

The Theory of Imitation: A Comparative Study of Indian and Western Perspectives

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Abstract: In defining aesthetics and literary theories, the Greek and Indian perspectives differ as well as share several similarities. Any parallel study must acknowledge that similarities are as important as differences. It shows how different cultures, even though they spring from radically different environments, temperaments, and world views, share some common factor of aesthetic thought that contributes to harmony among human beings. While defining drama one turns to the earliest definitions provided by Aristotle in the West and Sage Bharata in the East. In analyzing the content of the tragedy offered by his contemporary dramatists and formulating its structure, Aristotle, drawing inspiration from the purgatory powers of tragedy, defined it as an imitation (of a form of action, not a quality) that stimulates fear and pity. Considering the plot to be the soul of tragedy he lays out six elements of tragedy in a fixed chronological order, with the last element being the least significant in the tragedy. Bharata, like Aristotle, also describes drama as imitation but his definition seems to be more complex. Not only does it imitate the actions of men, but it also encompasses everything in this universe that has an emotional state, including thoughts. Further, Bharata goes beyond the purgatory power of drama to formulate a theory of *nātyarasa* which elevates the prominence of acting. This paper examines both definitions in terms of modern dramaturgy and compares their relevance.

Keywords: *Anukaraṇa*, *bhāvānukīrtanam*, *anuvyaṅgya*, *mimesis*, *catharsis*, *rasa*, *nātyadharmī*, *lokdharmī*

Aitareya Mahīdāsa, the seer of *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* (1000 BCE to 600 BCE) was perhaps the first great aesthetic philosopher in the history of world art who has “defined the creative process in the art through the term *anukṛti*. Discussing two types of *śilpa*, i.e. *divya śilpa* and *mānuṣa śilpa*, Aitareya Mahīdāsa had said that the *anukṛti* of the former leads to the creation of the latter, i.e. *mānuṣa śilpa*.” (Tripathi 56) Later Sage Bharata in India and Plato and his disciple Aristotle in Greece used similar terms to illustrate the creative process of making a play. While the Eastern concept of the creative process revolves around Bharata’s use of the terms *anukaraṇa*, *anukīrtana*, and *bhāvānukīrtanam*, the Western tradition owes a lot to the term *mimesis* defined by the Greek masters, especially Aristotle who redefined the term. It is more important to look at what Aristotle and Sage Bharata offer as definitions of drama in the West and East, respectively. Aristotle’s *Poetics* makes the following statement while defining tragedy:

- i. Imitation, then, is one instinct of our nature. (Chapter IV)
- ii. Tragedy, then, is an imitation of an action that is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude; in language embellished with each kind of artistic ornament, the several kinds being found in separate parts of the play; in the form of action, not of narrative; through pity and fear effecting the proper purgation of these emotions. (Chapter VI)

iii. For Tragedy is an imitation, not of men, but of an action and of life, and life consists in action, and its end is a mode of action, not a quality. Now character determines men's qualities, but it is by their actions that they are happy or the reverse. Dramatic action, therefore, is not with a view to the representation of character: character comes in as subsidiary to the actions. Hence the incidents and the plot are the end of a tragedy; and the end is the chief thing of all. (Chapter VI)

Bharata makes the following statements in his first chapter which are vital for understanding theatrical and literary aspects of Nāṭya as he elaborates in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*:

i. सप्तद्वीपानुकरणं नाट्यमेतद्भविष्यति ॥ I 117 ॥

The Nāṭya in this world will be an imitation (*anukaraṇa*) of the Seven Continents.

ii. त्रैलोक्यास्यास्य सर्वस्य नाट्यं भावानुकीर्तनम् ॥ I 107 ॥

Nāṭya is a representation of the emotional state (Bhāva) of the entire triple world. (Unni 399)

iii. नानाभावोपसम्पन्नं नानावस्थान्तरात्मकम् ।

लोकवृत्तानुकरणं नाट्यमेतन्मया कृतम् ॥ I 112 ॥

The drama, as I have devised is a mimicry of actions and conduct of people, which is rich in various emotions, and which depicts different situations. (Ghosh 15)

iv. योऽयं स्वभावो लोकस्य सुखदुःखसमन्वितः सोऽङ्गाद्यभिनयोपेतो नाट्यमित्यभिधीयते ॥ I 121 ॥

