



An Inquiry into the Dramatic Art in Sri Lanka from the Pre-Buddhist Period to the Kandyan Period

Ramith Preshal Chandrasekara

Temporary Assistant Lecturer, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka

<http://dx.doi.org/10.18415/ijmmu.v7i10.2196>

Abstract

There is evidence that has been an advanced art in Sri Lanka since ancient times. The source provides evidence that dance and instrumental art existed in Sri Lanka from the pre-Buddhist era. In addition to the arts of dance and music, there is evidence that drama has existed in Sri Lanka since pre-Buddhist times. The question of this research is whether there was a drama art in Sri Lanka from the pre-Buddhist era to the Kandyan era. Literary and archaeological sources were used as the methodology for this research. Primary and secondary sources were used under literary sources and inscriptions, ruins, etc. were investigated under archeological sources. The names drama, dance, theater, choreographer, dancer, dancer and poet were used in connection with literary and archeological sources. Searching for the meaning of those names confirmed that it meant drama. These names have been used in connection with a source in Sri Lanka since pre-Buddhist times. Accordingly, it was confirmed that there was a drama in Sri Lanka from the pre-Buddhist era to the Kandyan era.

Keywords: *Drama; Pre-Buddhist; Kandy*

An Inquiry into the Dramatic Art in Sri Lanka from the Pre-Buddhist Period to the Kandyan Period

There is evidence that there has been an advanced aesthetic art in Sri Lanka since ancient times. Among these, the source bears witness to the fact that the art of drama has existed in Sri Lanka since pre-Buddhist times. The direct evidence for the existence of drama in the pre-Buddhist period can be traced back to the reign of Pandukabhaya. King Pandukabhaya was moved to make sacrifices for the demons who had helped him to build the kingdom of Anuradhapura and gain state power. The Mahavamsa states that the play was watched during those festival days.

*"Sacrificing to them and others every year, on the days of the festival, that Pandukabhaya sat in the same seat with the demon Chittaraja of the kingdom and made the divine man play with the Rati Krida ..."*¹

According to the Mahavamsa, King Pandukabhaya watched divine and human dramas during the festival. Accordingly, a clear information can be obtained here that there was a certain dramatic art in that period.

According to Bharatamuni's dramas, the plays created by God were used by Bharatamuni for the benefit of mankind. Hence it may have been called Dibbamanusa drama. (Also, please note that Sanskrit is referred to as the Divine Language and the Sanskrit alphabet as Nagari.) This is a good indication that the Aryans who came to Lanka from India enjoyed theatrics from the very beginning of their history. This shows that Buddhism was a theatrical art even in the Lakdiva Raja Sabha from the time before it came to Sri Lanka.

King Pandukabhaya along with a local leader of Chittaraja watching Dibbamanusa plays at a state ceremony shows that drama was a prominent aesthetic feature of Sinhala culture even in the pre-Buddhist era.²

Anuradhapura Era

The Dhathuwamsa states that during the reign of King Mahanama Magama in the Anuradhapura period, there were women dramatists in those areas as well. It is mentioned in the Dhathuwamsa that the women of the drama also paid homage to the Tooth Relic in various ways during the procession of the Tooth Relic to Magama from Haththotta Danawwe.

*"The king instructed the king to 'slowly kill all the creatures in the temple,' and instructed the dramatists to take the relics and worship the relics at their royal palace in the inner city. The women of the play, dressed in various costumes, came out of the royal palace, worshiped the relics, played the panchadgika band in their hands and performed great sacrifices..."*³

According to the Dhathuwamsa, King Kavantissa left Soma Nuwara and went to the Seru Nuwara pool, where he also engaged in theatrical female dance.

*"... The king came out of the city of Soma, near the pool called Seru, and brought out various perfumes, and dressed in other paraphernalia, and danced, sang, and played musical instruments. It was as if the earth were breaking apart, the rocks of the Saptha caste were being swept away by it, and the great sea was crossing the shores..."*⁴

The word drama also means drama. Accordingly, the inclusion of the term 'drama women' in these two events in the Dhathuwamsa confirms that there were women associated with drama at that time

¹ Mahavamsa, (2015) ed. Most Venerable Hikkaduwe Sri Sumangala Nayaka Thero, Batuwanthudawe Padithuman, Deega Emga Asga Abeyratne, Dr. Nandadeva Wijesekera, Buddhist Cultural Center, Dehiwala, Chapter 84 Stanzas 84-87

² Dela Bandara Gamini, Sinhala Drama and Cultural Background, Samibhavaya Publications, Page 23

³ Dhatu Vamsaya (2017), ed., Moratuwagama H. M, Ratna Book Publishers, Colombo 10, page 47.

⁴ Dhathuwamsa, page 100.

and that there was a theatrical art. Since there was a connection to the play, it can be concluded that these women may have been referred to as drama women.

It is said that the play was performed in the Magama area in the past in the estate of Dhammasutha Upasika which is included in Rasavahini.

"...Lankādīpe rōhana janapadē bhikkhu bhikkhuni satha samākinnan anēka satha viharan hirañña suvanna ādī anēka vibhawa samākinnan issara jana samūha samākulan nachchan gītha vādithehi ehi nachcha jana mano nandanān niranthara duk kela pasuna anēka jana kulan vaththuththaya pūjāparēhi saddha kulēhi anū savarithan..."⁵

Rasavahini provides etymology for the word dance in this paragraph as an actor.⁶ What makes sense as an actor is what the play is about. This story which was included in the Rasavahini which was close to the people in the past⁷ is also included in the Saddharmalankara as the Dhammasavanopasika object. This story can be seen in more detail in Saddharmalankara than in Rasavahini.

"...This Lakdiva Ruhuna Colony is home to hundreds of thousands of monks and nuns, hundreds of temples and a host of treasured treasures such as gold, pearls and gems. The floor is lined with a variety of floors ranging from two storeys to three storeys, adorned with a variety of artefacts hundreds of adorned street performers adorned with a series of three million home performances were constantly entertained by theatrical performances by theatrical actors..."⁸

Nachcha Jana in Rasavahini is referred to as Nataka Jana in the Saddharmaratnavaliya. By referring to the drama people, it can be inferred that there may have been a separate group of people associated with the play at that time.

