

## [Book Excerpt: The Wonder that Is Sanskrit](#)

Category : [July/August/September 2012](#)

Published by dharmalingam on Jun. 06, 2012

Book Excerpt

### The Wonder that Is Sanskrit

Exploring the astounding word plays and linguistic legerdemain of our poets

The following are excerpts from Chapter Ten, "Interesting and Amazing Creations in Sanskrit" of The Wonder that is Sanskrit, written by Sampadananda Mishra and Vijay Poddar and published by the Sri Aurobindo Society in 2006. This chapter can be found at [scr.bi/WonderSanskrit](http://scr.bi/WonderSanskrit); the book itself is unfortunately out of print.

#### Introduction

There is in Sanskrit a whole body of literature that is based on a play with the language. This is not great literature or inspired poetry, but more in the nature of linguistic acrobatics. These writings are often obtuse and not easy to understand because they require a great mastery over all the complex grammatical structures. Therefore, they are known as adhamakavyas, meaning "poems of a lower quality." However, far from being worthless, they demonstrate the amazing possibilities inherent in the language, along with the originality and creativity of the writers.

Several great poets, including Kalidasa, Bhartrihari, Magha and Sriharsha have made use of the adhamakavyas, sometimes even in their major works, in a spirit of playful indulgence. There are instances where entire epics have been written in this style. These are known as chitrakavyas and are part of the alankarashastra, or Sanskrit rhetorics. Some of the creations border on the unbelievable and would perhaps be impossible in any other language. Here we will look briefly at a few examples to enjoy their flavor and taste.

#### Varnachitras

The varnachitras are shlokas written with certain constraints on the use of











