣṭikāṅka the description of the wailing of the female figures are largely found. Thus it appears that the crying heroine has a prominent role in this type of rūpaka\(^6\).

According to Bharata the heroine of the Thāmṛga should be a divine lady\(^6\). Dhanañjaya, the author of Daśarupa\(^6\) and Viśwānātha also follows the same view\(^6\).

Regarding the heroine of the vyāyoga Bharata remains silent. He only says that the number of women is very little in the vyāyoga\(^6\).

However no mention about the heroine of the rest three rūpakas i.e., vīthī, dīma and samavakāra is found in the Nāṭyaśāstra.

Bharata in his Nāṭyaśāstra says that people in this world always wish to get more and more happiness and women are the ultimate source of happiness. That means without the association of the women happiness cannot be attained. Besides this women are of having different nature\(^\). Thereafter, Bharata proceeds to describe various types of female figures having different nature and known by

\[\begin{align*}
62. & \quad \text{Natya, 18, 95-96.} \\
63. & \quad \text{Natya, 18, 78 \& 81.} \\
64. & \quad \text{Dr, III. 74.} \\
65. & \quad \text{SD, VI. 246.} \\
66. & \quad \text{Natya, 18, 90.} \\
67. & \quad \text{Natya, 22,99.}
\end{align*}\]
different names such as devārīśā, asuraśā, gandharvaśā, rākṣasaśā, nāgaśā, śakunaśā, piśācaśā, yakṣaśā vyālaśā naraśā, vānaraśā, hastirśā, mṛgāśā, matsyaśā, usṣṭraśā, makaraśā, kharaśā, śrīkaraśā, hayaśā, mahiṣaśā, ajaśā śvānaśā and gorśā. The characteristic features of each of these types are also dealt with, in detail in the Nāṭyaśāstra of Bharata

In another place, Bharata has mentioned eight types of nāyikās (heroines) in accordance with their attitudes towards their husbands or heroes; they are vāsakasajjikā, virahotkaṇṭhitā, svādhīnavartṛkā, kalahāntaritā, khaṇḍitā, vipralabdha, prositavartṛkā and abhisārikā. That type of heroine is called vāsakasajjā, who being decorated by her friends, waits in the bridechamber for the union of her husband. The wife who is being eager of the arrival of her husband, and even then he cannot come due to some unavoidable circumstances is become sorrowful, and she is called virahotkaṇṭhitā. Svādhīnavartṛkā is a kind of heroine, whose husband always remains by her side being attracted by her attachment, beauty and merit. That type of heroine is known as

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68. Nāṭya, 22,100-101.
69. Nāṭya, 22, 102-144.
70. tatra vāsakasajjā cā virahotkaṇṭhitāpi vā/ svādhīnavartṛkā cāpi kalahāntaritāpi vā// khaṇḍitā vipralabdha vā tathā prositavartṛkā/ tathābhisārikā caiva jñeyastvaśtau tu nāyikā// Nāṭya, 22,211-212.
71. Nāṭya, 22,213.
72. Nāṭya, 22,214.
73. Nāṭya, 22,215.

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Kalahāntaritā who leaves her hero out of anger, and later on becomes repentent and sorrowful. Khaṇḍitā is a type of heroine, who feels grief when her husband comes near to her with the mark of enjoyment with another woman. When the husband does not meet his wife by giving the hint of his arrival, then that lady, feeling insulted, is called vipralabdhā. That type of love-lorn wife is known as proṣītavartikā, whose husband resides at a distant place for accomplishing various works. And lastly the abhisārikā is a heroine who being excessively effected by the desire of her love goes to the abode of her lover by her own will.

In another place Bharata classifies the heroines into four types basing on their qualities. They are viz., 1. divyā (divine lady), 2. nṛpapatni (wife of the king), 3. kulastrī (house wife) and 4 gaṇikā (prostitute). Further on the basis of different characteristic features these heroines are also subdivided into four types, such as dhīrā, lalitā, udāttā and niṣṭā. Divyā and rājāṅgana (nṛpapatni) are attributed with the qualities of dhīrā, lalitā, udāttā and niṣṭā. In the kulaāṅgana (kulastrī) type of heroine, the qualities of niṣṭā and udāttā are met with. Lastly, the gaṇikā heroine is possessed of the

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74. Nāṭya, 22, 216.
75. Nāṭya, 22, 217.
76. Nāṭya, 22, 218.
77. Nāṭya, 22, 219.
78. Nāṭya, 22, 220.
79. Nāṭya, 24, 23.
81. Nāṭya, 24, 25.
82. Nāṭya, 24, 25.
qualities of lalitā and udāttā\textsuperscript{83}.

Bharata also gives a comprehensive account of different types of heroines in the context of delineating the heroines residing in the inner apartment of the kings. The names of such heroines are as follows—Mahādevī, devī, svāminī, sthāpitā, bhoginī, śilpakāriṇī, nāṭakīyā, nartakī, anucārikā, pāricārikā, saṅcārikā, preśaṇacārikā, mahattarī, pratihāri, kumārī, sthavirā and āyuktikā\textsuperscript{84}. An elaborate account of the characteristic features of these heroines is also met with in the Nāṭyaśāstra\textsuperscript{85}.

The Nāṭyaśāstra acquaints us with the information about the gestures of the heroine, which are also known as the ornaments like bracelet, ear-ring etc.\textsuperscript{86} These ornaments or alaṁkāras, suggestive of the erotic sentiment of the heroines at the youth, have twenty varieties such as, ḥāva, bhāva, helā, līlā, vilāsa, vicchitti, vibhrama, kiliṅcitam, moṭṭāyitam, kuṭṭamitam, vivvoka, laṭitam, viṅrtam, śobhā, kānti, ḍīpti, mādhuryam, dhvairya, prāgalbhyam and oudāryam. Out of these kinds the first three are designated as āṅgaja, the next ten as svabhāvaja, and the last seven as ayatnaja\textsuperscript{87}.

Bharata, the author of the Nāṭyaśāstra also dealt exclusively on

\begin{footnotes}
\item[83] Nāṭya, 24, 26.
\item[84] Nāṭya, 24, 29-32.
\item[85] Nāṭya, 24, 33-64.
\item[86] Nāṭya, 22, 4.
\item[87] Nāṭya, 22, 5.
\end{footnotes}
the usage of language by the various female figures that may found a place in a dramatic piece. According to him the language of the female characters is to be prākr̥ta\textsuperscript{88}. But he also admits that the queens, courtesans and female artists may speak in Sanskrit under certain circumstances\textsuperscript{89}. Viśwanātha, in his Sāhityadarpaṇa also gives a detailed account on the usage of language by the various female figures that may found a place in a dramatic piece. According to him, the speech of the female characters belonging to the upper class is to be saurasenī prākr̥ta, and in the song of these ladies the mahāraṣṭrī prākr̥ta should be used\textsuperscript{90}. He further says that in the speech of female ascetics of high order Sanskrit is to be employed- and in the opinion of some in the speech of the queen, the minister's daughter and the courtesans also Sanskrit may be used\textsuperscript{91}.

The above discussion on the reference of female figures in the ancient-Indian dramaturgic works especially in the Nāṭyaśāstra, the monumental work, reveals that the female figures were given due importance. A large variety of the heroines, their classification based on different criteria such as beauty, characteristic feature, quality, behaviour towards the heroes etc. and further the gestures and

\textsuperscript{88.} strīṇīcajātiṣu tathā nāputiṣake prākr̥taṃ yojyaṁ—
Nāṭya, 17, 37.

\textsuperscript{89.} Nāṭya, 17, 39.

\textsuperscript{90.} saurasenī prayoktavyā tādṛṣṭīnāṁ ca yoṣitāṁ /
āṁsāmeva tu gāthāsu mahāraṣṭrī prāśitaṃ prayojayet //
SD, VI, 159.

\textsuperscript{91.} saṁ skṛtaṁ saṁprayoktavyāṁ liṅginīśūttamāśu ca /
devī mantrisutā veśyāsvapi kaiścīttathidotam //
SD, VI, 167.
language of the heroines—all these probably show the realistic outlook of the dramaturgists towards the female figures.

**BHĀSA AS A DRAMATIST**

Bhāsa, the famous dramatist in the domain of Sanskrit literature has been known from a long period of time in some literary works only. Till the early years of the twentieth century, appreciating remarks about the plays of Bhāsa have been met with here and there. But all these have not been taken by the scholars as sufficient to prove the identity of the plays ascribed to Bhāsa. However, in the year 1909 Mahamahopadhyaya Ganapati Shastri came across a bundle of manuscripts containing a number of ten plays viz., Svapnavāsavadatta, Pratijnayaugandharāyaṇa, Pañcarātra, Cārudatta, Dūtaghaṭotkaca, Avimāraka, Bālacarita, Madhyamavyāyoga, Karṇabhāra and Ḫrubhaṅga. After subsequent survey he could be able to find out three more plays viz., Dūtavāyka, Abhiṣeka and Pratimānāṭaka. Thereafter in the year 1912, Ganapati Shastri published all these thirteen plays. From a careful observation of these dramas, he came to the conclusion that these were the lost dramas composed by Bhāsa. This discovery draws the attention of many scholars and also gives rise to various contradictory views regarding the authorship of Bhāsa, and probably, till now it is a matter of great curiosity and controversy of the researchers in the field.

The existence of a renowned dramatist, named Bhāsa may be established from the works of famous writers in the domain of
Sanskrit literature such as Kālidāsa, Bāṇabhaṭṭa, Rājaśekhara etc.

Kālidāsa in the drama Mālavikāgnimitram, remembers the celebrity of his great predecessor Bhāsa through the speech of sūtradhāra- prathitayaśasāṁ bhāsa saumillakaviputraṁ prajāṁ pravandhānatikramya vartamāna kaveḥ kālidāsasya kṛte katham vahumānaḥ. Here the expression ‘prathitayaśasāṁ’ indicates that, before the time of Kālidāsa, Bhāsa was established as a famous dramatist.

In the 7th century A.D. Bāṇabhaṭṭa in the prastāvanā of his Harṣacar ita states that just as the fame achieved through the establishment of a temple by the architect, having many stores and banner; in a like manner Bhāsa attained fame by composing his plays beginning with the sūtradhāra, having many roles and rich in patakāsthānakas. Here Bhūna appears to mention the noteworthy features of Bhāsa’s plays.

Coming to the 9th century A.D. Rājaśekhara appreciates Bhāsa in his ‘Sūktimuktāvalī’-

bhāsa- nāṭaka- cakre’pi chekaih kṣipte parīkṣitum/
svapnavāsavadattasya dāhaka’bhūnna pāvakaḥ //
i.e., when all the dramas of Bhāsa were subjected to a fire-ordeal, only Svapnavāsavadatta was remained unburnt by fire. Here the excellence and popularity of Svapnavāsavadatta is revealed among the group of plays composed by Bhāsa.

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In the Nāṭyadarpaṇa of Rāmacandra and Guṇacandra, the reference of Bhāsa’s Svaṃavāsavadaṭṭa is found- “yathā bhāsakṛta svapnavaṃsavadaṭṭa śeṭhālikātalamavalokyā vatsaraṇaḥ-”.