The Chulagalla estate included in the Saddharmaratnakara also contains descriptions of the play.

"... And with a pair of sapphires, like Kimmel, and with beautiful limbs like the calves of Divaran Thisara, and with the trembling trembling of those limbs, the lilopetha sigu vilag, and the long, broad, sunny eyes like the divine Nilupul petals, and all the limbs were adorned with splendor." Hundreds of beauties like eye-catching rasadun pidu graced the stage with their ornate ornaments and performed in the midst of drum beats played by skilled musicians Kindness, Heroism, Mystery, Humor, Horror, Silence, Horror, Rodra are some of the new dramas that go on and on. The worshipers of Lord Maliyadeva, who saw the Son of God coming with great divine glory, with their entourage of divine people who did not leave alone for about sixteen days..."⁹

According to this description, the dance was performed by beauties. The new play has been included in the section on Drama Code and Taste Commentaries included in Bharathamuni's Drama

⁵ Rasavahiniya (2001), Panditha Vanarathana Ranjith, Samayawardena, Colombo 10, page 2.

⁶ Rasavahini, page 14.

⁷ Sinhala Dictionary Compilation Institute, 2018, Sinhala Spelling Dictionary, Department of Cultural Affairs, Colombo 7, Page 124.

⁸ Saddharmalankara, 2017, ed. Migoda Pangaloka Thero, Buddhist Cultural Center, Dehiwala, page 484.

⁹ Saddharmalankara, page 842.

Shastra. Accordingly, it is confirmed that the drama that existed in Sri Lanka was widespread based on the drama of Bharatamuni.¹⁰

The Gotaimbara genre included in the Saddharmalankara also contains a description of the play.

"...the wives also put a toddy-filled toddy mud on their right hand, like a goddess, adorned with various ornaments, such as the dukkavalaya dudkavalaya thisarapata kondamal, and the eight paths with hundreds of similarly adorned women and various armor-bearing vases and incense. All the drunken boards were summoned and ordered to sing theatrical songs as they wished..."¹¹

The Gotaimbara type is a good example of the fact that the play was performed in the homes of different people, depending on their personal needs.

The Mahavamsa states that after the death of King Dutugemunu, the crown of the king was saved by a dramatic woman.

"...To show the public, he got out of the car, rode the Great Seya three yalas and the Seya and the Sangha went to Thusithapura. Even though the women of the theater escaped at some point here, the halls they built here were called Tomo Makuta Muktha Hall..."¹²

According to this evidence it can be confirmed that the art of Lakdiva drama was very advanced during the Anuradhapura period.

Polonnaruwa Era

Literary sources confirm that there was a drama in the Polonnaruwa period as well. In the past, it was compulsory for the children of kings to master the arts. Drama is one of the sixty arts. The Mahavamsa states that King Parakramabahu I learned the arts of dance as well as the arts he learned as a child.

"... The prince himself came to the area of his own accord... By virtue of his diamond-like wisdom, he mastered many of the various arts in the immediate vicinity of the Guru, and became proficient in the various disciplines of jurisprudence, as well as in phonology, in the art of lexicography, and in many disciplines, such as bows and swords..."¹³

According to the Mahavamsa, the masters mastering these arts during their childhood was an integral part of the Polonnaruwa period.

¹⁰ Saddharmalankara, page 605.

¹¹ Mahavamsa, Chapter 32, Stanzas 77-78

¹² Mahavamsa, Chapter 64, Stanzas 3-5

¹³ Mahavamsa, Chapter 69, Stanzas 23-25

It is said that King Parakramabahu who came to the kingdom kept the children of his relatives and nobles in his abode and educated them.

"... And that king is the son of the noble's brothers and grandsons in handicrafts, horse crafts, in foreign languages, in dance songs, successfully stopped and explored in his mansion without the knowledge of the numerous royalty..."¹⁴

King Parakramabahu united the country and chose the city of Polonnaruwa as his kingdom and built a grand palace called Vijayantha Palace in its grandest style. The Mahavamsa also states that a pavilion called Saraswati Mandapa was built among the various temples there. It was used for the enjoyment of fine arts during the king's recess.

"...then Narendra was illuminated near the satellite hall from the Golden Pillar for listening to the various Gadoya and for performing the beautiful sceneries, the main events of his character, illuminated by Hath, are expressed in a charming manner. Named the Saraswati Mandapa...He also built a beautiful hall called Saraswati Mandapa..."¹⁵

It is said that the king, who was thus engaged in the enjoyment of the fine arts, was also an expert in the acting which he had mastered in his childhood. The Mahavamsa states that the king was the foremost among those who enjoyed the new drama.

"...then Parakumba with the conquered enemy kings and living in the city of Pulasthi with the enemy chaos that has vanished. what is being done is to listen to the relic pairs..."¹⁶

This is how the Mahavamsa describes King Parakramabahu's chief queen, who mentions how even caste women engaged in the aesthetic arts during the Polonnaruwa period.

"...The goddess Rupavathi, who was forever enchanted by the subtle and intelligent kindness of grace, like Kusatana Ag, who was delighted with the other virtues such as the devotional rites of the father who uttered those naughty words, behaved like those good minds...like this..."¹⁷

The Mahavamsa states that the drama women also lived in the royal palace built by King Parakramabahu in Polonnaruwa.

"...Statues of the Buddha, adorned with ornate robes and adorned with a series of images of the Almighty, are to be placed here by hand, to pay homage to the Buddha and to recite the Anutthara Dhamma by composing the divine music composed by Rajendra the people who started

¹⁴ Mahavamsa, Chapter 70. Stanzas 85-88

¹⁵ Mahavamsa, Chapter 34, Stanzas 183-485

¹⁶ Mahavamsa, Chapter 73, Stanzas 142-144

¹⁷ Mahavamsa, Chapter 73, Stanzas 10-12

the dance and started dancing with the women who were singing and dancing sweetly were amazed...¹⁸

Thus, it is confirmed that not only King Parakramabahu but also his chief queen was a man of great talent in acting and singing.

