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## Contents

1.	A Note on Modern Assamese Poetry since the 1980s to the Present	Suhajit Bhadra	05
2.	A Critical Study on the Idea of Asian Century.....	Rajkumar Gudigonda	10
3.	Environmental Ethics under the Domain of Islam and Hinduism	Tariq Rafeeq Khan	
		Vijaya Laxmi Gupta	13
4.	The Crisis of Consciousness in the Cry, The Peacock	Ahilya B.Barure	16
5.	The Prisons We Broke: Self Identity of Dalit Women	Aher Vaishali B.	18
6.	The Politics of Disaster Management ...	Shaista Afzal	21
7.	Effect Of Conditioning Training On Selected Psychological ...	Ajaz Ahmad Shah	27
8.	Effect Of Isotonic And Isometric Exercises On Anxiety Level ...	Khurshid A. Hurrath	30
9.	Effects Of Weight Training On Selected Motor Fitness.....	Farhat Hamid	32
10.	Effect Of Therapeutic Exercises On Mental Health Among...	Faheem Faisal	34
11.	Impact of Literacy on Agricultural Productivity in ....	Anil P.Wagh	36
12.	Immigrant thoughts on Gandhi with special reference to V.S. Naipaul	Jestendra N. Deshmukh	38
13.	Elizabethan Poetry and Prose	Dr.Mahananda C. Dalvi	40
14.	Linguistic Style In Manju Kapurs Literary Work	Dr. D. N. Deshmukh	42
15.	Socio-economic conditions of elderly people in India	Hilal Ahmad Mir	
		Geeta Shrivastava	43
16.	India's NSG Bid: Prospects and Challenges	Dr. Muzaffar A.Gannai	45
17.	Evaluation of Road Density in Aurangabad Division	Ghodke Jitendra V.	47
18.	Lesbianism Is Shobha De's Strange Obsession	Dr.Hodgekar Varsha. V	49
19.	The role of libraries in a knowledge-based society in changing scenario	Dr.Prashant S. Thakare	50
20.	A Study on the Populer Folk Music of West Bengal	Dr. Sudhir B. Mohod	51
21.	A Comparative Study of Aristotle's Poetics and Bharata's Natyashastra	Arun M. Jadhav	53
22.	Muscle: Body's Largest Tissue	Destmukh Vijay Y.	55
23.	An Overview of Filial Relationship in the Literary Art of Mahesh Dattani	Omprabha A. Lohakare	57
24.	The increasing Problem of Environment Pollution and ...	Dinesh Baboo	60
25.	A Study Of Aggression And Mental Health Among ...	Dr. Rajesh B. Shirsath	
		Santoshi V. Bhutekar	62
26.	Social Security In Unorganised Sector	Dr. Sonal A. Ubale	65
27.	Non-Performing Assets in Indian Banking	Dr. Subhsh Savant	68
28.	Hunger as Central Theme in Bhabani Bhattacharya's Novel So Many Hungers	Ravindra Singh	74
29.	Modern Trends in Sports Psychology	Ms. Reena Rai	77

## A Comparative Study of Aristotle's Poetics and Bharata's Natyashastra

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Aristotle's *Poetics* and Bharata's *Natyashastra* are the ground breaking critical texts which give systematic theories of European classical criticism and Indian classical criticism respectively. Therefore, a comparative study of Aristotle's *Poetics* and Bharata's *Natyashastra* is quite interesting and fruitful in the context of Indian literary criticism and theory. So in this paper an attempt has been made to highlight the major similarities and difference between *Poetics* and *Natyashastra* with a compare and contrast method. Both *Natyashastra* and *Poetics* are in chapter form. *Natyashastra* contains 36 chapters where as *Poetics* contains 26 chapters.

### The Plan of Natyashastra :-

- The 36 chapters dealing extensively with the different aspects of Natya.
- The first 27 chapters, except the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> deal with drama, including acting and make up.
- In 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> some sages ask different questions to Bharata.
- The six chapters from chapter 27 onwards (28,29,30,31,32,33) deal with music and musical instruments.
- The next the three chapters (34, 35, 36) are again devoted to a discussion of drama.

### The Plan of Poetics:-

- The 26 chapters dealing with the different form of literature - Poetics (epic), Drama (Tragedy, Comedy)
- The first four chapters and the twenty fifth are devoted to poetry.
- The fifth in a general way to comedy, epic and tragedy.
- The following fourteen (6-19) exclusively to tragedy.
- The next three (20, 21, 22) to poetic diction.
- The next two (23, 24) to epic poetry.
- The last two a comparison of epic poetry and tragedy.

Here in the both *Natyashastra* and *Poetics* we found that maximum chapters dealt with drama (Natya, Tragedy & Comedy). In *Poetics*, Aristotle devoted some chapters to poetry where as in *Natyashastra* there is no special chapter for poetry. In *Natyashastra* six chapters are devoted to music and musical instruments on the other hand in *Poetics* there is no special chapter for music and musical instruments.