Śāradātanaya in his Bhavaprakāśa mentioned the plot of Svapnavāsavadaṭṭa while giving an illustration of prasaṅtanāṭaka, and cites a verse from the sixth act of this drama-

ciraprasuptahkāṭma me vinaya prativodhitah/
taṃ tu devīṁ na paśyāmi yasyā ghoṣavatī priyā //

Thus form the above mentioned statements and appreciating remarks, it is apparent that before Kālidāsa, there flourished a great dramatist named Bhāsa, whose works had immense popularity among the masses.

Though Bhāsa’s name has been mentioned here and there in the works of various writers, still the name of Bhāsa as an author of the thirteen plays was unknown till the discovery of these dramas by Mahamahopadhyaḥya Ganapati Shastri. After a critical examination of these plays mentioned earlier in the discussion, Ganapati Shastri has come to the conclusion that all these plays are the works of a single writer and that writer is none other than Bhāsa of great repute. The grounds put forwarded by M.M.G. Shastri regarding the common authorship of these plays may be summarised as follows-

(1) All the thirteen plays commence with the stage direction “nāndyante tataḥ praviṣati sūtradhāraḥ”, and then the sūtradhāra enters in the stage and reads out a benedictory verse. This cannot be
termed as the nāndī verse. Generally in the classical Sanskrit dramas sutradhāra enters after the recitation of the nāndī verse in the nepathya (from behind the screen).

(2) In all these plays, excepting the Karṇabhāra, the word sthāpanā is used for the prologue, whereas in the other Sanskrit dramas the term prastāvanā is used.

(3) In most of these dramas viz. Svapnavāsavadatta, Pratijñāyaugandharāyaṇa, Paṇcarātra and Pratimānāṭaka, the names of the prominent actors and actresses are mentioned in the technical device called mudrālāṁkāra.

(4) All these plays are silent about the name of the dramatist, whereas in the classical Sanskrit plays the name and family history of the dramatist in many cases are given.

(5) In all these plays, disregard is shown to certain rules found in the Nātyaśāstra such as (a) deaths and slaughter and fighting on the stage, (b) bringing of water on the stage, (c) sport and sleep and (d) calling aloud from a distance. Death of Daśaratha in the Pratimānāṭaka, Vālin in the Abhiṣeka and Duryodhana in the Īrūbhāṅga are shown on the stage. Slaughter of Cānura, Muṣṭika and Kaṁsa, and the violent struggle between Kṛṣṇa and Ariṣṭa in the Bālācarita are shown on the stage. Sport and sleep are found in the Svapnavāsavadatta, and the description of calling aloud from a distance can be met with in the Madhyama-vyāyoga and the Paṇcarātra.

(6) In these plays grammatical solecisms or archaïsms (ārṣaprayogas), disregarding the rules of Pāṇini are very common. As
for example the use of the words dharante, rakṣante, āprcchāmi etc. may be referred to.

(7) Uses of similar scenes, similar sentences and description are met with in these plays. As for instance Vālin, Duryodhana and Daśaratha see holy rivers after their death, and divine carriages come to lift them. In some of the plays the expression “ussaraha, ussaraha ayya! ussaraha”, is applied in many places. The description of sunrise, fighting and battlefield are found in a similar way in many of these plays.

(8) In most of these plays a dramatic device called patākāsthānakas is met with. For example, in the Pratijñāyaugandharāyaṇa, Mahāsena, the king, while discussing on the suitable match for his daughter Vāsavādattā, asks his queen, “Whom of these, do you think, is worthy of our daughter?” Then a chamberlain enters with the word ‘Vatsarāja’. He brings the news of Vatsarāja’s capture, and out of joy, he cannot restrain himself and bursts out ‘Vatsarāja’.

On the basis of these similarities, it is probably evident that these dramas may be the works of a single dramatist, on the basis of which, perhaps, Ganapati Shastri is found to be of the opinion that Bhāsa is the author of these thirteen plays. However, his assertion perhaps, depends chiefly on the statements of Bāṇabhaṭṭa and Rājaśekhara; which have been mentioned earlier.

But the opinion of Ganapati Shastri have not been accepted unanimously by the scholars in the field of Sanskrit literature.
Scholars like Belvalkar, Dhruba, Dikshitkar, Kale, Keith, Pushalkar and many others accept the theory of Bhāsa’s authorship, while Barnett, Devadhar, Kane, A.K. Pishareti, K.R. Pishareti, C. K Raja, Hiranand Shastri and some others refuse to accept the theory.

The antagonists of the Bhāsa theory state that as in none of these thirteen plays the name of Bhāsa is mentioned, the authenticity of Bhāsa is not proved. Further, some stanzas, quoted in some works, as of Bhāsa are not found in the Trivandrum plays. So, the opponents argue that these are not the works of Bhāsa. They opine that, as these plays have been discovered at Trivandrum, so the peculiar characteristics of these plays in comparison with other Sanskrit plays, may largely be the features of South Indian books (manuscripts); because these types of peculiarities have been met with in the South Indian manuscripts of the works of Kālidāsa etc. also. Thus, taking into account the similarity of name found in the ‘Svapnavāsavadatta’, quoted by Rājaśekhara and the ‘Svapnavāsavadatta’ belonging to the group of plays discovered by Ganapati Shastri, it will not be appropriate to come at a conclusion.

So, without any final proof, the views of any of the group cannot be fully accepted. But as the opinion of the anti-Bhāsāites are not based on strong footing, so the assertion of Ganapati Shastri has been more or less acceptable and on the basis of this Bhāsa has been accepted, by and large, as the single author of these thirteen plays.
Regarding the date of Bhāsa also different scholars hold different views and it is surprising that an interval of over fifteen hundred years between the earliest and latest dates have been ascribed to him by different scholars and that period is in between the sixth century B.C. to eleventh century A.D.

The internal evidence furnished by two of Bhāsa’s plays viz., Pratijñāyaugandharāyaṇa and Svapnavāsavadatta show the upward limit that can be assigned to Bhāsa. These two plays are based on the Udayana story, and the three kings figure there. They are Udayana, Pradyota and Darśaka, who are historical personages. The fact that Udayana and Pradyota were contemporaries can be known from the genealogies given in the Viṣṇu Purāṇa; while the Buddhistic and Jaina works informed that Pradyota and Ajātaśatru were contemporaries of Buddha and Mahāvīra. All the above views are advocated by Rhys David.

From the Vāyu and other Purāṇas, it can be known that Darśaka was the immediate successor of Ajātaśatru. Thus it seems that Udayana, Pradyota and Darśaka were all contemporaries. And according to Vincent A. Smith the dates of the reigns of Darśaka and his immediate successor are in between 475 to 450 B.C. So, following the opinion of Vincent A. Smith it may be said that Bhāsa, the author of these two plays did not flourish before sixth century B.C.

The earliest reference of Bhāsa is found in the Mālavikāgnimitram of Kālidāsa. So, Bhāsa might have been flourished before Kālidāsa.
But there is a controversy also regarding the date of Kālidāsa himself. Some say that Kālidāsa is a poet of the Gupta age, and he flourished in between the last part of the fourth century A.D. and the first part of the sixth century A.D. Again some other scholars are of opinion that Kālidāsa flourished in the first century B.C. As the date of Kālidāsa is a disputed matter, so the later limit of the date of Bhāsa also cannot be fixed. Here, it is evident that Bhāsa cannot flourish at a date later than Kālidāsa.

The thirteen plays of Bhāsa stand unique from the viewpoint of divergence of subject-mater. The Rāmāyaṇa, the Mahābhārata, popular ancient stories and folk-tales are the principal source works of Bhāsa’s plays. Among these, the Abhiṣekanāṭaka and Pratimāṇāṭaka are based on the story of the Rāmāyaṇa. The Dūtavākyya, the Dūtaghaṭotkaca, the Karnabhāra, the Īrubhaṅga, the Madhyama – vyāyoga and the Paṇcarātra are based on the story of the Mahābhārata. The plot of the play Bālacarita is drawn from the Harivarhaṇa, a supplementary part of the Mahābhārata. The theme of the plays the Pratijñāyaugandharāyaṇa and the Svapnavāsavadatta is taken from the famous Udayana story; whereas Avimāraka and Cārudatta are based on legendary stories. Let us have a glimpse over the thirteen plays of Bhāsa –

1. Abhiṣekanāṭaka: – The drama Abhiṣekanāṭaka depicts the incidents of the Rāmāyaṇa starting from the Kiṣkindākāṇḍa up to the Lankākāṇḍa. The assassination of Vālin by Rāma after the capture of Sītā, getting Sugrīva’s friendship, Hanumāna’s search for Sītā and consequently burning of Laṅkā, Vibhiṣana’s
becoming a protege of Rāma, Rāvaṇa’s defeat and death in the battle, deliverance of Sītā and her fire-ordeal and ultimately coronation of Rāma – all these events are dramatically presented by Bhāsa in the Abhiṣekanāṭaka.

2. Pratimānāṭaka: - The Pratimānāṭaka is a seven act play describing Rāma’s exilment to the forest along with Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā and the consequent death of Daśaratha, Bharata’s return back to Ayodhyā, his departure to the forest to bring Rāma back to the capital, Rāma’s refusal, Sītā’s abduction by Rāvaṇa, war between Rāma and Rāvaṇa, deliverance of Sītā by Rāma, their return to Ayodhyā and finally crowning of Rāma as the king of Ayodhyā. At the middle of the play Bharata in his way to Ayodhyā enters into a temple to take rest where along with the statues of his ancestors he saw the statue of Daśaratha and thus learns the death of his father. The mental reaction of Bharata, which arises from this incident, runs throughout the whole of the Pratimānāṭaka.

3. Dūtavākya: - The Dūtavākya is a one-act play basing on the events of the Mahābhārata. It describes the incidents of Śrīkṛṣṇa’s arrival as an ambassador into the royal palace of the Kauravas with a peace-proposal, Duryodhana’s refusal of that proposal and preparation for fighting, having felt insulted Śrīkṛṣṇa’s manifestation of the cosmic form and lastly Dańtarāṣṭra’s showing hospitality to Śrīkṛṣṇa after praising him.
4. **Karṇabhāra:** - The Karṇabhāra is a one-act drama, the source of which is the Mahābhārata. At the very outset of the play, Karṇa in the battlefield relates about a curse by which his weapons would fail him, when mostly needed. Thereafter, before his fight with Arjuna, Indra in the disguise of a brāhmin comes there and asks for a gift. Karṇa agrees to give his armour and earrings to Indra. The Karṇabhāra ends with Indra's bestowal of an impregnable sakti to Karṇa.

5. **Dūtaghaṭotkaca:** - The Dūtaghaṭotkaca is also a one-act play, the plot of which has been drawn from the Mahābhārata. After the treacherous murder of Abhimanyu in the hands of Kauravas, Arjuna overcome with grief and wrath, promises to kill the killers of his son. In the meantime, Ghaṭotkaca, the son of Bhīma is being sent by Śrīkṛṣṇa as an emissary, in the court of Duryodhana with a mission of peace; and consequently a hot debate takes place between Ghaṭotkaca and Duryodhana. This is the main theme of the drama Dūtaghaṭotkaca.

6. **Ūrubhaṅga:** - The Īrubhaṅga depicts the fighting between Bhīma and Duryodhana at the last part of the Kurukṣetra battle. In a fierce mace encounter between the two opponents Bhīma and Duryodhana, the former violating the rules of battle breaks the thigh of the later; and as a result Duryodhana's defeat and death on the stage occur. In short, this is the subject matter of the play Īrubhaṅga.