King Parakramabahu was inspired not only to build religious shrines but also to build theaters for the development of the arts. The Mahavamsa describes it as a meritorious deed. The Mahavamsa mentions the various buildings made by the king in his native land.

"...The king was a master of charitable work and made other industries in the villages of Ruhuna. Or he made a stupa called Ratnavali which is one hundred and twenty cubits in size at his mother's crematorium in the dairy village... and a theater hall...¹⁹

King Parakramabahu the Great built five theaters in his native Rohana colony, indicating that advanced theatrical art existed in Sri Lanka at that time. Theaters are needed not only to perform classical plays but also to perform folk dramas. Therefore, it is clear that this drama may have been used in theaters as it was without a doubt a classic drama of the real era.²⁰

Dambadeniya Era

During the Polonnaruwa Dambadeniya period, Sanskrit literature was influenced by Sinhala classical works. Inspired by the Sanskrit language and literary traditions, Chandas created beautiful and grammatical books such as Piyumlakuna, Siyabaslakara and Sidath and wrote lyric poems such as Kawsilumina, Muwadevdawa and Sasadava. Eternal literary works of the Tathagata period were also inspired by classical Sanskrit drama literature. Excerpts from Sanskrit plays such as Ratnavali, Shakuntala, Balaramayana and Nagananda can be found in Polonnaruwa literature. This is evident from the writings of other authors, including Gurulugomi, a prominent scholar of the day. Excerpts from the Balaramayana play on the full praise of the Sasadavana Sannaya and the praise of the winter season are also taken from the Shakuntala of the summer season praise.²¹ Excerpts from Ratnavali Natya are found in Gurulugomin's Dharmapradeepika's Sulukaligu Katha and the author has used quotations from Nagananda's play in compiling the Mahaboi Granthipada.²² This shows that Sanskrit drama was closely associated with local folklore and that there was a good understanding of the art of Sanskrit drama at that time.

It is clear from the literary works written during the reign of Dambadeniya that the play was performed as a necessity of the daily life of the society at that time. The author of the Saddharmaratnavaliya, Ven. Dharmasena Thera, used illustrations from his listener's familiar environment in creating the book. Ven. Dharmasena's attention is drawn to Komaline, a regular character in Kavinaluwa, a popular drama tradition of the past. This parable appears several times in that book.

¹⁸ Mahavamsa, Chapter 71, Stanzas 71,72,77

¹⁹ Sinhala Drama and Cultural Background, Page 110

²⁰ Sasadavatha or Kavnya Thilaka with arms. Compilation - Dharmapala Thero, Athuruwelle, (1931). Colombo, page 12, its own, page 37 and its page 16

²¹ Dharmapradeepika, ed. Dharmarama Thero, Ratmalana, (1951), Kelaniya, page 900

²² Commentary on the Mahabodhivansa Bibliography, ed. Dharmarama Thera, Ratmalane, (1910), Colombo, page 129

"...Because the pavilion, which had been left in a state of mourning, was blown away by the wind, and the glory of the sun was not glorified, but the glory of the sun, and the glory of the sun, and the glory of the sun, and the glory of the sun, and the glory of the sun, The lost hand ran away..."²³

He portrays the caricatures of disaster and humiliated theorists by comparing them to the polytheists of a play. There is no doubt that the disciples of Ven. Dharmasena used this parable as they knew about the Komalins. Another example of how theatrical art was rooted among the Sinhalese at that time is the parable of 'a man who weaves an anvil out of a dirty cloth like a man in a hat and walks around until the evening...' *Puramattu Panava Yatu* is acting. Ven. Dharmasena there who had performed in the theaters of the Tathagata era, tried to emphasize the facts through an experience that was closer to his audience by presenting the occasion in the form of a parable.

In addition to this, when Ven. Dharmasena describes the character of Gautama Buddha, at the time of attaining Enlightenment, the Son of God came with his demons to defeat the Bodhisattvas, and he cited a clown parable to indicate that you came in the form of a barren caricature, even though you created many horrible images all around.

"...Except for the deadly crowd and the various weapons such as swords and rods, the Komalins who came to drink the Buddha's Magulai Puramattu, imagining a monster-like form of a monster, surrounded the Bodhisattvas..."²⁴

Puramattu Panava is the act of acting in a play. The parables presented in the *Saddharmaratnavaliya* and the *Saddharmalankara* do not appear in the *Dhammapadattakatha* or the *Rasavahini*, the original Pali works on which these two works are based. They are just Sinhala works.

These are the parables that the monks of that time used to include in their experiences. It can be deduced from the theatrical traditions prevalent in the contemporary society.

Komali is defined in the *Sri Sumangala Dictionary* as Konangiya or the joker.²⁵ Konangiya is the comedian in a play.²⁶ This is what Bishop Edmund Peiris calls Komalin.

"...Komali, Konangiya or Kolam Vu is a regular character in the play. His job is to keep the audience awake with funny words and rags. He was loved by the audience. His role is generally described as that of a greedy, greedy man with a pot-like stomach. However, he treats life and death equally and is ridiculed and ridiculed."²⁷

In this way, it is certain that the character of the comedian in a play is mentioned in the *Saddharmaratnavaliya* and the *Saddharmalankara*. This shows how theatrical art provides ample evidence of the prevalence of planetarium among the Sinhalese people during the Dambadeniya Kingdom.

After this, various information about the art of drama during the Gampola period can be studied through contemporary literary works. This is a wonderful illustration of the use of drama in the *Saddharmalankara* written during that period.

²³ *Saddharmaratnavaliya*, page 813.

²⁴ *Saddharmaratnavaliya*, page 1193.

²⁵ Soratha Thera, (1952), (first half), page 279

²⁶ Soratha Thera, (1952), (first half), page 283

²⁷ Peiries, Edmund, (1978), *Syudied Historical and Cultural*, Colombo, page 245

*"One day, when Rihal Tissa was spending his days rowing, the Sakra Devendras, knowingly inquiring about their wealth of devotion, turned the umbrella into an umbrella and leaned forward, imagining a very old Brahmin Vesak as a caricature taken by the dramatists to make fun of him. They came and got into the boat ..."*²⁸

Here it is clear how the author Saddharmalankara used his listener's knowledge of the costumes used to portray the characters in the play. In view of these facts, the conclusion that Lakdiva drama did not arise in the past due to Theravada Buddhism should be rejected as a conclusion reached without any justification.

