

# Feelings 'N Fiction: An Analysis Of Aristotle's *Poetics* And Bharat Muni's *Natyasastra* With Special Focus On Impact On Audience

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**Abstract:** Literature is more than just entertainment; it trains us in the art of being human. When we read a book, we start relating ourselves to a character's path through the story world. We see things from their point of view—feel scared when they are threatened, wounded when they are hurt, pleased when they succeed. But our tendency to identify with characters is actually a remarkable demonstration of our ability to empathize with others. When we examine this process of identification in fiction, we appreciate the importance of empathy—not only in enjoying works of literature but in helping us to form connections with those around us in the real world. The feelings evoked by fiction go beyond the words on a page and actually can help train us in the art of being human. The tradition of understanding literature derives from Aristotle in his *Poetics*. The subject matter of his book was not just poetry. The central term in *Poetics* is *mimesis*, the relation of the story to the way the world works. There is a long history of the uses of the term 'catharsis'. Aristotle's *Poetics* and Bharata's *Natyasastra* are two monumental works which analyses the essentials of drama from different perspectives. Bharat Muni is credited with the authorship of *Natyasastra*, an immortal encyclopedia of the theories and doctrines about poetry and drama. The present paper attempts to discuss similarities and differences of the both these critical texts with special focus on their impact on the audience.

**Key Words:** Feelings, Emotions, Pity, Fear.

## 1. INTRODUCTION:

As man is a social animal, it forms a social group and this social life on one hand brings with it its own remuneration, blessings, and blissfulness but on the other hand it leads to abuses, oppressions, betrayal and cruelty. Man is individualistic as well as intellectual. He does not want to be shackled by social norms, oppressed ethically by nature and feeling uncomfortable with treachery and cruelty. Literature is a social idiom and interplay is always reflected between the writer and his society. He tries to bring social ethos to the forefront by manipulation of cathartic emotions. As long as man has lives, he ponders over his life as an individual as well as social being and that is reflected in the writings also. Writers being an integral part of the society have concerned with social problems and have tried to find solution and provide relief. Catharsis is "in not so much in confession of guilt as much it is in expression of acceptance of its existence and the helplessness or inability to set right the wrong. Usually it is maintained that views expressed in serious vein are more effective but certain writers and poets have proved that even satirical writing can be evocative." (Neelmani.J.Bhatia)

## 2. DISCUSSION:

Aristotle's *Poetics* and Bharata's *Natyasastra* are two monumental works which analyze the essentials of drama from different perspectives. *Poetics*, written in Greek language, explores the aspects of tragic drama and its effect on the audience. On the other hand *Natyasastra* written in Sanskrit, discusses the Indian tradition. But both these works analyze drama and help in interpretation of dramatic art. The Greek tradition, to which Aristotle belonged to, is largely based on tragedy. Sanskrit hardly has any tragedy in the technical sense of the term. The most striking similarity in *Poetics* and *Natyasastra* is, when both the authors try to derive the effect of drama on the audience. Aristotle uses the term catharsis, which may mean purgation, purification, synthesis or illumination. "A Literary piece, may it be a poem, a novel, a short story or even a scholarly treatise, holds mirror to human life itself and exposing the truth, however shameful the naked truth be and that pain of shame itself is catharsis." (Neelmani.J.Bhatia) Bharata uses the term *rasa* to describe the effect of drama on the audience which may be of four types – (i) *rasa* as *utpatti* (production), (ii) *rasa* as *anumiti* (inference), (iii) *rasa* as *bhoga* (enjoyment) and (iv) *rasa* as *abhivyakti*. (Manifestation) (Neelmani.J.Bhatia) These terms, *catharsis* and *rasa* are not explained by the authors which accounts for their multiple interpretations. (Dhar) It is a strange coincidence that *catharsis* and *rasa* appear in the VIth chapters respectively of *Poetics* and *Natyasastra*. (Catharsis also occurs in the XVIIth chapter of *Poetics*) These two terms are, may be, most debatable terms in literary theory. 'Tragedy' for Aristotle and *natya* for Bharata are synonymous terms for both denote serious drama. Contrary to contemporary understanding, tragedy in Greek is not a tragic drama but a serious play not

necessarily ending in grief or misery. Bharata considers drama an imitation of people's joys and sorrows and accordingly of human action which is termed *anukriti*. Both Aristotle and Bharata visualize a play as a linguistic entity where mimesis or *anukriti* is the differentia of fine arts. Aristotle lays stress on the dramatic manner of the presentation while for Bharata the play is successful only if it can carry meaning from the stage to the audience Devdutt Patnaik in his article , " The Vessel of Rasa" says "there is a fundamental difference between Aristotle's *Poetics* and Bharata's *Natyashastra*. In *Poetics*, storytelling begins by paying attention to the idea, which is expressed through plot and character. Bharata focuses more on sensations (*rasa*) evoked in the audience, and emotions (*bhava*) of the performer and less on the story itself. The expressions, posture and gestures of the performer need to be rooted in a particular emotion (*bhava*) so that it evokes an aesthetic sensory experience (*rasa*) in the audience." (Patnaik) Devdutt distinguishes between western and Indian way of storytelling He says: "The Western way of storytelling focuses on one character, one plot, one transformation and one dominant emotion. In complex storytelling, multiple linear story lines are woven together into a tapestry. Here, the idea matters and through the idea one emotion rises and falls." (Patnaik) Hamlet's hesitation in *Hamlet*, the romance of Romeo and Juliet, the impatient passion of Othello all these examples second it. Each of these plays has a clear story with a distinct emotion. By contrast, in the Indian way of storytelling the point is to foster the audience with a whole range of sensations and emotions. At the end of story it is observed whether the viewer has experienced joy, anger, pleasure, hatred, love, compassion or sorrow. (Patnaik)

### 3. CONCLUSION:

So, both *Poetics* and *Natyashastra* are critical texts and they have similarities and differences in the context of their impact on the audience of dramas. Both Tragedy and *natya* are synonymous terms denoting serious drama and they both follow a formulaic mode providing hints but no description. Catharsis and *rasasutra* is a formula to describe the effect of drama on the audience. Both these texts believe that a play brings about a transformation from general to the aesthetic, the painful to the joyous

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