7. **Madhyama-vyāyoga:** - As the name indicates, the Madhyama-vyāyoga is a one-act vyāyoga type of drama. The plot of the
play is centered round the characters of the Mahābhārata but the story is mostly invented by Bhāsa. Ghaṭotkaca, the son of Hiḍimbā, in search of human flesh for his mother’s meal, met a brāhmin family—a couple and their three sons. Thereafter the middle son of this family is offered to Ghaṭotkaca. In the meanwhile, Bhīma arrives there and to save the son of brāhmaṇa, he fights against Ghaṭotkaca without knowing his identity. But later on, by the interference of Hiḍimbā, both Bhīma and Ghaṭotkaca recognize each other as father and son; and the play ends with a happy note.

8. Pañcarātra: - The Pañcarātra is a three-act drama, the plot of which has been taken from the virāṭa-parvan of the Mahābhārata. During the period, when Pāṇḍavas are living incognito, Duryodhana performs a sacrifice and wishes to give away ‘daksinā’ to Droṇācārya. Droṇācārya wants to get half of the kingdom for the Pāṇḍavas in the form of ‘daksinā’. Duryodhana gives him assurance that he will give Droṇācārya’s desired ‘daksinā’, if the later finds the whereabouts of the Pāṇḍavas within five nights. For this purpose, the Kaurava soldiers, under the leadership of Bhīṣma move forward for battle to the Virāṭa Kingdom with a view to steal the cows. But with the help of disguised Arjuna, the soldiers of the Virāṭa King win the battle. Bhīṣma identifies the Pāṇḍavas and accordingly Duryodhana bestows half of the kingdom to the Pāṇḍavas.
9. **Bālacarita:** The Bālacarita, consists of five acts. It is based on the Harivarṇa, the supplementary part of the Mahābhārata. The Bālacarita depicts the birth and childhood of Śrīkrṣṇa, which is full of extraordinary deeds such as sucking out the life of Pūtanā, killing of Cānura, Kāliya, Vṛshabhāsura and Kaṁsa. The play ends with the well being of the Gopa Society.

10. **Pratijñāyaugandharāyaṇa:** The theme of this four act play Pratijñāyaugandharāyaṇa is based on the famous story of Udayana and Vāsavadattā. Pradyota, the king of Avanti, selects Udayana as a perfect match for his daughter Vāsavadattā; but for the time being there prevails a sense of hostility between these two kings. So, by the trick of a mock elephant-hunt Pradyota captures Udayana and appoints him as a lute-teacher for his daughter. Udayana and Vāsavadattā fall in love with each other. After getting this news Yaugandharāyaṇa, the trustworthy minister of Udayana promises to rescue the king from the enemy kingdom. Later on, through the strategy of Yaugandharāyaṇa, Udayana along with Vāsavadattā can safely returns to his own territory. Both the king Udayana and the princess Vāsavadattā are united, and thus Yaugandharāyaṇa becomes successful in his promise.

11. **Svapnāvāsavadatta:** The Svapnāvāsavadatta is probably the most popular work among the thirteen plays of Bhāsa. The plot of this six-act play is based on the famous Udayana legend. It is a continuation of the theme of the Pratijñāyaugandharāyaṇa. Udayana, the king of Vatsa country loses his kingdom by Āruṇi
and is residing at the Lāvānaka village. Yaugandharāyaṇa, the reliable minister of Udayana, for the purpose of strengthening the later, wants to make an alliance with the king of Magadha through Udayana’s marriage with the Magadha princess Padmāvatī. According to this plan Yaugandharāyaṇa along with queen Vāsavadattā, goes into concealment after spreading the rumour that, both of them were burnt at the fire-incident, which took place at Lāvānaka. Thereafter, he keeps Vāsavadattā under the custody of Padmāvatī. King Udayana is married with Padmāvatī and is staying there for a few days. One day he visualizes Vāsavadattā in his dream, and gets impression for the first time that Vāsavadattā is alive. However, at the last part of the play Udayana and Vāsavadattā became reunited, Yaugandharāyaṇa also makes his appearance and thus the play ends with a happy reunion.

12. Avimaraka: — The Avimaraka, is a six-act play the plot of which has been drawn from popular folk-tale. The central theme of this play is the love-story of a candāla youth Avimaraka with the princess Kurāṅgī. Avimaraka is actually Viṣṇusena, the son of Sauvīra king; who becomes candāla, for one year, by the curse of a sage. On account of killing an asura, in the form of 'Avi', Viṣṇusena is entitled as Avimaraka. He falls in love with Kurāṅgī, the daughter of king Kuntībhoja. But Avimaraka’s low-caste identity, creates obstacle in his way of union with Kurāṅgī. Both of them try to commit suicide separately, but were saved supernaturally. At the end of the play Nārada appears on the scene and reveals the actual identity of Avimaraka; and
consequently Avimāraka and Kuraṅgī get united.

13. **Cārudatta:** - The Cārudatta consists of four acts. The theme of this play centres round the love affair of a poor Brāhmin Cārudatta with a courtesan Vasantasena. Śūdraka’s Mṛčchakaṭṭika has close resemblance with the ‘Cārudatta’ with regard to subject matter, plot-construction as well as having similar verses; though the later ends abruptly in the fourth act. These similarities have given rise to many questions such as, which is the earlier work, and between Bhāsa and Śūdraka who has chosen the plot of his play from which source. However, this is still a matter of dispute among the scholars.

In the field of Sanskrit dramatic literature, Bhāsa is undoubtedly a great genius. From the variety of the themes of his dramas Bhāsa stands unique. His language is at the same time simple and lucid. It is free from all artificiality and rhetorical devices noticeable in the later Sanskrit play. The mode of expression is natural, and at the same time effective. Bhāsa is quite at home in writing the dialogues. His specialty lies not in using sentences with long compounds but in employing sentence with simple words. The dialogues in the Svapnavāsavadatta, Avimāraka and Īrubhaṅga especially, would bear ample testimony to his mastery of composing dialogues. Many of his sentences like ‘duḥkhamnyāsasya rakṣaṇam’ have become proverbial. His use of such words as ham, ām etc. and repetition of expressions like svairam, svairam etc. makes the dialogues natural. Bhāsa shows his skill in employing the verses in
the middle of the dialogues. While composing the verses of his plays, Bhāsa generally uses the figures of speech, which are very common such as Upamā, Rūpaka, Utpreksā, Arthāntaranyāsa etc.

The description of upamā, which is a favourite figure of speech of the poets and dramatists in Sanskrit literature, can be met with here and there in the plays of Bhāsa. Thus the example of simile can be found in the following verse of Karṇabhāra, where the heroic Karṇa overwhelmed with grief is beautifully compared with the sun covered by clouds. In the Pratimāntaka where Bharata approaching towards the empty Ayodhyā without his father and brother, compares himself to a thirsty traveller going to an empty river is also a fine example of Upamā. In the other plays of Bhāsa also various example of upamā can be met with.

The figures of speech rūpaka or metaphor can be seen in the following verse of Madhyamavyāyoga where an old brāhmana is in grief owing to the loss of his middle son like the breaking down of the middle pick of his mountain like lineage. In the Dūtavākya where the wrath of Bhīma is compared to fire, which is much excited by the wind in the form of the arrow of Arjuna, is an excellent example of metaphor.

A beautiful illustration of the figure of speech utpreksā can
be found in the following verse of the Pratimāṇaṭaka, which depicts the pathetic condition of Daśaratha at the separation of Rāma. To speak in the words of Bhāsa, “The king plunged into the vast ocean of grief is becoming weak and unconscious, as if at the end of the epoch, the trembling Sumeru mountain; or like the dried-up ocean, or resembling the sun which can be observed in its circle only”⁹⁶

Bhāsa is also quite at home in employing the arthāntaranyāsa. The statements like (i) kālakramaṇa jagataḥ parivartamānā cakrārāpaṅktiriva gacchati bhāgyapaṅktiḥ, (ii) prāyeṇa hi narendraśrīḥ sotsāhaireva bhujyate, (iii) sarvāṁ hi sainyamanurāgamṛte kalatram, (iv) sotsāhānāṁ nastyasādhyām naraṇāṁ mārgāravdhāḥ sarvayatnāḥ phalanti, (v) akāraṇāṁ rūpamakāraṇāṁ kulaṁ mahatsu nīceṣu ca karma śobhate, (vi) svairdoṣairbhavati hi śaṅkito manusyaḥ etc. may be referred to in this context⁹⁷.

Generally the verses of Bhāsa can be easily grasped, and sometimes appear as almost prosaic. But if we observe it from a different point of view, it appears that this simplicity of expression is more a merit then a demerit. Nāṭaka is a drśyakāvyya, where seeing, hearing and appreciating take place simultaneously. So a simpler way of expression appears to be more effective in appreciating the play. To quote the words of Prof. Devadhar, “For quickness of

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⁹⁶ Pratimā, II, 1.
repartee and dazzling play of dialogues, this device is admirably suited"\(^98\).

Sometimes the dramatist expresses many beautiful ideas, without depicting in a clear-cut way. As for example, the following statement of Vāsavadattā may be cited 'yathā yathā tvarate tathā tathāndhikaroti me hṛdayam"\(^99\). How simply here the sorrowful condition of the heart of Vāsavadattā resulting from Udayana’s second marriage with Padmāvatī has been revealed. The following statement in the Pratimāṇṭaka may also be cited in this context - 'ānuktvaiva vanām gatāḥ"\(^100\). How beautiful these expressions are with such simple words! Here we may quote the words of Meerworth - 'He is terse and sparse in his expression. He tells us more by the things he does not say than by the things he says. He is the master of silence"\(^101\).

One of the noteworthy features of Bhāsa’s dramatic art is the use of a dramatic device called patakaśthānaka. It takes place, when through some statements or incidents in the context of a matter; the reference of a similar kind of incident is met with. There are ample instances of patakaśthānakas in the thirteen plays of Bhāsa. Here, an example may be cited from the Pratijnāyaugandharāyaṇa. The king Mahāsenā and the queen Aṅgāravatī are discussing about the suitable bridegroom for their daughter Vāsavadattā. In course of

\(^98\). Plays ascribed to Bhāsa: Their Authenticity and Merits, by C.R. Devadhar, Poona, 1927, p. 65.
\(^99\). Svap, Act-II.
\(^100\). Pratimā, II, 17.
their conversation, the king asks his queen; after enumerating a list of worthy suitors ‘Whom do you think worthy of our daughter?’ In the mean time a kaṅcukī enters with the word ‘Vatsarāja’\textsuperscript{102}. He brings the information of Vatsarāja’s capture, and out of joy, he cannot restrain himself and bursts out ‘Vatsarāja’. Here the word ‘Vatsarāja’ serves as an answer to the king’s query, though the chamberlain tells it in a different sense.

Rasa or the sentiment is perhaps the principal element in dramatic literature. Regarding the number of rasas, divergent opinions are there among the Sanskrit dramaturgists. But taking Viśvanātha’s Sāhityadarpaṇa as a specimen, the number of rasas may be accepted as nine viz., śṛṅgāra, hāsya, karuṇa, raudra, vīra, bhayānaka, vibhatsa, adbhuta and sānta. It appears that Bhāsa has-employed most of these rasas in his plays.

(1) Śṛṅgāra: - Śṛṅgāra is mainly divided into sambhoga or love-in-union and vipralambha or love-in-separation. The love between Rāma and Sītā in the Pratimānāṭaka and Abhiṣekanāṭaka, the union between Avimāraka and Kurāṅgī in the Avimāraka, the marriage and love between Udayana and Padmāvatī in the Svapnavāsavadatta etc. fall under the former category. The example of the second variety of śṛṅgāra may be found, in case of the intensity of love between Udayana and Vāsavadattā being separated form each other, in the play Svapnavāsavadatta.