Information on what is thought to be a Wessanthara play during or after the reign of Dambadeniya can also be revealed in association with a Pali literary work. Subodhalankaraya, a beautiful Pali book written during the reign of Dambadeniya, is one of the examples used to describe the taste of the play.

"Dukkha rūpeyamāno - Kathananu karunādike

Siyā Sothunamānō - Sōko Wessanharassahi..."

*"...One should not think of how this emotional form of happiness, which is a symptom of misery, tastes so cruel. That is why the mourners who heard the grief over the demise of the sons of the universal sabodhisattvas are happy..."*²⁹

The aforesaid illustration is a good indication that Wessantara was a play. Here it is important to illustrate the story of Wessantara on the one hand because it was a popular story among the Sinhalese. In this illustration, the audience is delighted to hear that in the past, watching a play was known as "hearing".³⁰

We can get a lot of information about the art of drama by examining the literary sources of the Dambadeniya period. The most important factor for this is Dambadanikathikavatha. The Dambadeniya Dialogue Kalikala Sahitya was enacted by King Sarvajna Panditha Parakramabahu. One of the points in the constitutional system regarding the discipline of monks is rooted in the art of drama. There the monks are commanded to 'make ignorant of the poetic dramatic science, and to make others ignorant'.³¹ The reason for imposing a discourse on the monks to separate themselves from the use of arts such as poetry and drama is because the monks entered the art of drama during this period. This is to prevent you from harming the Sasana. The Bhikkhu has been banned from performing in the Dambadeniya discourse.

During the reign of the Dambadeniya dynasty, there was a discourse forbidding the teaching of theatrical arts to the monks, led by King Parakramabahu II. This is a very important document written about the daily routine of King Parakramabahu II who enacted the Constitution. This document, which is currently in the library of the Great Museum of Great Britain, is called Camp Customs. This document provides information on how the children of the Sinhala kings lived their daily lives and gives us a better understanding of how they taste the fine arts on a daily basis. The ministers and parliamentarians who witnessed King Parakramabahu II's daily activities are in a state of ecstasy. After lunch, he was brought to the Kokila Bhovili bed in the erotic pavilion, brought to the watchtower during the day, played games, got up on the floor, put on the Rajapala oil, sat down on the Ranyahan oil, sat down thoughtfully, got up and

²⁸ Saddharmalankara, page 600

²⁹ Subodhalankara, page 353

³⁰ Dela Bandarala (2005), 140-142

³¹ Conversation Magazine, ed. Jayathilaka, D. B. (1984), Colombo, page 19

sat on it for twenty-two hours... Then, before dinner, he engaged in other government work. Let them be happy with the dance and song they received' the camp tradition states that.

Even before 50 years have passed since the discourse, the monks have focused on the play, and Dalada Siritha testifies that he was engaged in the study and education of the play. This reveals that there was a teaching of drama at the Parakumba Pirivena in Kurunegala. The author of the book, Devradasagina, also mentions his teachers in the introduction. When mentioning his name, Devradadam Pasagina mentions the name of his teacher before his name with reverence:

*"Saku Magada Helu Nalu Kiwisata Egathu Aduru Etherindu Parakumba Piravadena Somiguna Sarana Sikara Tusva Saladakuluneni Devradadampasagina Van Sitha."*³²

This shows how Ven. Parakumba Pirivena Adhipati Thera was well known for his knowledge of drama. This reveals how even the orders contained in the discourse established by the state order were rendered ineffective by contemporary membership requirements. This shows that drama was an essential part of the educational process as it was an essential part of people's lives. Although Parakumba Pirivena is a religious educational institution, the laity were also educated here.

The needs of the laity could not be ignored either. For this reason, it was essential that the monks, as lecturers, be knowledgeable about the art of drama. Although forbidden by discourse, the law is confined to a document and can be seen in this age and in later eras.

It is reported that various professionals and dramatists accompanied the princes who came to Sri Lanka from South India during the reign of Kurunegala. The Wannipuwatha, a collection of Hugh Neville pamphlets in the British Museum Library, tells the story of five princes who claimed the kingdom of Madras at the time and sought political asylum in Sri Lanka. Those who arrived were traditionally accompanied by their escorts. It is said that there were craftsmen of various professions among the entourage. The mention of a Nadagam (poet) artist among them reveals information about the art of Lakdiva drama. The princes mentioned in the Wannipuvatha came to Sri Lanka in the 13th century. Although it is believed that the first playwrights came here with this arrival during the reign of King Bhuvanekabahu I (1272 - 1284), it is clear that the history of Lakdiva drama goes back nearly 700 years.

*"...It is also said that during the reign of King Bhuvanekabahu I, some of the Pagukara Paksa princes, descendants of the royal family of Madras, came to Ceylon due to the crime of those kings. An elephant and several pentatonic deities came to the sea in a ship. They were Kalukumara Bandara, Ilangasinghe Bandara, Divakara Bandara, Wanaviraja Bandara, Ilangasinghe Divakara Bandara, the Kalukapu Golle Hathdenai, the Rathachariya, the Pallankara Thotiya, the Delisamanna, the Mevallakkara, the Vahunvalan, the Kalinagavara, the Sankanada Guru, the Suddhahaluwa, the Sunnankhuva, the Sittanchariya, the Baligosakaya, the Nadagamguruva, the Viduusamukkara, the Manampey Arachchila, the Yakkudinaide came aboard a ship for three months. King Bhuvanekabahu gave the proper offerings to it, handed over the Nindaganga and the Gabadaganga and ordered the god Ayyana to the east of Kataragama and to the west..."*³³

There is another evidence similar to the arrival of the aforesaid playwright in the Puskola book called Wannikadaimpotha.

