

**DRAMATIC TECHNIQUES OF  
BHĀSA**

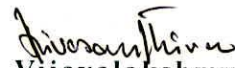
**by**

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## **Candidate's Declaration**


The work described in this thesis was carried out by me under the Supervision of Prof. E. W. Marasinghe and a report on this has not been submitted in whole or in part to any University for another Degree / Diploma.

  
Vijayalakshmy Sivasanthiran.

## Supervisor's Declaration

I/~~We~~ certify that the above statement made by the candidate is true and that this thesis is suitable for submission to the University for the purpose of evaluation.

  
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## ABBREVIATIONS

A.Bh.	Abhinavabhāratī, Abhinavagupta's Commentary on the Nāṭyaśāstra, Vol. I, GOS, 2 <sup>nd</sup> ed. (1956); (Vol. II, III, Vol.IV Parimal Sanskrit Series, No.4
Abhi./Abhiseka	Abhiṣekanātaka.
Abhinava.	Abhinavagupta.
ABORI	Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute.
AIOC	All India Oriental Conference.
A S G.	Ānandāśrama Samskr̥ta Granthamālā.
Avi.	Avimāraka.
Bāla.	Bālacarita.
Bh. Pr.	Bhāvaprakāśana.
Bh. Sr.Pr	Bhoja's Sṛṅgāraprakāśa
BNC	Bhāsanāṭakacakram
BORI	Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute
Cāru.	Daridra-Cārudatta
Com.	Commentary
DR.	Daśarūpa
GOS	Gackwad's Oriental Series
IHQ	Indian Historical Quarterly
JBRAS	Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society
JOR/JORM	Journal of Oriental Research, Madras.
JOUM	Journal of the University of Bombay.

JRAS	Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society.
Karna.	Karṇabhāra
KAS	Kāvyaṅuśāsana
K.M.	Kāvyaṃāla Series
K.Pr.	Kāvyaṃrakāśa
KSS	Kasi Sanskrit Series
Madyama.	Madyamaṃvyāyoga
MM	Mālatīṃmādhava
Mrcch.	Mrcchakaṭika
ND.	Nāṭyadarpaṇa
NLRK	Nāṭakalakṣanaratnakoṣa
N.S. Edition	Nirnaya Sagar Edition
NŚ	Nāṭyaśāstra
Pañca.	Pañcarātra
Pānini	Aṣṭādhyāyī of Pāṇini
POS	Poona Oriental Series
Pratijñā	Pratijñāyugaṃdharāyaṇa
Pratimā.	Pratimānāṭaka
RS	Rasārṇavasudhakara
Śak/Śākuntala	Abhijñānaśākuntala
SD	Sāhityadarpaṇa
Svap./Svapna	Svapnavāsavadatta
TSS	Trivandrum Sanskrit Series
Ūru.	Ūrubhaṅga



## SCHEME OF TRANSLITERATION

All Sanskrit and Prakrit words, technical terms and proper nouns (including the names of authors and their works) given in this thesis are written in the Roman characters. The mode of transliteration adopted is as follows :

Vowels	: a अ	i इ	u उ	ṛ ऋ	ai ऐ	au औ
	ā आ	ī ई	ū ऊ	e ए	o ओ	
Anusvāra	: ṁ .					
Visarga	: ḥ :					
Consonants	: k क्	kh ख्	g ग्	gh घ्	ñ ङ्	
	c च्	ch छ्	j ज्	jh झ्	ñञ्	
	ṭ ट्	ṭh ठ्	ḍ ड्	ḍh ढ्	ṇ ण्	
	t त्	th थ्	d द्	dh ध्	n न्	
	p प्	ph फ्	b ब्	bh भ्	m म्	
Semi-vowels	: y य्	r र्	l ल्	v व्		
Sibilants	: s स्	ś श्	ṣ ष्			
Aspirate	: h ह्					

Proper names are written with an initial capital letter and the rest together with titles of works in italics.

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# DRAMATIC TECHNIQUES OF BHĀSA

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## ABSTRACT

Bhāsa is the first and the most prolific Sanskrit Playwright whose works have survived in complete form. There had been much controversy over the ascription of the thirteen plays including the *Svapnavāsavadatta* to Bhāsa by T. Ganapatiśāstri, but almost all eminent scholars, western as well as Indian are now inclined to accept Bhāsa as the author of these plays.