(2) Hāsya: - Profuse instances of hāsya or humour may be met

\textsuperscript{102} Prat. Yau, Act-II.
with in the plays of Bhāsa. In the Svapnavāsavadatta the saying of Vidūṣaka, that his stomach has got ‘parivarta’ change upside down derangement as the cukoos have the ‘parivarta’ change from one side to another of their eyes\textsuperscript{103}, give the touch of humorous sentiment. The ignorant remark of Śakāra in the Cārudatta generates the hāsyarasa\textsuperscript{104}. The conversation between Sūtradhāra and Naṭī in the same play, also gives the taste of the humorous sentiment. When Sūtradhāra wishes to eat, Naṭī says that everything is ready, but when he asks about the food, she says ‘In the market’\textsuperscript{105}. Again the speech of Naṭī that she observes the fast for having a handsome husband in her next birth gives the touch of humour\textsuperscript{106}. Sajjalaka’s remarks that, his sacred thread in the daytime becomes a measuring thread of the hole in the night, generates the hāsyarasa\textsuperscript{107}.

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{103} Vidūṣaka - adhanyasya mama kokilānāmakṣiparivarta iva kukṣiparivartaḥ saṁvyṛttaḥ - Svap, Act-IV.
\textsuperscript{104} Śakāra-
kiṃ vāsudevaḥ śavapattanesaḥ kunteśuto vā janmejayo vā / ahaṁ tvam grahitvā keśahaste duḥṣāsanaḥ sītāmivāharāmi //
Cāru, Act-I.
\textsuperscript{105} Sūtradhāraḥ - ārye! kiṁ kim i
Naṭī - gṛhitam guḍo dadhi taṇḍulāśca sarvamasti i
Sūtradhāraḥ - etat sarvasmākaṁ gehe'sti i
Naṭī - nahi nahi i antarāpane - Cāru, Act-I.
\textsuperscript{106} Sūtradhāraḥ-kinnāmadheyām ārṇyāyā upavāsāḥ i
Naṭī-abhirūpapatiṁśa i
Sūtradhāraḥ- kimanyajatyāṁ i
Naṭī - āṁ - Cāru, Act-I.
\textsuperscript{107} Sajjalaka-atha kenedaṁśiṁ sandhicchedamārgaḥ
cūcayitavyaḥ syāt nanvidaṁ diva brahmaṣūtraṁ rātrau
karmasūtraṁ bhaviṣyati-Cāru, Act-III.
\end{flushright}
(3) Karuṇa: - Karuṇa or the pathetic sentiment is beautifully depicted by Bhāsa in his plays. In the Svapnavāsavadatta the delineation of karuṇa rasa is met with in the lamentation of Udayana on account of the reported death of his wife Vāsavatā in a fire incident\textsuperscript{108}. In the Dūtagaṭotkaca the reference of the pathetic sentiment is there in the feelings and remarks of Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Gāndhārī and Duḥśāla\textsuperscript{109}. In the Abhiśekanāṭaka the mournful condition of Rāvaṇa after the death of Indrajit also gives the touch of karuṇarasa\textsuperscript{110}.

(4) Raudrarasa: - Raudrarasa or the furious sentiment has been originated in the angry remarks of Valarāma at Bhīma’s breaking the thigh of Duryodhana illegally, in the Urubhaṅga\textsuperscript{111}. In the Pratimānāṭaka Bharata’s contemptuous remarks for his mother Kaikeyī, also comes in the category of raudrarasa\textsuperscript{112}.

(5) Viṭarasa: - Bhāsa has exhibited great skill in describing the heroic sentiment in his plays. The depiction of viṭarasa or the heroic sentiment may be met with in the battle between (a) Rāma and Rāvaṇa, (b) Bhīma and Duryodhana, (c) Uttara and the Kauravas,
(d) Udayana and the soldiers of Mahāsena and (e) Abhimanyu and
the soldiers of Virāṭa

(6) Bhayānaka: -In the Pratimānātaka when Rāvaṇa shows his
original furious form before Sītā, bhayānaka rasa has been revealed.
When Rāvaṇa is about to kill Sītā after the death of Indrajit in the
Abhiṣekanātaka, than also the touch of furious sentiment is found.
Bhayānaka rasa is also generated in the Bālācarita at the time of
killing of Karṇa by pulling the hair.

(7) Adbhuta: - The description of abhuta rasa can be seen in
various occasions in the plays of Bhāsa. In the Avimāraka, the
reference of Avimāraka’s becoming invisible by bearing the ring
given by Vidyādhara generates the abhuta rasa. Śrīkṛṣṇa’s
exhibiting the virāṭa form in the Dūtavākyya also creates this rasa.
The appearance of the goddess of fortune and the curse in the
human form before Karṇa suggest the same sentiment. In the
Abhiṣekanātaka when the ocean gives a route for Rāma by dividing

113. (a) Abhi, Act VI; (b) Īru, Act I, (c) Pañca, Act II, (d) Prat. Yau, Act I; (e)
Pañca, Act II.
114. Rāvaṇaḥ (svarūpaṁ grhitvā) - sīte ! tiṣṭa ! tiṣṭa!
Sītā (bhayam) - haṁ ka idanīmayam ? Pratimā, Act V.
115. Rāvaṇaḥ-asyaḥ kāraṇena vahavo bhrātaraḥ sutaḥ suhṛdaśca me
nihatāḥ | tasmādāmitraviśayamasyā ṣrīdayaṁ bhītvā
kṛṣṭāntramātālaṁkṛtaḥ khaṁgāśāṇipātena samanuṣyayugataṁ
sakalavāṇarakulaṁ dhvāṁsayaṁi-Abhi, act V.
117. Vidyādhara - yadiṣṭam bhavataḥ | ............ vayasya !
antarhitasāntarhitasprasṭaśca tātprasṭaścāntarhitas bhavantī niścaya- Avi,
Act-IV.
118. Vāsudevaḥ- kathāṁ vadhūkāmo māṁ kilo suyodhanaṁ ṣrībhavatu,
suyodhanasya sāmarthyaṁ paśyāmi (viśvarūpamāṣṭhitāḥ)- DV, Act I.
119. Bāla, Act II.
its water into two parts, then also the hint of Abdhuta rasa is found\textsuperscript{120}. 

\textbf{(8) Śānta:} - The suggestion of śāntarasa is also there in the plays of Bhasa. In the Karṇabhāra when Indra takes away the armour of Karṇa, Śalya says that Karṇa has been deceived by Indra. Then the remark of Karṇa that Indra has been deceived in reality creates the śāntarasa\textsuperscript{121}. In the Abhisekanāṭaka when Rāma describes the purity of Sītā, then the presence of śāntarasa is found\textsuperscript{122}.

Thus it is evident from the above discussion that Bhasa has very elaborately depicted the different types of rasas in his plays.

The descriptions of nature are no less important in the plays of Bhasa. It seems that he is a close observer of nature, and so his description about natural phenomena are at the same time realistic and interesting. He gives diverse details and various facts related with the particular object he intends to depict. Some examples may be cited here in this regard. In the following verse the sunset is depicted in its minutes details. Thus, “The birds have come back to their nests; the ascetics have descended into water; the kindled fires are shining bright; the smoke is moving over the penance grove; and fallen from a great height and with his rays contracted, the sun, too,

\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{120} Baruṇaḥ-eṣa mārgaḥ ī prayātu bhavān (antarhitah) 
\textsuperscript{Rāmaḥ-kathamantaroḥito bhagavān varuṇaḥ ī vibhiṣaṇaḥ-paśya paśya}
\textsuperscript{bhāgavat prasādānīṣkampavīcimantaṁ salilādhimapatiṁ ī Vibhiṣaṇaḥ-deva!}
\textsuperscript{sāmprataṁ dvīdāḥbhūta īva ḍṛṣyate jalanidhiḥ ī Abhi, Act IV.}
\item \textsuperscript{121} Karṇa, I, 23.
\item \textsuperscript{122} Rāmaḥ-anugṛhältōśmi ī 
\textsuperscript{jaṇatāpi ca vaidehyāṁ śucitāṁ bhūmaketana ī /}
\textsuperscript{pratyayārthaṁ hi lokānāmevameva mayā kṛtam//}
\textsuperscript{Abhi, VI,29.}
\end{enumerate}
having turned back his chariot, is slowly making towards the top of the setting mountain\textsuperscript{123}.

The description of night and darkness appears to be a favourite subject for Bhāsa. This in the Cārudatta he describes the deep darkness of the night as, “The darkness, as if, besmearing the limbs; the sky as if showering down black collyrium; and eye-sight has been of no benefit, like service rendered unto a wicked man”\textsuperscript{124}.

Bhāsa has used many similes and metaphors while sketching the natural phenomena in a number of verses. The following verse concerning the description of the ocean is full of similes, “Somewhere there is foam, somewhere the water is abounding in fishes, somewhere it is full of conches, somewhere the water resembles the blue cloud, somewhere there is ascending waves, somewhere the furious crocodiles are reversing, somewhere the water is steady”\textsuperscript{125}.

Again the verse, in which the speed of a chariot and the objects in connection is described, is striking and realistic\textsuperscript{126}.

Thus the peculiar aspect, which may be observed in Bhāsa’s description of nature, reflects his simple and realistic attitude. The sense of fact appears much stronger than imagination.

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{123} Svap, I, 16.
  \item \textsuperscript{124} Cāru, I, 19.
  \item \textsuperscript{125} Abhi, IV, 17.
  \item \textsuperscript{126} Pratimā, III, 2.
\end{itemize}
The characterization met with in the thirteen plays of Bhāsa, is also unique. It appears that Bhāsa portrays his characters as the men and women of this real world. They are not imposed with superhuman, imaginary or inconceivable qualities - and perhaps; this is the reason that the spectators and readers can identify themselves with the feelings of these characters. The divinities like Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa, Sītā, etc. as also the Rākṣasas and Vānaras like Rāvaṇa, Hīḍimbā, Vāiś, Sugrīva, and Tārā etc. are presented before us with human nature and sentiments.

As many as two hundred and thirty-two characters have been portrayed by Bhāsa in his thirteen plays. But it is interesting to note that, in spite of the large variety of characters; none seems unwanted in the development of the plot. All the characters of Bhāsa are marked with individuality. He portrays his characters as individuals and not as types. Some of the minor characters also left an indelible impression in the heart of the readers. The names of Madanikā and Vidūṣaka Vasantaka may be referred to in this context.

One of the significant aspects of Bhāsa’s characterization is that, most of the characters in his plays are idealized and elevated. The familiar picture of the so-called bad characters is found noble in his plays. In this context, characters like Duryodhana and Kaikeyī may be mentioned. The psychological analyses of characters met with in the plays of Bhāsa are not less striking. It appears that the dramatist has depicted the feelings of the characters in a way, as he himself has experienced all these. In this connection the character of
Vāsavadattā may be referred to as example. In the third Act of the play Śvapnavāsavadatta, the way in which the dramatist simultaneously depicts the self-sacrificing nature and the tragic feelings of Vāsavadattā, really touches the heart of the readers. To quote the words of an authority, in this regard, “in psychological subtlety Bhāsa is almost [moderne]”.  