³² Dalada Siritha

³³ Wannipuwatha, or 6006 (140) (a palm-leaf book), British Museum Library

"...From this the Venerable Bhuvanekabanu descended to this Sinhala island. After that 7 relatives joined to the Vihara in Malwa Rata. It was a hostile country. Since they could not serve without ransom, they went out of the Bodhi Mandala Vihara and boarded ships. The carpenter of Kotta King Pasamesinghe of Telugu made the Samban, the carpenter of Paliguirugal, the carpenter who built the Samukkava, Abaranabadala, Kapuruhettiya, Pakkuhettiya, Wettilahettiya, Sunnombi hettiya, Sandunhettiya, Wahunwalan karumantha metiliyana pandithaya, Sankanadaguruva, Thalavirindu, Suddhanada bali viridu, Nadagam Panikkiya, Dalisamanna, Suddhahaluwa etc. when my people saw these names, they took the gifts one by one and ran down to the swamps where the clouds started blowing more and more. The Tamil Hetti Hamba landed at Kuragala and came to Karaduwa and sat on the Welparappu..."³⁴

The aforesaid Wannikadaimpotha also tells of a group of migrants who came to Sri Lanka from South India during the reign of King Bhuvanekabahu. These were the aristocrats of the Mallaraja dynasty.

It is said that they too came to Sri Lanka to get rid of the state fear that had befallen them. Otherwise, it may be based on a work based on a single story, or later writers may have documented something in folklore. However, the peculiarity of both books is that they included dramatists. These facts play a significant role in acknowledging the arrival of playwrights in Sri Lanka during the reign of King Bhuvanekabahu, and literary evidence suggests that there was a knowledge of the art of drama in Sri Lanka even before that period and that it was a very popular art form among the common people. (In the Saddharmaratnavali of Ven. Dharmasena written during the Dambadeniya period which has come to our notice earlier³⁵ in the Saddharmalankara of the Gampola period.³⁶ Not to mention the comedy about the comalian in the play.)

Mukkarahatana is a book about aesthetics from India during the Kotte Kingdom. Mukkarahatana is the story of a support army brought from Kanchipura, Kaveri Pattanam and Keelakkarai in southern India to drive out the invaders from Punnala during the reign of Parakramabahu VI. It is said that five thugs were among those who came with the support forces. Today, thovilkars are the craftsmen who are engaged in the rituals of machinery, balitovil etc. However, in the Battle of Mukkara and contemporary writings, the thug is used in an even broader sense. Traditional martial artists, including prehistoric craftsmen, have also been known by the common name of thugs. This may be due to the fact that in the ancient Sinhala social system, astrology, pacifism, drumming, dance, drama, etc., were largely entrusted to a particular caste. Therefore, it can be said that those who were engaged in all forms of pacifism and performing arts may have been tempted to call themselves Thugs, considering the work done by any caste. Evidence can be cited by the old Sabaragamuwa Secretariat, a contemporary document of the Mukkara battle, to illustrate how those engaged in the performing arts were generally referred to as thugs, regardless of caste. According to this ancient state register, all the performing arts artists were known as thugs. The names of the thugs of the aforesaid secretariat are named as Marapana Kolakkara, Balangoda Naiyandikara, Emagama Weerasangilia and Emagama Hulawaliya Naiyandikara.³⁷ It should be noted here that these personal names were formed based on their occupation, and in particular the personal family name had a relationship with the job.

The Sri Sumangala Dictionary refers to the kolakkaraya as the clown Konangiya of a play³⁸ and the nayyandi as a dance performed during temple processions.³⁹ The columnist is Konangiya. Otherwise the comedian in a play. According to Ven. Soratha Thero, this is a word that came into use in the Sinhala

³⁴ Wann Bar Book

³⁵ Saddharmaratnavaliya, page 813

³⁶ Saddharmalankara, 1934, 278, 283, 312 pages

³⁷ Gnanavimala Thero, Kiriella, (1942) Ancient Documents of Sabaragamuwa, Kiriella, page 191

³⁸ Soratha Thero, Welivitiye, (1952), Dictionary of Sri Sumangala, (First Half), Colombo, page 279

³⁹ Soratha Thero, Welivitiye, (1952), (First Half), page 284

language along with the Telugu language. Nayandi is a Tamil name derived from Saradama.⁴⁰ Gayfod in Tamil means joke or sarcasm. (Nayyandi can also be described as a comedy for fun.) Performing artists of the Sabaragamuwa Province are classified as thugs according to the aforesaid code names. This proves that Hulawalain, the temple performers and the kolam dramatists are all commonly known as thugs. This shows that the fine arts were not limited to one caste, but from the royal palace to the saddle hut.

Kotte Era

The most detailed information on the art of drama can be found in the literary works written during the period of Sri Jayawardenapura in Kotte. It often mentions a type of theater called Kavinaluwa. Kavinaluwa Kotte was one of the most popular performing arts during the reign of Sri Jayawardenapura. The statement made by the Venerable Veedagama Maha Maitreya about the beauty of the Buddha is about Kavinaluwa as it provides information to make it clear that Kavinalu is one of the two genres of poetry and drama.

<i>Dusiri maga</i>	<i>newathi</i>
<i>Silwath danan se</i>	<i>nithi</i>
<i>Kavinaluva rasa</i>	<i>niwithi</i>
<i>Natana natawana ayek nam</i>	<i>nethi (98)</i>

It is clear from this verse that kavinalu is not a subject of poetry and drama but a kind of drama called kavinalu. This is a good example of the fact that 'Tath Kavinalu' required actors and producers to perform in a special genre, 'there is no dancer', which is a direct, theatrical tradition.

Gira Sandesha also mentions instances of this drama being mentioned in the tradition. The writer Gira Sandesha choose an ambalama for the passenger to spend the night with his angel. The angel listens to the conversations of the passengers who stay there at night and hears information about the daily happenings in the society. It is said that there was a drama called Lakdiva Kavinalu at that time in the conversation that took place in Ambalama and Ramaseetha stories were presented in a dramatic manner in association with it.