Bhāsa was one Sanskrit playwright who did not follow the beaten track, and therefore, is the most controversial among Sanskrit dramatists. Both his dramatic and theatrical techniques therefore deserve special treatment. Kālidāsa's dramatic works are admired mainly because of their poetic excellence but Bhāsa's plays, though less poetic, are much more interesting from a dramatic point of view. It is therefore the

application of Bharata's rules of dramaturgy can best be seen in the Bhāsa plays. As such, he is the most successful of Sanskrit dramatists on the stage, for he has shown great maturity as a master of stagecraft. Therefore, without studying the plays of Bhāsa, one cannot form a clear picture of how the Sanskrit drama was performed on the stage. Further, he is an avant-garde dramatist who has tried his hands at different types of play. It is also interesting to note that some of his plays do not fit into any clear genre of Sanskrit play as described by Bharata and other theorists, and remain as nondescript, for instance, the *Pratijñāyaugandharāyaṇa* the *Pañcarātra* and certain one-act plays. The techniques he has employed understandably differ from genre to genre.

Although some studies on Bhāsa have been done by scholars, sufficient attention has not been paid to his skill as a stage craftsman. These are the factors that prompted me to take up this topic for my research project.

As the plays of Bhāsa fall into different types, I have discussed the types of plays that are specified in the dramaturgical works and compared the plays of Bhāsa with them to see what extent Bhāsa has adhered to the specifications or deviated from them.

Bhāsa's contribution to Sanskrit theatre can be viewed from two angles: i.e. dramatic and theatrical. His dramatic techniques are of special interest as can be seen in his handling of prologues and scenes

characterizations and the development of *rasa* particularly the *vīra* and *hāsyā* and the use of *arthopaksepas* and *patakasthāna*. These are the main areas that I have dealt with as far as the dramatic and theatrical techniques are concerned.

As for the skill he has displayed in the employment of theatrical techniques, I have analysed it from various angles, i.e. *Vācīkabhinaya* *Āṅgīkābhīnaya*, *Āhāryābhīnaya* and *Sāttvikābhīnaya*. He has used all forms of delivery that are approved in the dramaturgical works. Also he has made use of live actors to impersonate animals, missiles and so on this dialogues are very short and lively and logically follow which make his plays successful and interesting theatre.

Lastly, I have examined whether this bygone theatre has left its mark on the Sri Lankan traditional theatres, both Sinhalese and Tamil. The *nāḍagama* genre and *kūttu* form have been subjected to a thorough scrutiny and discussed their points of similarity with the Sanskrit theatre.

## INTRODUCTION

The scope of this study is strictly confined to the 'Dramatic Techniques of Bhāsa' who is a towering figure in the sweep of Sanskrit dramatic literature. The Sanskrit dramatic art had attained a high degree of development at least by the first century A.D. as clearly displayed by the works of Aśvagoṣa. 'Drama is the most fascinating of all poetic genres',<sup>1</sup> said one Sanskrit critic. Drama is called '*drśyakāvya*' in Sanskrit, for it is relished visually. The theory of *rasa* (sentiment) universally applied to Sanskrit artistic tradition was first evolved in the context of drama and theatre. The Sanskrit theatre has been a synthesis of the fourfold *abhinaya*, embellished with music and dance and was intended to give pleasure and delight to the spectator. Like all other forms of Indian art, Sanskrit theatre too has a religious tinge, but its more important function was to give moral education, spiritual upliftment and enlightenment to the onlooker. The most important and the earliest available work on Indian dramaturgy, the *Nāṭyaśāstra* considers the delectation that the audience experience by witnessing a dramatic spectacle as one of the most important factors ensuring the '*nāṭya siddhi*' (the success of a dramatic production).

Many dramatic pieces might have been written in Sanskrit and performed on the stage. Kālidāsa happens to be the earliest of the dramatists, who supplies very useful information about his predecessors and himself. His reference found in the *Mālavikāgnimitra* is given in the