There is nothing in this world, which is fully perfect, and without any defect. So whenever we are going to deliberate the merits of a thing we must have an idea of the demerits of that thing also. Merits and demerits are the two sides of every thing - either human being or material element; and Bhāsa is no exception to this.

The first defect that possibly come to the notice of the reader after a careful study of the works of Bhāsa is that, the unity of time has not been maintained. As for instance in the first act of the play Bālacarita when Vasudeva delivers Kṛṣṇa to the care of Nandagopa, night is said to have been over- ‘pravātā rajanti’ and when he arrives at Mathura, he finds Mathura under the spell of night - ‘tathaiva prasupto mathurāyāṁ sarvo janaḥ’.

Another defect, which is peculiarly met with in the plays of Bhāsa is the use of the terms ‘niṣkramya praviśya’. The chamberlains, doorkeepers, messengers etc. are sent out either to

127. Meerworth, JASP, 1917, p 278.
128. Bāla, Act I.
129. Bāla, Act I.
bring some characters or some news; they start and immediately returns back with the person called or with the news of events which may require a long period to happen. It appears quite unnatural and probably, reveals the dramatist’s lack of sense of time and proportion.

Application of grammatical solecisms, faults in versifications, very often use of pādapūraṇas like tu, vai, ca, vā etc, some verses being very plain and devoid of sentiment or poetic fancy, are some of the minor defects which are met with in the plays of Bhāsa.

But the above faults perhaps, can never minimize the genius of Bhāsa as a dramatist. It may be noted in this connection that the thirteen plays of Bhāsa are the products of that age when the classical Sanskrit was making its way. So, as a forerunner of the Sanskrit dramatic literature, Bhāsa’s genius will be appreciated forever.

KĀLIDĀSA AS A DRAMATIST

Kālidāsa, the great dramatist is indisputably the greatest genius in the Sanskrit literature. Probably there would be no exaggeration if we term him as the crownless emperor of Sanskrit literature. From time immemorial Kālidāsa’s genius has been recognised in India. Various poets, scholars and successors of Kālidāsa have bestowed their appreciations for
him in the highly fascinating terms. Kālidāsa always stood ahead, in the perfection of his art. Bāṇabhaṭṭa, the renowned author of the Kādambarī, makes the following statement about Kālidāsa—

“nirgatāsu na vā kasya kālidāsasya sūktiṣu/
prītir madhurasādrāsu mañjarīsviva jāyate”//

i.e., who is not delighted in the sweet sayings of Kālidāsa charmed with sweet sentiment just as honey-laden flowers?"

A popular subhāṣīta is there among the scholars, which runs thus—

“purā kavyāṇāṁ gaṇaḥ prasaṅge kaniṣṭhikādhiṣṭhita kālidāsah/
adyāpi tattulya kaverabhāvād anāmikā sārthavatā babhūva”//

“Once upon a time when the poets were being counted, then Kālidāsa being the first poet established in the last finger. But thereafter when a second poet like him has not been found out it may be said that the name of second finger (anāmikā= nameless) remained proper”.

Kālidāsa has been praised also as a master hand in employing the figure of speech ‘upamā’—

“upamā kālidāsasya bhāraverarthagauravam/
daṇḍiṇaḥ padalālityam māghe santi trayo gunāḥ”//
In the later times Jayadeva, the famous author of the ‘Gītagovinda’ acclaims Kālidāsa as Kavikulaguru ‘the lord of poets’ and the viśa ‘Graceful Play’ of the muse of poetry when he says- ‘bhāso hāsaḥ kavikulaguruh kālidāso viśaḥ’.

Kālidāsa has been recognised as the best in the field of the Sanskrit dramatic literature and earned the appreciation which runs thus-

“kāvyesu nāṭakaṁ ramyam tatra ramyā Śakuntalā/
tātāpi cā caturtho’ñkastatra ślokatuṣṭayam”//

i.e. drama is the most charming among the kāvyas, among dramas Śakuntalā is specially charming. Even in the Śakuntalā, the fourth act is the best; and there also the four ślokas.

Kālidāsa has been acclaimed, not only by his countrymen as the best of Indian poet and dramatist, he has been appreciated by the foreign scholars also. Goethe, the famous German poet admires Kālidāsa in the most fascinating terms when he says-

“Wouldst thou the young year’s blossoms and the fruits of its decline, And all by which the soul is charmed enraptured, feasted fed? Wouldst thou the earth and heaven itself in one sole name combine, I name thee, O Sakuntala, and all at once is said”.

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Humboldt, the renowned philosopher and traveller, appreciates Kālidāsa, the great dramatist in the following terms – “Kālidāsa is a masterly describer of the influence which nature exercises upon the minds of lovers. Tenderness in expression of feelings and richness of creative fancy have assigned to him his lofty place among the poets of all nations”. Prof Lassen calls Kālidāsa as “The brightest star in the firmament of Indian poetry”. Besides the above scholars, there are many other western scholars such as Sir William Jones, Sir Monier Williams, Dr. Ryder, Dr Sylvan Levy; Schelegel etc. who have showered unstinted praise upon Kālidāsa.

Thus, it appears that Kalidasa has been occupied the place of a monarch in the hearts of innumerable people of his country and the foreign countries as well. But, Kālidāsa, the ‘brightest luminary in the firmament of Sanskrit literature’ is quite silent about his own identity, throughout his works. Perhaps this is the reason, which gave an opportunity to many unscrupulous inferior poets to father their own works upon him. The following is a list of the works which have been commonly attributed to Kālidāsa – (1) The Kumārasambhavam, (2) the Rāghuvāṃśam, (3) the Meghadūtam, (4) the Rūtusāṃhāram, (5) the Abhijñānāśakuntalam, (6) the Mālāvikāgnimitram, (7) the Vikramorvāśiyam, (8) the Śṛṅgārarasāṣṭakam (9) the Nalodayam, (10) Setubandham, (11) the Kunteśvarādautyam, (12) the Śrutabodhah (13) the Puṣpavānnavilāsam, (14) the Śṛṅgāratilakam,
(15) the Jyotirvidhābharaṇam, (16) the Ratnakoṣa, and (17) the Ārṇgārasāra kāvyam. Of these the first seven are acknowledged by all the eastern and western critics as his composition undoubtedly. In the history of Sanskrit literature there have been some more poets as Kālidāsa by name, among whom at least three were known to Rājaśekhara of the 12th century A.D. who thus says –

“eko’pi jñyate hanta kālidāsa no kenacit/
ērgāre lalitodgāre kālidāsatrayī kimū”//

So, it may be either possible that the two other Kālidāsa under grounded themselves by giving the responsibility of their own infamy in the hand of original Kālidāsa or it may be expected that the inferior poets of different other names took the shelter of a great name for the publicity of their own works.

However, the compositions, which have been undoubtedly accepted, as Kālidāsa’s own by the critics and the scholars may be mentioned under the following heads –

(a) Three dramas viz., Abhijnanasakuntalam, Mālavikāgnimitram and Vikramorvāṣīyam.

(b) Two court epics viz., Raghuvamśām and Kumārasambhavam.

(c) Two lyrical poems viz., Meghādūtam and Rtusaṁhāram.
Here it may be pointed out that, as our topic of deliberation is based on the plays of Kālidāsa, we will further restrict our discussion within his three well-known plays only i.e., Abhijñānaśakuntalam, Mālavikāgnimitram and Vikramorvaśīyam.

Regarding the date of Kālidāsa there are many diverging opinions of scholars, which fall to give us definiteness and certainty in this regard. He has been drawn by the scholars from century to century and it is interesting to note that an interval of over two thousand years between the earliest and latest dates have been ascribed to him. The period is between eight hundred B.C to twelve hundred A.D. In this connection some of the period may be mentioned-

1. 800 B.C. - Hyppolyte Fauche.
2. 57 B.C. - Sir W.W. Hunter.
3. Before the birth of Christ - Principal S. Roy, Mr. Nandargirkar, Prof. R.N. Apte, Prof. Shembavnekar.
4. Near the beginning of the Christian era - Dr. Peterson.
5. 350 A.D. - Dr. Jacobi.
6. 300 A.D. - Dr. Lassen.
8. Not later than 500 A.D. - Dr. Macdonell.
9. 6th century A.D. - Dr. Bhaudaji, K.B. Pathak, Haraprasada Sastri, R.C. Dutta, Hārināth Dey, Dr. Maxmuller, Dr. Furgussion, General Cunningham, Dr. Kern.
10. In Gupta period - Dr. Keith.
11. 1000 A.D. - Dr. Wilson.
12. 1200 A.D. - Dr. Bentley.

The advocates of these views have also put forward considerable argument in support of their views. But it would perhaps not so easy for us to find out definite solution from these diverging and conflicting opinions about the flourishing period of Kālidāsa. Therefore, one of the generally accepted views regarding the date of Kālidāsa may be mentioned here.

There is a generally accepted view among the modern European scholars that Kālidāsa must have flourished during the reign of one or more of the Gupta Kings. The Gupta age is roughly extended from 300 A.D. to 650 A.D., and was marked in ancient Indian history for a revival of Sanskrit learning and arts. Mr. Vincent A. Smith revealed the opinion that Kālidāsa must have lived in the reigns of the first two, or even in that of the third, of the following Gupta kings —

- Chandragupta II (357-413 A.D.).
- Kumāragupta I (413-455 A.D.).
- Skandagupta (455-480 A.D.).

It may be noted here that both Chandragupta II and Skandagupta adopted the title of ‘Vikramāditya’, while Kumaragupta held the title of ‘Mahendrāditya’. To quote Mr. Smith, “It is not unlikely that
the earliest works of Kālidāsa may have been composed before 413 A.D., that is to say, while Chandragupta II was on the throne; but I am inclined to regard the reign of Kumāragupta I (413-455) as the time during which the poet's later works were composed, and it seems possible, that the whole of his literary career fell within the limits of that reign. It is also possible that he may have continued writing after the accession of Skandagupta.\(^{130}\)

Two inscriptional evidences may be referred to in this context - one is the Aihole Inscription dated 634 A.D. and the other is the Mandasor Inscription of the 472 A.D. In the first one Kālidāsa has been recognised as a famous poet - "sa jayatāṁ raviṅkitiḥ kavitāŚrītakālidāsa bhārāvikirītīḥ". In the second one Vatsabhāṭṭi, the author of the Mandasor Inscription copies ideas and language from the Meghadūtā and Rūtusāṁhāram of Kālidāsa. Therefore, Kālidāsa obviously being a predecessor of Vatsabhāṭṭi have lived prior to 472 A.D.

The three plays of Kālidāsa are superb and achieved a distinctive place in the Sanskrit dramatic literature from the viewpoint of divergence of subject matter and wonderful characterisation. Kālidāsa has made the framework of his plays by taking materials from popular sources such as the Mahābhārata, the Rgveda etc.; but applied considerable

amount of innovation and imagination in these works.

The Mālavikāgnimitram, which is recognised by most of the scholars as an earlier product of Kālidāsa is based on the historical incident. King Agnimitra, the hero of the play is a historical personage of the second century B.C. He belongs to the famous Śuṅga dynasty. Besides him two other kings of this dynasty are also met with in this play—one is Puṣpamitra, the father of Agnimitra and another is Vasumitra, the son of Agnimitra. Among the other historical characters found in the play are Vāhatak, the minister of Agnimitra; Vīrasena, the brother-in-law of Agnimitra; Yajñasena, the king of Vidarbha, and Agnimitra’s kinsmen brother Mādhavasena.