<i>Ayek misadituga</i>	<i>th</i>
<i>Noyek kavinalu rasa da</i>	<i>th</i>
<i>Pera thama thamuga</i>	<i>th</i>
<i>Ramaseetha katha</i>	<i>thepalath (114)</i>

In addition, King Parakramabahu VI, who held the throne of Sri Jayawardenapura Kotte, was also noted to have visited Kavinalu. This is stated in the Gira sandesha.

<i>Viridun hera da</i>	<i>rama</i>
<i>Weda rada neethi asa</i>	<i>rama</i>
<i>Dena awisip sa</i>	<i>rama</i>
<i>Siyal kavinalu esi nohe</i>	<i>rama (153)</i>

⁴⁰ Karunathilaka W. S., (2002) Tamil-Sinhala Alphabet, Colombo, page 487

This statement in the Gira sandesha is based on the truth. King Parakramabahu VI was well versed in the art of drama. In the Selalihini Sandesha of Thotagamuwa Sri Rahula Thero, King Parakumba knew the Tripitaka, abandoned corruption, strategically suppressed the arrogance of violent enemies, united the whole of Lanka, and ended up as the master of all weapons and poetry.

Hala dusiri dana thevala munidu bana
Kela path siyal awsip kavinalu sathana
Ola mola rupun dapa meda pee upanena
Kala mulu lakdiwa eka sesath sewana (97)

The King himself has mentioned his knowledge of poetry. The following is the reference to the author of the book Namruwanmal written by him.

Geburu noyek thaku – wiyarana sayuru thera path
Aththevalada nalu kawu – siyal lakdiw muluye (747)

Sanaha lo sawan – kiwikam kan rasanen
Dasavamiyanata koda – sudukiwikath bisew othuye (749)

Wiyatha perakumba – sirisagabo nara pawara
Siyabas namrewanmal – peheyum wan kele mee (750)

Many lay clergymen of the time of Sri Jayewardenepura were well versed in the king as well as the poet. Its opening vocals show that the play Sinhavalli, believed to have been written by Philip Cinco, is not his own work. An examination of the opening vocals reveals that he later edited a script written by a Buddhist writer in the past. This is confirmed by the poet's predecessors' refuge as the Guru's Saranina, who was virtuous and had a pre-existing ancestry. Its final verses are as follows.

"thimirayata pehedimaya dipamen eluwadana
Mratha therunta sihipariksha gena ne na
Pemethi thuta pera pevathi puwatha dena
Sawan di mahath wu man Priya wadawa na
Elupadawa Prathama kith widagama thotagama
Da kawiswara pabada wu wadane na
Natakasayawa serasu kaviragayen sinhavalli
Natharestha vanami sabe bethiye na⁴¹

⁴¹ Copies of Ancient Sinhala Drama, (D.H) Page 27

Despite the weaknesses of the language used in the composition of the poem, its meaning can be stated as follows.

"...Like a lamp to receive light in darkness, the poetic wisdom of the glorious sages is remembered with creative wisdom, the news from the past, which brings great joy to the heart with joy and love by the famous Ven. Veedagama, Thotagamuwe and Kaviswara Theras commend the play which was composed in Sinhala verse in a dramatic manner under the name of Sinhavalli adorned with Kaviragas..."

An important point that is clear from this is that the Sinhavalli play or the fiction associated with it was fabricated by the forerunners of Thotagamuwe, Veedagama and Kaveeswara. If not, they were involved in the creation of the play.

Here is a connection between the Veedagama, Thotagamu and Kaveeswara Theras and the poet. It is said that the Parivenadhipatis who presided over the Thotagamu Vijayaba Pirivena and the Keragala Padmawathi Depiriwana, two of the foremost academies in the island which were famous and highly regarded at that time, were well versed in the tradition. Ven. Siri Rahal Thero of Thotagamuwa himself said this in the Parawi Sandesha.

<i>Kadawuru kula upan redi thotagamu</i>	<i>piyasa</i>
<i>Seda dath siyal kavinalu magada saku</i>	<i>basa</i>
<i>Kada kumaridu waralath pasalos</i>	<i>wayasa</i>
<i>Wadahala rahal wedi then kalarev</i>	<i>sadeda (208)</i>

Dominated the Keragala Padmawathi Pirivena, a science institute in the forest tradition ven. Vinaratana Thera carefully examined the taste and depth of the poems and discarded them as a precaution. It is clear that you saw the kavinaluva well and therefore rejected it.

<i>Kala seta sathara ki isivaran</i>	<i>guru</i>
<i>Nola dosak sadalakar in kara</i>	<i>soduru</i>
<i>Gala rasei pewasu kavinalu</i>	<i>geburu</i>
<i>Bala palapayakei nokale ya</i>	<i>garu</i>

However, the Hansa Sandesha states that the students who were educated at the Padmawathie Parivenasthana in Keragala studied Kavinaluwa. This shows that even though the Tat Parivenadhipati Thero rejected the play religiously, he had given the necessary permission to study the art of drama in his institution as a member requirement.

<i>Asesa desa parasidu porana</i>	<i>kiviyara</i>
<i>Wisesasayen pewasu noyeka</i>	<i>manahara</i>
<i>Dose duralamini sada wiyarana</i>	<i>lakara</i>
<i>Ese kiyanu wisithuru kavinalu</i>	<i>sathara (182)</i>

According to the Gira Sandeshaya, the group of scholars who followed the earlier poets of the Vijayaba Pirivena Wenuma and were well versed in the aesthetics and grammar of Chandasa read Sanskrit, Magadha, Tamil and Kavinalu.

Sirimath soduru e vehera thena thena lakulu
Ida sith lesata pera kivyara siri rukulu
Denagath sadalakara wiyarana wiyath mulu
Pawa sath saku magada helu demala kavinalu (227)

Thus, it is clear that the poet who came to the attention of the distinguished monks who worked during the reign of Sri Jayawardenapura Kotte studied in the academies headed by them.

Apart from this, the Venerable Veedagama Maitreya Thero of Mahanetrprasadamula also says that he has a good understanding of poetry.