**Theory of Imitation:-** Following Plato Aristotle calls the poet an imitator like a painter or any other artist, who imitates on the three object - "Things as they were or are, things as they are said or thought to be, or things as they

ought to be' - in other words, what is past or present, what is commonly believed, and what is ideal.

Bharata also calls dramatist an imitator and for him 'Natya is an imitative representation of all seven islands'. In the definition of Natya, Bharata explained it.

"The Natya is depiction and communication pertaining to the emotion of the entire world..." (*Natyashastra*)

Occasionally piety, occasionally fighting and occasionally slaughter are represented in tragedy and occasionally sport, piece of mind, laughter are represented in comedy.

"The pious behavior of those who practice religion, the passion of those who indulge in sexual pleasure the impression of those who go by a wicked path, the act of self restraint of those who are disciplined." (*Natyashastra*)

The above quoted paragraph is related to the object of imitation. It imitates 'men in action' as explained by Aristotle in his ground breaking treatise, *Poetics*.

**Rasa Theory and Chudhars :-** While discussing the two, eastern and western treatises we come across with similarities and differences regarding the Rasa theory of Bharata & Criticism of Aristotle.

### Rasa Theory :-

- **Nirukta / Etymology:-** Derived from the verb 'ras' i.e. to taste.
- **Karika / Definition:-** "Rasa is a harmonious combination of sthayibhava (8), Anubhava(8) & Vyabichari(33)"
- **Rasa:-** Abiding mental conditions + The psycho - physical conditions (Sativika / Anubhava) and transient mental states.

### Types of Rasa (8):-

- |                          |   |                       |
|--------------------------|---|-----------------------|
| 1) Love (Shringara)      | - | Erotic in nature.     |
| 2) Terror (Rudra)        | - | Furious in nature.    |
| 3) Heroic (Vira)         | - | Courageous in nature. |
| 4) Disgust (Vibhatsa)    | - | Odious in nature.     |
| 5) Humour (Hasya)        | - | Pathetic in nature.   |
| 6) Pathos (Karuna)       | - | Pathetic in nature.   |
| 7) Wonder (Adbhuta)      | - | Marvellous in nature  |
| 8) Frightful (Bhayanaka) | - | Terrible in nature    |

### Division of Rasas:-

#### Primary:-

- 1) Shringara (Love)

- 2) Rūdra (Frenzy)
- 3) Vira (Heroic)
- 4) Vibhāsa (Disgust)

#### Secondary:-

- 1) Hāsa (Humour)
- 2) Karuṇa (Pathos)
- 3) Adbhūta (Wonder)
- 4) Bhayanaka (Frightful)

The secondary rasas derived respectively from the first four. The comic sentiment becomes possible from the erotic, and the pathetic from the furious, the origin of the marvellous is from heroic and the terrible from the odious. The term rasa has a twofold significance: It means the 'aesthetic content' of literary art and 'aesthetic relish' which the reader - spectator enjoys.

**Katharsis:-** The term is used by Aristotle in his Poetics to explain the effect of tragic drama on the audience. It arouses the emotions of pity and fear, the term also means the kind of emotional relief of heart, mind and soul effected by witnessing or reading a tragedy.

While discussing the two terms we come to know the broadness of Rasa Theory. In catharsis only pathetic and frightful mimes are discussed. Hence, Bharata was respected by later generations more for his Rasa theory than for his elaborate study of theatre. The theory of Rasa becomes very important in the study of poetry and literature, though originally it was applied by Bharata only to drama.

**The Constituent parts of drama:-** Aristotle finds six constituent parts in tragedy on the contrary Bharata mentions four in Natya.

#### In Poetics:-

- |            |              |              |
|------------|--------------|--------------|
| 1) Plot    | 2) Character | 3) Thought   |
| 4) Diction | 5) Song      | 6) Spectacle |

#### In Natyashastra:-

- |                      |          |
|----------------------|----------|
| 1) Words             | 2) Music |
| 3) Acting (Abhinaya) | 4) Rasa  |

In Poetics Aristotle considers plot as a soul of tragedy whereas in Natyashastra Acting, seems to be the soul of Natya.

**Structure of a plot:-** Aristotle divides a plot into two later parts - complication and its denouement (unknotting). The former ties the events in knot the latter unties it. Between these two Bharata reveals different stages. These are five stages - Arambha (beginning), Prayama (effort), Praptyasha (Meeting the obstacles), Niyama (removing the obstacles), and Phalagama (denouement). Both the structures disclose themselves in Pyramidal shape i.e. rising action, climax and falling action.

Apart from the above mentioned aspects we can discuss different aspects such as spectacle, language (fiction) etc. but these are minor things while comparing Natyashastra and Poetics. In short, Natyashastra is the seminal manifesto of the classical Indian theory. It is a chief treatise of Indian dramatic theory and the practice of the classical period. It is best introduction to classical Indian dramatic theory in Sanskrit Language. What Aristotle's Poetics is to western classical dramatic theory so is Bharata's Natyashastra to Indian Classical theory.

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