According to some scholars Kālidāsa has taken the material of this play from the Vandhumati legend of the Vṛhatkatha of Guṇāḍhya. Apart from this, the play Mālavikāgnimitram resembles Bhāsa’s Svapnāvāśavadatta in some respects.

Kālidāsa has taken the material of his second play viz., Vikramorvaśīyam from the famous Saṁvāda - hymn of the Ṛgveda. The Purūrvās - Urvaśī Saṁvāda of the Ṛgveda depicts the love-story of Urvaśī, the celestial nymph and Purūrvāvas, the king.
In the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, the story of Urvasī and Purūravas is met with. The reference of Purūravas-Urvasī is also found in the Mahābhārata, in the Purāṇas viz., the Matsyapurāṇa, the Padmapurāṇa and Viṣṇudarmottarapurāṇa, and in the Kathāsaritsāgara of Somadeva. Kālidāsa may have interwoven the plot of the Vikramorvaśīyam by taking these varied source-materials and applying his own imagination.

The third play, the Abhijñānaśakuntalam, is the masterpiece of Kālidāsa. The plot of the play is taken from the Śakuntalopākhyāna of the Ādi-parva of the Mahābhārata. Duśyanta, the king, in course of his hunting excursion happens to come to the hermitage of Kaṇva and has enjoyed the company of Śakuntalā. He knows the story of Śakuntalā’s birth from herself and wants to marry her according to the Gāndharva system of marriage. Śakuntalā gives her consent to marriage on condition that her son would become the heir of the throne. After nine years, Śakuntalā along with her son Sarvadamana comes to the king. But the king owing to the blemish of the people rejects to accept her. In the meantime, an oracle is heard that she is the married wife of the king and so he should accept her. Then the king accepts her. Kālidāsa takes this story of the Mahābhārata as the plot of the Abhijñānaśakuntalam and makes it a superb dramatic composition with his brilliant imaginative power with some objective.
Now, let us have a look over the three famous plays of Kālidāsa viz., The Mālavikāgnimitram, the Vikramorvaśīyam and the Abhijñānaśakuṭālam.

1. Mālavikāgnimitram: - This play comprising of five acts, depicts the love story of Mālavikā and Agnimitra, the king of Vidiśā and founder of the Śuṅga dynasty. The story of the play runs thus - Viśrasena, the brother of queen Dhāriṇī sends Mālavikā as a gift to his sister. Dhāriṇī takes care to keep Mālavikā out of the sight of Agnimitra, her husband. But the king sees Mālavikā in a portrait and falls in love with her. Mālavikā, day by day under the guidance of the dance master Gaṇadāsa becomes more and more efficient in the art of dancing. In the meanwhile, the quarrel arises between the two dance teachers of Mālavikā viz., Gaṇadāsa and Haradatta, the former being appointed by Dhāriṇī, the queen and the later by the king. Here it is needless to say that this happens by the tricks of Gautama, the jester and love-mate of the king Agnimitra. The king also takes this chance and arranges the dance competition of Mālavikā, where the later brilliantly presents her dancing skill. The king cannot take his eyes off Mālavikā and his heart becomes filled up only with Mālavikā. Now he waits for another chance to meet Mālavikā, his beloved, again, but this is rendered almost impossible by the queen who keeps Mālavikā under close watch.
A few days later Dhāriṇī, the queen, gives Mālavikā the responsibility of fulfilling the wish of the Aśoka tree, and promises to fulfil Mālavikā’s desire if the Aśoka flower blooms within five nights. Irāvatī, the second queen of Agnimitra invites him in the pleasure-garden. Mālavikā with her maid Bakulāvalikā comes there and kicks the Aśoka tree. The king who was present there cannot restrain his feelings and comes in front of Mālavikā and expresses his love for her. Irāvatī, who has been an eyewitness to this incident furiously comes forward and reproaches the king in a very undesirable language. The king tries to please Irāvatī but all are in vain.

After this incident Irāvatī in league with Dhāriṇī manages to imprison Mālavikā and Bakulāvalikā in a cellar. But Vidūṣaka’s presence of mīnd helps both of them to get release from there. In the meanwhile, it is heard from behind the greenroom that the Aśoka tree becomes flowered before the completion of five nights. In course of various other incidents, such as Mālavikā’s identification as a princess, Vasumitra’s conquering the Yavana soldiers, the play is about to end. At this moment Dhāriṇī with the consent of Parivrājikā gives the hand of Mālavikā to the hand of Agnimitra, and thus the play ends with a happy note.

2. Vikramorvaśīyam: - This play consisting of five acts, describes the love story of the king Purūravas and Urvaśī, the heavenly nymph. Purūravas when comes back towards the
earth after eulogising the sun, is informed by the heavenly nymphs that Urvaśī and Citralekhā, their friends, have been kidnapped by the demon Keśī. Purūravas rushes in search of the demon and rescues Urvaśī along with her friend. Seeing the beauty of fainted Urvaśī in his chariot, the king falls in love with her. When Urvaśī regains her consciousness and met the king as her protector, she also has a similar feeling of love towards the king.

Purūravas returns to his capital. His changed mood comes to the notice of his queen, and she, with the help of a maid, learns everything from the Vidūṣaka.

Thereafter, Urvaśī sends a love-letter to Purūravas and meets each other for a short while. Urvaśī then is called on by Indra for performing dance-programme. In the meantime the queen appears there and sees the latter, so, naturally, the king’s attempt of pleasing the queen goes in vain.

Then, Urvaśī has been cursed in the heaven, for her negligence in duty. She comes as an Abhisārikā in the Maṇiharmya palace of Purūravas and becomes invisible. The queen appears there and after the completion of a vow she gives the consent of the king’s union with Urvaśī.

Days pass on happily. But once Urvaśī enters into the Kumāravana and becomes transformed into a creeper. Later on,
Purūravas gets Urvaśī back to her previous form with the help of the saṅgamanīya gem. The king along with Urvaśī returns to the capital. But after a few moments, it is heard from the royal palace that the saṅgamanīya gem has been taken by a vulture. Hearing the news, the king becomes puzzled. But within a short while, the chamberlain comes there with an arrow and the lost gem. The king through the letters, engraved in the arrow becomes astonished to know that this arrow belongs to his own son Āyu. Then a female ascetic appears there and gives Āyu to the hand of Urvaśī. Urvaśī discloses the reality that if the king sees his son, she will have to go to the heaven; and for this reason manages to keep hidden her son from the king. Purūravas orders for the coronation of Āyu to the throne, as he wishes to go to the forest being separated from Urvaśī. But at that moment Indra invites Purūravas in the heaven to take weapon for the cause of the gods. Then, with the command of Indra Urvaśī remains as the beloved of Purūravas, the king, forever.

3. Abhijñānaśākuntalam: - The Abhijñānaśākuntalam, the best dramatic composition of Kālidāsa, the great poet - dramatist, describes the union of Duṣyanta, the king of Hastināpura and Śakuntalā, the hermit - girl. The king Duṣyanta, pursuing a deer enters the hermitage of the sage Kaṅva. There he finds three young girls of the same age. From the conversation, going on among the friends he comes to know that the particular one of them is having the name ‘Śakuntalā’. He has been charmed by the extraordinary
beauty of Śakuntalā. The king makes his appearance in front of them and the friends of Śakuntalā become busy in showing hospitality to him. In course of their conversation Duṣyanta comes to know that actually Śakuntalā is the daughter of the sage Viśwāmitra, formerly a king, and Menakā, a celestial nymph. The king becomes happy thinking that Śakuntalā being a Kṣatriya, she is worthy to be married by him. In the meanwhile message comes that a chaotic condition prevails in the hermitage due to the entrance of the king Duṣyanta along with his soldiers in that place. Duṣyanta leaves Śakuntalā along with her friends giving assurance to remove all obstacles of the penance grove.

The king, staying at the outskirt of the hermitage waits for another chance to meet Śakuntalā. His wish becomes fruitful when two hermit boys come there and request the king to stay a few days in the hermitage to protect their sacrifice from the Rākṣasas.

Duṣyanta removes the obstacles of the austerity of the sages, but he cannot stay for a moment without seeing Śakuntalā. Their love becomes more and more deep, and as a result the king marries Śakuntalā, in accordance with the Gāndharva form of marriage and returns back to the capital assuring Śakuntalā to take in the capital very soon. Many many days pass on but nobody from Duṣyanta’s side neither enquires about nor comes to take her in
the capital of the king Duṣyanta. Naturally, Śakuntalā, then, becomes anxious and unmindful to her duties thinking over her husband and at that very period the curse of Durvāsā occurs, and with the active initiative of Anāśīyā and Priyaṁvadā, Śakuntalā’s friends, the means of the removal of the curse take place. Meanwhile Kaṇva, the foster father of Śakuntalā returns back to the hermitage. Knowing every thing he accepts the marriage of Śakuntalā and makes the preparation to send her to her husband’s place.

Accompanied by Śarñgarava, Śāradvata, the hermits and Gautamī, Śakuntalā arrives at the royal palace of the king Duṣyanta. But the king, under the spell of the curse of Durvāsā, fails to remember his marriage with Śakuntalā, and thus repudiates her who then is bearing the king’s child. Śakuntalā then wants to show her ring given by the king to her as a token but finds it missing. At this precarious condition, the royal priest suggests to take Śakuntalā to his house till the birth of her child. But on their way an idol of light from the sky picks up Śakuntalā from that place.

A few days later Duṣyanta finds the signet ring from a fisherman and remembers every thing. In the meantime Indra invites the king for his help to defeat the demons.
After defeating the enemies of Indra, Duṣyanta on his way from the heaven, enters into the hermitage of the sage Mārīca. There he meets a boy playing with a lion-cub. His friends tell the king that the boy belongs to the Puru dynasty and his mother is Śakuntalā. The king becomes amazed. Śakuntalā appears in front of the king; the later begs pardon for his earlier misdeed. With the blessing of Mārīca and Aditi the king Duṣyanta becomes reunited with Śakuntalā, his beloved wife along with Sarvadaman, his son. And the play ends with a happy note.

In the realm of Sanskrit dramatic literature Kālidāsa, perhaps, is unquestionably a great genius. He has placed the Sanskrit drama in the forefront of the world literature. Kālidāsa’s language is inartificial and lucid. Easy-flowing language, simplicity of expression are the special features of his style. Kālidāsa’s diction is marked by the absence of long compounds, involved constructions, overwrought rhetoric and artificial puns noticeable in the later Sanskrit play. The mode of expression is natural, and at the same time effective. Kālidāsa has shown his skill in composing the dialogues of his plays. The speciality, which can be met with in the dialogues is the use of sentences with simple words. As for instance, the following scene from the Abhijñānaśakuntalam may be cited. When the king Duṣyanta, for the first time, meets his son Sarvadaman at the hermitage of the sage Mārīca then both are unknown to each other. Earlier, being rejected by her
husband Dusyanta, Sakuntalā takes shelter there and gives birth to her son. When Sarvadamana asks her about Dusyanta- “Who is he mother”? Sakuntalā replies- “Ask your fate, my, child”\textsuperscript{131}. The sentence is simple but conveys many things. Many simple expressions employed by Kālidāsa, the great dramatist appear as idiomatic expression. The sentences like - (a) sarvaḥ raṅgaḥ, (b) kṛtaṁ bhavatā nirmaksikam, (c) aye labdham netranirmāṇam, (d) pivatīva māṁ āyanābhyām, (e) tvam me mukham bhava, (f) āvayoh samavibhāgo prītiḥ etc. may be cited as examples.