"Pasan lakdiw sada – muva madala men hobana
Palam aram siri piri – widagama wehera redi
Pasak thun losidu – idu budu radun wadahaha
Thewala sayura kubuyon – sirini gath niya athlen
Noyek kavinalu sada – wiyarana lakara wiyathun
Muduna sedu methmahaneth – pamula maha theridu sada"⁴²

It is further stated in this work that poetic drama is a blessing to the poet and others, as some say, that poetry is not a term confined to the textbook.

Another thing that should not be forgotten here is the interest shown by the monks and their lay clergy who were prominent in the field of study during the Sri Jayewardenepura period. The lamp was written by the poet Dedigamuwe Divakara of the Thotagamu dynasty.⁴³ It was written by a monk named Buwaneka who lived in the Kelaniya Rajamaha Viharaya⁴⁴ and was a student of the Ven. Dankatinaya is an essay by the great Maitreya Thero⁴⁵ and the Pathasa,⁴⁶ Ambavidamana⁴⁷ and Madevikathawa⁴⁸ were written by a poet named Ekaviraja Panditha. He was also a student of the Maitreya Thero. The story of Gajaba is also a creation of Ven. Veedagama.⁴⁹ Amarasaya is an essay by Sallayale Thera.⁵⁰ The story of Ganaruwa included in the Panthiskolmura is an essay by a grandson of Maliya Mahatherindu Pajayaveda Panditha.⁵¹ As we have seen above, it is clear from the Seventh Elusilo that the nobles, kings as well as the aristocracy of the time were well versed in poetry. Panikki, who invited the author to write this book, had a good knowledge.

⁴² Kavlakunu Minimal, 84 - 86

⁴³ Kolmura Poems, page 17

⁴⁴ Kolmura Poems, page 47

⁴⁵ Kolmura Poems, page 27,28

⁴⁶ Kolmura Poems, page 95,96

⁴⁷ Kolmura Poems, page 134

⁴⁸ Kolmura Poems, page 265

⁴⁹ Kolmura Poems, page 484

⁵⁰ Kolmura Poems, page 98

⁵¹ Kolmura Poems, page 49

rath sath path eka yuth suugath pada mudun
Dun mal kadak men nithin
Yuth meth sath gunayen sathan reki
Nenin dath sip siyal kavnaluth
Sathkith yuth me panikki nam
Methithumek aradhanawen mahath
Seth ath path wanu was siyak elu
Silo kimen thilona wadim (101)

Alagiyawanna Mukavetti, who lived in the Seethawaka period, states in his Savul Sandeshaya that he was knowledgeable about poetry in the author's recommendation.

Geburu saku magada kavinalu sidu kim dee
Mithuru novana kavigajasiha sirith dee
Seduru alagiyawanna mukuveti nemathi sudde
Miyuru pada rasethi me sevul asna yedee (206)

In the Mayura Sandeshaya, which is believed to have been written during the reign of Gampola around 1378 AD, it is mentioned in the praise of Galle that there were poets trained from an early age. This shows that in the past women also used to act in poems.

Balle purudu kavinalu siyalle
Iille wadan dena ladunudulle
Nelle kothenakath lowa mululle
Galle sirida daku noma pekille (81)

Commenting on this verse, Ven. Baddegama Wimalawansa Thero says:

According to the poem, poets have been practicing everything since childhood (since childhood). There is no doubt that the name of the actor mentioned here is the play... This certainly suggests that Kavinalu had been involved in children's education since childhood.⁵²

Kolama was another advanced drama that was popular during the Sri Jayawardenapura period in Kotte.

Since the Kolam acting was a popular drama at that time, Ven. Vidagama Maitreya Thero had to explain things to his readers, the Kolam was used as an illustration in Loweda Sagarava.

Kala rasa musu bojana kara pem
Gala suwadethi sadunuth manaram
Lala abarana risi lesa selasum
Pala giya veni bahuruu kolam (51)

⁵² Wimalawansa Thero (1988), page 100

Considering the foregoing, it is clear that Sarachchandra's view that 'the art of Lakdiva drama did not come into being due to Theravada Buddhism' is a controversial concept. In addition, Sarachchandra's depiction of Sinhala rural culture reveals the contradiction in his view of the birth of Lakdiva drama. Believing that Buddhist rituals are devoid of collectivism, he says that in folk beliefs, people gather to perform dances, songs, drums and trumpets, and to perform dramatic scenes and masks. But at one point he tried to say that there was a clear distinction between village culture and Buddhist culture in his interpretation of dance and drama, and that 'music does not escape' from this culture because the rituals that characterize dance and singing are not part of the Buddhist faith. Sometimes he tries to divide the cultures in a straight line. Such a simple parallel separation can never be seen in Sinhala culture or any other culture and it is clear that there was a harmonious relationship with each other. However, the writer has to admit that they were dramatic elements of the Sinhala rural culture. It has been acknowledged that folk dramas and dramas have been used in Buddhist rituals on an earlier occasion, but this work has created an unnecessary problem by interpreting and analyzing even though they should be accepted as correlations of the same culture. This is due to the fact that Theravada Buddhism sought to establish that theatrical art had lost its potential. Sarachchandra sometimes refutes his own arguments to substantiate his arguments.

"...The following quote is a factor. Other examples are that the folk arts sought the glory of the great tradition. Kandyan dancers associate with the character of the Buddha in Vannam. At some religious festivals, they sing and dance to the Sufi commentary. Horseback riding is the process by which Prince Siddhartha ascended on horseback as Kanthaka. The song of the Tooth Relic is a lyrical composition composed by Pranam Oral. Buddhist stories such as Sandakinduru Jataka and Maname Kathawa (Chulladhanugga Jataka) were used as news objects for Gaminatika. But these examples show that the villagers took possession of the great tradition, but that the Chula tradition was not indebted to the great tradition in terms of artistic form. With regard to the music and dance of the Chula tradition, it seems that these arts flourished when they came in contact with the more advanced Duvida arts and when they were considered by scholars and Buddhists.⁵³

Archaeological Source

Evidence can be found that Sri Lankan drama has existed in the past under archeological sources as well. Evidence from inscriptions and ruins can also be used to provide information on ancient drama in Sri Lanka.

Cree. BC Several inscriptions from the first to the third century were in charge of several administrative divisions of the regime at that time mention has been made of several officers who held the posts of Aga Adeka, Ati Adeka, Pakara Adeka, Nava Adeka, Pana Adeka, Nrutaya Adeka, Rupa Adeka and Sivika Andaka. Mr. Paronavithana states that the term Adaka or Adeka mentioned in these inscriptions is similar to the directorial posts included in Kautilya Economics identified as Horse Director, Hand Director, Co-Director, Road Director, Choreographer, Drama Director, Commodore Director or Commercial Director, Director of Coin Issuance and Director of Hidolu.⁵⁴

Thus Cray. BC in the first and third centuries, the performing arts were associated with the ruling class. The existence of a separate post as Drama Director confirms that the art of drama was at a very advanced level at that time.

In addition to the name of the author unknown, the inscription is also referred to as Tachadapa. Andaka is another name used to describe the play's director. Archaeological sources confirm that there were directors in the past who created the play.

⁵³ Sarachchandra, (1968) page 27.

⁵⁴ Paronavithana S, 1959, University of Ceylon History of Ceylon, 2 part, Colombo, page 233.

In addition to the name Nriya Adaka, it is also referred to as Nachadaka in inscriptions. Nachadaka is another name used to describe a play director. Archaeological sources confirm that there were directors in the past who created the play.

Ancient cave inscriptions confirm that they were professional dramatists even during the period when Buddhism was spreading in Lanka. These cave inscriptions are written above the drip of stone caves donated by the contributors for the residence of the monks. The articles mention the names of the donors who made offerings to the Bhikku Sangha in the relevant cave. It seems that from the early days of Mahinda Thera until much later, monks used to live in such caves.

Articles in such caves also mention donations made by dramatists. Korawela. Among the inscriptions written during the Anuradhapura period in Medagama, Periyakaduwa and Sasseruwa are some caves which contain such information.

- "Thotayamiya gapathi okdhaka thisha putha upashaka nata thishasha daran shagasha dine" (Korawakgala)
(Thotayamiya householder Majaka Tissa's son Upasaka dramatist Tissa's alms is restored to the Sangha.)⁵⁵
- "Nada thishaha bariya parumakali bramanaya lene medagama viharaya"
(The wife of the playwright Tissa is the cave of the leading Bhramana.)⁵⁶
- "Gapathi rupadaka thishaha lene"
(Periyakadu Viharaya)
- "Gapathi nata wudaha gapathatha shamudaya nata waluya kaditha" (Sesseruwa)
(Housewife Natyakara Woodage Gahapathini Natyakara Chaluge Daughter Samudda's Cave)⁵⁷
- "Shobikana aga ka(mi)na marumakana nata chulaha lene athatha anagatha chathudisa shahasha shobamath wuwan gen aga pemini kaminage" (Kamini)
(The cave of the grandson of the playwright Chula was offered to the four-legged monks who did not come.)⁵⁸
- "Nata chulabha jitha dama kdahaya shamudaya (1016) (Sesseruwa)
(Dramatist Chula's Daughter Dramatist Dhamma's Wife Samudda's Cave)⁵⁹

Details related to the art of drama can be found by focusing on the cave inscriptions above. This cave drama can be confirmed as a cave dedicated to the Bhikku Sangha by the chiefs. The names Nata Nisha, Nadi Thiha, Rupadaka Gaha, Nata Vuha, Nata Vulaha used in the inscriptions mean playwright, playwright and illustrator. Based on that source,⁶⁰ it is possible to confirm that there was a drama in the past.

An inscription found during excavations in the Rajagala area provides information about a theater. According to the inscription, rations are charged for admission to the performing arts.⁶¹ The charging of rations in the past for watching the play also confirms the development of the art of drama in that era. If rations were charged for watching the play in the Rajagala area, there is no doubt that an advanced drama tradition existed in the area in the past. In addition to the inscriptions, the ruins also provide information that the past was a theatrical art. Here you can see stone carvings, buildings and statues in the category of ruins.

⁵⁵ Mudiyanse Nandasena, 2016 Collection of Sinhala Inscriptions, S. Godage & Brothers, Colombo 10, Page 119

⁵⁶ Code of Sinhala Inscriptions, page 151

⁵⁷ That, page 161

⁵⁸ That, page 170

⁵⁹ That, page 162

⁶⁰ Sinhala Inscription Words Alphabetical, Page 154

⁶¹ Interview with Prof. Karunaratne Attanayake, University of Sri Jayewardenepura on 04.12.2013

A statue of actress has also been found in connection with the inscription found during excavations in the Rajagala area. Researchers conclude that the statue depicts a playwright at the time. The statue can be seen in the costume belonging to a playwright.⁶²

There is evidence that there were theaters in the past associated with the Ruhunu Maha Vehera or Magul Maha Vihara. Built according to the Egyptian style of architecture, the Magul Maha Viharaya also houses the Bhakna Hall, Pratima Hall, Bheri Hall, Sabha Hall, Sacrifice Hall, Yakshadhrama and Dance Hall. Accordingly, it is confirmed that this drama was also performed in the temples and monasteries of that period.⁶³

Sculptures found near the Ramba Vihara in Ruhuna also provide information on the existence of a dramatic art. The statue is 18 cm long and 10 cm wide. One sculpture depicts a drumming scene and the other sculpture depicts acting. A large number of such carved plaques have been found in association with the 23-11 builds. Thus, it is possible to confirm that there were dramatic arts in the past.⁶⁴

Based on the literary and archeological sources mentioned above, it can be confirmed that the play existed from the pre-Buddhist era to the Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa eras.

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⁶² That

⁶³ Kumara Sugath Mahinda, 2017, Magul Maha Viharaya or Ruhunu Maha Vehera, S Godage And brothers, Colombo 10, page 172

⁶⁴ Karunaratne Asoka, H. H., 2016, An Inquiry into the Semi-High Clay Pottery Boards Found at Manavulu Ramba Vihara, Kumara Pushpa Janaka, Godage Bookshop, Colombo 10, Page 356