Kālidāsa shows great skill in employing the verses in the middle of the dialogues. While composing the verses of his plays, Kālidāsa generally uses the common and familiar figures of speech like Upamā, Rūpaka, Utpreksā, Arthāntaranyāsa etc. But Kālidāsa excels others in the application of similes and earned the appreciation ‘upamā kālidāsasya’. Especially in the Abijnānaśakuntalam, Kālidāsa shows remarkable extent of his genius in using the upamā. One example may be cited here. The king Dusyanta, while depicting the beauty of Sakuntalā says-Her lip has the redness of a fresh sprig; her youth alluring as flowers, pervades all her limbs\textsuperscript{132}. This verse appears to be capable of describing the tender beauty of

\textsuperscript{131} Bāla- ambā ka ēsaḥ?
Sakuntalā - vatsa! te bhāgadheyāni prccha - Abhi. Ś, Act VII.

\textsuperscript{132} Abhi. Ś, I, 19.
Sakuntalā. There are many other instances of upamā in the Abhijñānaśākuntalam and in the rest of the plays viz., the Vikramorvaśīyam and the Mālavikāgnimitram.

The following verse is also a beautiful instance of upamā. Here the poet compares the restless mind of the king Duṣyanta, which is running backward towards Sakuntalā, like the China silk-cloth of a banner borne against the wind.\textsuperscript{133}

In the Vikramorvaśīyam and Mālavikāgnimitram also various references of the figure of the speech simile can be met with. Thus this verse of the Vikramorvaśīyam where the king Purūravas, surrounded by lamps put in the hands of the maids is compared with the mountain full of Karnikāra flowers, and whose wing has not been cut out by Indra\textsuperscript{134}; is a good example of upamā. In the following stanza of the Mālavikāgnimitram Kālidasā delineates the upamā in a very striking manner. Just like the two horses of a chariot move at the will of the charioteer by pulling the bridle, in a similar way these two kings separately taking the royal fortune, will calmly placed by mutual control and stay in your subjugation.\textsuperscript{135}

The figure of speech rūpaka can be met with in the following verse of the Abhijñānaśākuntalam where Gautama and Nārada,

\textsuperscript{133} Abhi. Ś, I, 31.
\textsuperscript{134} Vikram, III, 3.
\textsuperscript{135} Māla, V, 14.
the two hermits of the hermitage of Kaṇva remark that, the descendants of Puru are initiated with the great sacrifice in the form of exemption from fear to the distressed\textsuperscript{136}.

An excellent example of the figure of speech utprekṣā can be found in the following verse of the Abhijnanaśakuntalam where the charioteer says that, the king Duṣyanta with his bow strung on the deer, as if, looks like the Pināka-holder (Śiva) pursuing the deer in a visible form\textsuperscript{137}.

Kālidāsa is quite at home is employing the Arthāntaranyāsa also. The sentences like (a) purāṇamityeva na sādhu sarvam, (b) kutūhalavānapī niṣargaśālīnaḥ strījanaḥ, (c) anutsekaḥ khalu vikramśīlamkārāḥ, (d) atisnehaḥ khalu kāryadarśī (e) kimiva hi madhurāṇāṁ maṇḍanam nākṛtīnāṁ, (f) satāṁ hi sandehapadesu vastuṣu'pramāṇamantakaraṇa-pravṛttayah etc. may be referred to in this context.

One of the special features of Kālidāsa's dramatic art is the sense of moderation. Kālidāsa depicts a matter to that extent which is necessary - not an extra word, which seems to be unnecessary. In this regard he differs from the later writers of Sanskrit literature like Bāṇabhaṭṭa, Bhavabhūti etc. Especially Kālidāsa's moderate

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{136} Abhi. Ś, II, 16. \textsuperscript{137} Abhi. Ś, I, 6.}
sense, which can be met with in the Abhijñānaśākuntalam is really amazing. While relating the story of Viśwāmitra and Menakā, Anasūyā stops at a particular place, Duṣyanta instantly says “parastāvadavagamyata eva” i.e., the rest is easily comprehended\(^{138}\). It is better to become silent in a matter of shame.

Again in the third act of this play when Duṣyanta in a romantic mood tries to keep up the face of Śakuntalā, she at once says – ‘paurava, rakṣa vinayam’ i.e, ‘O Descendant of Puru ! Keep to decorum’\(^{139}\).

Another noteworthy feature of Kālidāsa’s style is the suggestiveness. In the Abhijñānaśākuntalam, especially, there are ample instances of suggestiveness. It may be seen, in this play, that, many of the incidents have been suggested. The following examples may be cited in this connection. When Vaikhānasa desists Duṣyanta from Killing the deer of the hermitage, saying that, not indeed should it be allowed to throw the arrow on the tender body of this fawn-not indeed to be allowed, like fire on cotton in masses\(^{140}\); then it appears, as if, it is a hint of dissuading the king from loving Śakuntalā.

\(^{138}\) Anasūyā-ṣīṇotu āryaḥ | purā kila tasyā rājarseh ugre tapasi 
vartamānasya, kimapi jāтаśāṅkaḥ devaiḥ menakā nāma 
apsarāḥ preṣītaniyama vighna kārīne। 
Rāja-asti etat anya samādhī bhūrītvamān devānām। 
Anasūyā-tato vasanta vatāra samaye asya unmādayitum rupam prekṣya–
(iti ardhoke lajjaṅī viramati)। 
Rāja-parasta v-adavagamyata evaisarvathāapsarāḥ sambhavaṅgā – 
Abhi. Ś, Act-I.

\(^{139}\) Abhi. Ś, Act III.

\(^{140}\) Abhi. Ś, I, 10.
Moreover, when it is uttered from the green room that a
trenzied elephant enters the sacred grove\textsuperscript{141}; it appears that the
lovesick Duṣyanta is indirectly hinted at by the intoxicated elephant.

As regards the delineation of rasa in the plays of Kālidāsa, it
may be said that the dramatist shows his skill in the suggestion of
different types of rasas. From a study of his three plays it appears
that the following rasas viz., śṛṅgāra, hāsyā, karuna, raudra, vīra,
bhayānaka and abhūta are found depicted.

(1) Śṛṅgāra: - Both the two types of śṛṅgāra viz., sambhoga and
vipralambha can be met with in the plays of Kālidāsa. Sambhoga or
the love-in-union is there in case of the relation between Duṣyanta
and Śakuntalā, Purūravas and Urvaśī, and Agnimitra and Mālavikā.
The second type i.e., vipralambha or love in separation can be met
with in the sorrowful state of mind of Duṣyanta, being separated from
his beloved Śakuntalā under the influence of the curse of Durvāsā\textsuperscript{142}.
Similar sentiment is seen in the pathetic wailing of Purūravas, being
separated from Urvaśī, his beloved\textsuperscript{143}.

(2) Hāsyā: - Hāsyārasa or the humorous sentiment is generated
in the speech of Vidūṣaka in the Abhijñānaśakuntalam. When the
king Duṣyanta enquires about the cause of pain on Vidūṣaka’s

\textsuperscript{141}. dharmāraṇyaṃ proviśati gajaḥ- Abhi.Ś, I, 30.
\textsuperscript{142}. Abhi. Ś, VI, 22.
\textsuperscript{143}. Vikramorvaśīyam, Act IV.
limbs, the later replies, "You indeed, pricking my eye, enquires the cause of my tears." Again when the king expresses his feelings for Śakuntalā in front of Vidūṣaka, the later comments, "Just as one, surfeited with dates, may long for tamarind for changing the taste, so being temporarily bored with the beauties of your inner apartment, you are longing for the woodland-girl." In this remark the reality is shown by the touch of humour.

(3) Karuṇa: - In the Abhijnānaśākuntalam the pathetic condition of Duśyanta at the separation of this wife Śakuntalā depicts karuṇarasa. The same rasa also generates in the occasion of Purūrava’s wailing, at the separation of his beloved Urvaśī. The pathetic sentiment has also been created in the lamentation of Paṇḍitkauśikī, at the killing of her brother Mādhavasena.

(4) Raudra: - The presence of raudrarasa can be observed at the time of Durvāsā’s pronouncing the curse to Śakuntalā, in the Abhijnānaśākuntalam. When Śakuntalā reproaches Duśyanta for

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144. Rājā-kuto'yaṁ gātropaghātaḥ?
   Vidūṣakaḥ- kutaḥ kila svayamakśi ākǔlikṣṭya aśrūkāraṇaṁ prcchasi-
   Abhi.Ś, Act II.
145. Vidūṣakaḥ- (vihasya) yatha kasya-pi piṇḍakharjūraḥ udvejitasya
tintlyāṁ abhilāso bhavet, tathā śrūtantraparibhogino bhavataḥ
   iyamabhyarthanaṁ-Ibid.
146. Vide Ref. No. 142.
147. Vide Ref. No. 143.
149. Abhi.Ś IV, 1.
his ill behaviour, the raudrarasa is said to have originated\textsuperscript{150}. The existence of raudrarasa is also there in the furious speech of Śāṅgarava in the same play\textsuperscript{151}.

\textbf{(5) Vīra:} - Vīrarasa or the heroic sentiment has been originated, in the description of Purūravā's winning over the demon Keśī and the rescue of Urvaśī and Citralekha in the Vikramorvaśīyam\textsuperscript{152}. The same rasa is also there in the battle between Vasumitra and the Yavana soldiers\textsuperscript{153}.

\textbf{(6) Bhayānaka:} - The description of this rasa can be found in the battle scene between the merchants and the enemy soldiers in the Mālavikāgnimitram\textsuperscript{154}. In the Abhijñānaśakuntalam when the Vidūṣaka is assaulted by an invisible force, the bhayānaka rasa has been originated\textsuperscript{155}.

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{150} Šakuntalā (sarōśam)-anārya ātmano hṛdayānumāṇena kila sarvaṁ prekṣase ka idānīmanyo dharmakaṇḍuṇa praveśina stṛṇacchannakūpo-pamaśya tavānukṛtīṁ pratipatsyate—Abhi. Ś, Act V.
  \item \textsuperscript{151} Abhi.Ś, V,27.
  \item \textsuperscript{152} Rambhā-sarvatheha vijayī bhavatu (kṣaṇamātraṁ sthitvā) halā samāśvasita samāśvasita ēśauuccalitatāriṇāketanastasya rājarṣeḥ somadatto ratho dṛṣṭyate na khalu eṣo’kṛtārtho nivartisyate. (sarva uccakṣuṣa vilokayanti) (tataḥ praviśati ratharūḍho rājā sūtaśca citralekhāvalambitā bhayanimīlitākṣī corvāṣṭ)—Vikram, Act I.
  \item \textsuperscript{153} Rājā (upaviśya vācayati)........... i yo’sau rājayajñadīkṣitenā mayā rajaputraśālapaṇivṛttam vasumitraṁ goptāramādiśya sarhvatārāpārāvartaniyo nirgāralasturāgo visṛṣṭaḥ sa sindhor-dakśinārodhasi carannasvāṃkino yavanānāṁ prārthitaḥ tata ubhayoh senayormahānāśīt sammandāḥ—Māla, Act V.
  \item \textsuperscript{154} Māla,V, 10.
  \item \textsuperscript{155} Abhi. Ś, VI, 27.
\end{itemize}
(7) Adbhuta: - The hint of adbhutarasa is there in the reference of the armour (kavaca) of Sarvadamana named Aparājita when dropped on the ground, can only be taken up by his parents or himself; but if any one else takes it than it will become transformed into a snake and will bite that person. The reference of Sānumatī's becoming invisible under the influence of the 'tiraskarīnī-vidyā' also generates the adbhutarasa. The same sentiment is also been created in the disappearance of Urvasī and Citralekā with the help of the 'tiraskarīnī-vidyā'.

One of the significant aspect of Kālidāsa's dramatic art is the description and love of nature. He describes nature with the most effective touches. In the plays of Kālidāsa, an intimate relation between the nature and the human being can be met with. It appears, going through the plays of Kālidāsa that men and nature are not two separate identities, but they are inseparably related to each other. The fourth act of the Abhijnānaśākuntalam is perhaps the best example in this context.

156. Prathamā- śrṇoti mahārājaḥ! eṣā mahāprabhāvā aparājita nāma suramahauṣadhīḥ asya dārakasya jātakarmasamaye bhagavatā mārīcena dattaś etāṁ kila mātāpitarau ātmānaḥca varjayitvā aparā bhūmi- patitāṁ na grṇṛhāti?
   Rāja- atha grṇṛhāti?
   Prathamā- tatastaṁ sarpa bhūtvā daśāti- Abhi. 5, Act VII.

157. Sānumati- nivartitaṁ mayā paryāyanivartanīyam apsarastīrthasāṁmidhyam yāvat sādhujanasāṁbhisekakāla, iti sāmpratamasya rājaṁ udantaṁ pratyakṣikariṣyāmi ........................ bhavatu i anayoreva udyānapālikayoḥ tiraskarīnīpraticechannā pārśvaparivartinī bhūtvā upalapsye — Abhi.Ś, Act VI.

158. Urvasī- tiraskarīnīpraticechannā pārśvagatāsyā bhūtvā srosyāmi tavat-Vikram, Act II.
Nature is so much inseparably related to the human beings that, at the time of Śakuntalā’s departure towards her husband’s abode, the trees of the hermitage give her dress, ornaments, and decoration and this has been described by Kālidāsa as, “By a certain tree, an auspicious moon-white silken robe is presented; while by another is given the lac-juice fit for dying the feet with; and from other trees, these ornaments are delivered by the palms of the Sylvan Deities, extended out as far as the wrist, resembling burst-out leaflets”\textsuperscript{159}. Not only Śakuntalā experiences grief for her separation from the animals and plants of the hermitage; but the plant and animal world in the hermitage also become dazed, out of the grief of separation from her. Thus, “The deer have dribbled down the mouthful of kuśa-grass, the peacocks have given up their dancing; creepers are, as it were, are shedding tears with their brown leafage falling”\textsuperscript{160}.

Kālidāsa not only describes the nature, but it appears that he depicts the nature like a skilled artist. This feature is perhaps reflected in the following verse, which describes the earth from a height - “The earth, as if, climbing down from the peaks of the rising mountains; the trees from the exhibition of their stems, lose their state of being wrapped in the foliages; the rivers whereof waters had disappeared through attenuation, acquire manifestation through expansion of their waters. It seems that

\textsuperscript{159}  Abhi. Ś, IV, 5.
\textsuperscript{160}  Abhi. Ś, IV, 12.
the earth is being brought up to my side, as if by someone flinging it upward”¹⁶¹.

Kalidasa’s other two plays viz., the Mālavikāgnimitram and the Vikramorvaśīyam are also full of exclusive and vivid description of the nature. The description of the midday, in the Mālavikāgnimitram is very striking. “The swans with their eyes closed, sit under the shadow of the lotus-leaf of the tank; the pigeons out of excessive heat have taken the shelter of the mansion, leaving the familiar sloping roof; the peacockshave set in the fountain for drinking the tossed up water drops; the sun is illuminated in all straight lines like you, radiant in all the kingly qualities”¹⁶².

In the Vikramorvaśīyam, Kalidasa depicts the nightfall in a charming way. To speak in the words of the poet, “At the appearance of the night the peacocks have slept into the perch, appearing as if they are engraved like the sculpture; the karnishes of the roof mistake the smoke of the incense coming out from the window, as the pigeon; the elderly persons of the inner apartment, sacred by the customary rites are kindling the evening auspicious lamps in the particular places where the flower articles for worship have been dispersed”¹⁶³. This picture of the

¹⁶¹ Abhi. 6, VII, 8.
¹⁶² Māla, II, 12.
¹⁶³ utkṛṣṭa iva vāsayastraṣṭiḥ nīnāndirālasā varhiṣo dhūpairjālaviniḥśtarvalabhayaḥ sandiṅgdhapāravataḥ/ ṛcāraprayataḥ sapuṣpavalisūṃ sthāneṣu ca cācīṣmatāḥ/ sandhyāvaṅgaladīpikāvibhajate Ṛuddhāntavrddhajanaḥ // Vikram, IV, I.
nightfall and the imagination of the similies of the objects appear to be very appropriate.

Thus on the basis of the above brief discussion it may be said that Kālidāśa’s love of nature is unique, which probably has played a great role in giving him a position in the history of world literature, as a prince in Sanskrit literature.

The characterisation, as can be observed in the three plays of Kālidāśa is also superb. In delineating his character, Kālidāśa shows marvellous skill. He knows the art of diving deep into the human mind and thus his dramatic characters appears lively—not the stereotyped characters, in accordance with the fixed pattern of the dramaturgy. Kālidāśa’s characters are not generally imposed with superhuman, imaginary or inconceivable qualities and this is perhaps the reason that the readers and spectators can experience the feelings of oneness with these characters.

Approximately seventy-six characters have been delineated by Kālidāśa in his three plays and twenty-two characters have been mentioned there by name. While portraying his characters Kālidāśa shows his sympathetic attitude also. His movement is unrestrained from the heavenly region to the kingdom of the Yakṣa’s and kinnara’s, from the earthy royal palace to the hermitage, from the king to the fisherman. The characters of Kālidāśa are marked with
individuality—they are not portrayed as typical but as individuals.

One of the noteworthy features of Kālidāsa’s characterisation is that the characters have been depicted as ideals in their respective roles. In this context, the names of Duṣyanta, Dhāriṇī, Kaṇva, Urvaśī, Anasūyā, Priyaṁvadā etc. may be cited. The character of Duṣyanta, in the play Abhijnānaśakuntalam, belongs to the category of hero of dhīrodāṭṭa type. In him a perfect combination of an ideal husband, ideal father and ideal king can be met with. The queen Dhāriṇī, in the Mālavikāgnimitram, has been portrayed as an ideal Indian woman who is always devoted and committed to her husband under all circumstances. She is at the same time depicted as an ideal wife and an ideal queen. In depicting Kaṇva, Kālidāsa portrays the sketch of an ideal father. The picture of Urvaśī, which is met with in the Vikramorvaśīyam, is an ideal lady-love, who being a celestial nymph loves a mortal king i.e., king Purūravas boundlessly. Anasūyā and Priyaṁvadā are the two unique creations of Kālidāsa in whom the picture of ideal friends has been nicely depicted.

Another significant aspect, which can be met with in Kālidāsa’s characterisation is that, the characters have been endowed with human qualities. The names of Kaṇva in the Abhijnānaśakuntalam, and Urvaśī in the Vikramorvaśīyam may be referred to in this context. The sage Kaṇva who is the foster-father
of Śakuntalā shows his love and responsibility towards her daughter like a real household father. Though he is an inhabitant of the hermitage, he is fully accustomed with the worldly affairs, love and affection. Thus it is seen that he is casting off tears at the time of sending his daughter to her husband’s abode. The sage gives advice to his daughter like a common householder to contribute wholeheartedly to make a happy family. In the character of Urvaśī also human attributes can be met with in abundance. Though a heavenly courtesan, she falls in love with the earthy king Purūravas. Her love for him is sincere. She behaves more as a maiden of our society and less as a heavenly nymph. The characters in the three plays of Kālidāsa are natural and lively. In this context the names of Śakuntalā, Anasūyā, Priyāmvedā, Mālavikā and Irāvatī etc. may be referred to as examples.

The specialities of Kālidāsa’s dramatic art are manifold. However, a very minor defect, which may be met with in the plays of Kālidāsa is the monotonous and lengthy description of an event. This defect holds good only in case of the fourth act of the Vikramorvaśīyam, where a number of thirty-one apabhraṃśa songs have been incorporated, among whom eleven have been from the mouth of the king Purūravas and the rests have been applied in depicting the condition of the king. These songs perhaps effect the rasa realisation of this play to some extent.
But the above minor demerit cannot perhaps minimise the genius of Kālidāsa as a dramatist. While describing the merits of Kālidāsa, designated as the prince in Sanskrit literature, it appears that no word is final and sufficient to assess the great dramatist. His works will be appreciated by coming generation forever.

NECESSITY OF MAKING THE STUDY

Bhāsa and Kālidāsa, the two famous dramatist of Sanskrit literature represent two different ages. Bhāsa composed his thirteen plays at a time when the classical Sanskrit was making its way. He may be called as the precursor of Sanskrit dramatic literature. Kālidāsa flourished at an age when the ground of classical Sanskrit is setting up slowly - behind this development the contribution of Bhāsa, Āśvaghoṣa and many others are there. But so far as the Sanskrit dramatic literature is concerned, the main credit, possibly, goes to Bhāsa, after whom Kālidāsa appears in the scene and gives a solid shape of the Sanskrit dramatic literature.

The thirteen plays of Bhāsa, which have been mentioned earlier, are famous from the standpoint of subject matter and dramatic excellence. The plots of these plays have been drawn from various sources and the sentiments experienced from these plays are also divergent. The three plays of Kālidāsa as mentioned earlier,
are also popular from the standpoint of their subject matter as well as dramatic technique etc.

There is a well-known saying that literature is the mirror of society i.e., in the mirror of literature, every thing of the society, either good or evil has been reflected. This is very much true in case of the dramatic literature also. Drama belongs to the class of dṛśyakāvya, where visualizing, hearing and appreciating take place simultaneously. Besides, the drama is generally meant for all classes of people, either high or low, either male or female, either literate or illiterate. So, it may be termed as an effective means through which the picture of the life of the common people gets reflected. Again when it is said that the society is reflected in the drama, it may be taken as granted that the constituent parts of the society is also reflected in it. Men and women are the two principal constituent parts of the society. Both are equally responsible for the development of the society. So, possibly, it may not be out of point to say that, the position held by the women and their activities as well as in the society would be one of the judging factors to determine the quality of a society.

The present dissertation aims at determining the status of female figures in the plays of Bhāsa and Kālidāsa in a critical and comparative line to assess the society during those ages. Further, perhaps it is true to say that without a comparative study of the position of female figures as depicted in the plays of the two dramatists belonging to two different ages, it is not possible to
ascertain the real and complete picture of the society of those two different ages. Besides, through a critical study of the real status of the female figures only the attitude of the society towards the female figures in those two ages can be ascertained.

We believe, in the dramas, not only the contemporary society gets reflected, the dramatists hint at the betterment of the future society also. So, our objective in this dissertation, will be to examine and find out the relevant aspects if any, which may be applicable in the present society, where the female figures will be enjoying a respectable status, in true sense in the society and engage themselves freely, fearlessly and in a dignified way in different constructive activities to constitute a real prosperous society.