The entire nature of the people in the world (*lokasya svabhāva*) and their emotional states (*svabhāvah*) as connected with the experiences of happiness and misery or joy and sorrow (*sukha-duhkha-samanvītah*), when presented through the technical medium of histrionic representation (*āṅgādi-abhinaya*), is to be called Nāṭya. (Bhat 17)

In other words, the phrases 'Seven Continents' and 'Triple World,' by illustrating the range of Nāṭya, refer to the entirety of the universe and its inhabitants and all their actions, whether physical, emotional, or intellectual, as the content of Nāṭya. From the above statements, Bharata's emphasis is on *Anukaraṇa/Anukīrtana*. Critics often compare these terms to *mimesis* and translate both in English as imitation, but this translation ignores the finer differences between *Anukaraṇa* and *mimesis*. *Mimesis*, in Plato's postulations, meant "making of one sort or another", and thus making a copy of some original is central to the concept of *mimesis*. Bharata's concept of *Anukaraṇa* goes beyond its literal meaning of 'following after' or making a copy and encapsulates the idea of Nāṭya as a new creation, not a shadow of any conceived original ideal model or its Supermodel. Plato's concept of *mimesis* has the connotation of likeness, an accurate reproduction of the original, which falls short of the original: "If the image were perfect—expressing in every point the entire reality of its object—it would no longer be an image, but an example of the same thing." (Plato *Cratylus* 432) His famous condemnation, an almost blasphemous denunciation of the use of art as something vicious, has its deeper root in his philosophical ideal (which contains two principal elements; moral and metaphysical) of constructing an ideal State and an ideal man (as the individual counterpart of the State) where everything, including art, is subservient to *morality*, or civic virtue, and thus any art must not be allowed to contaminate his State through spreading lies. Ananta Charan Sukla in his seminal work *The Concept of Imitation in Greek and Indian Aesthetics* (1977) draws an outline of Plato's cosmology that Plato possessed a highly eclectic philosophical outlook and represented the Apollonian aspect of Greek culture rather than Dionysiac culture as he preferred reason to emotion. "But nonetheless, he was sensitive to art." (55) Sukla further makes a revelation that Plato does not attack art at all but, "He attacks the improper use of art in the system of education and the misconceptions of the gods and demigods in epics" (82). The conclusion of Wimsatt and Brooks is worth citing here

Plato has confronted the very difficult problem of the relation between formalism and illusionism in art and, in line with the austerity and subtlety of his basic mathematical view of reality, has expressed his mistrust of the realistic trends of his day and has cast a perennially influential vote in favor of some kind of visual formalism. (20)

While Aristotle reverses the denigration and transforms *mimesis* into a concept of pleasurable likeness that leads to knowledge, the condition of replicating the original model is retained. Aristotle defines:

First, the instinct of imitation is implanted in man from childhood . . . The cause of this again is, that to learn gives the liveliest pleasure, not only to philosophers but to men in general; whose capacity, however, of learning is more limited. . . . For if you happen not to have seen the original, the pleasure will be due not to the imitation as such, but to the execution, the coloring, or some such other cause. (*Poetics* IV)

Thus against Plato's doctrine of universal forms signifying the eternal, Aristotle's idea of *mimesis* focuses on the idea that the cognition of reality is an individualistic phenomenon. With far finer discrimination than Plato, Aristotle "saw that the connection effected by imitation is not between poetry and the world without, but falls wholly within the being of poetry". (Abercrombie 86) He rejects the Platonic ideal of the moral purpose of art and reinstates the status of the poet in society. But as Bharat Gupt rightly observes "... the Aristotelian affirmation of pleasure in art was not sufficient to free art from being constantly compared with its original, the world. This original Platonic habit has been strong throughout Western criticism.... (1993, 98)" Additionally, Aristotle's vision was limited by his focus on creating a theoretical model based on his ancestors' literary works. Further, his emphasis is more on the poet's technique of translating his imaginative inspiration into language. Bharata concurs with this thought, but he emphasizes the content of drama more than language, which is just another way to communicate; he integrates verbal and gestural languages into a complex structure of communication, as well as a theatrical sign system based on several techniques of representation. The mimetic conception of Aristotle places an emphasis on action and its spellbinding quality, and language serves as a grammar for this action. However, there are lots of technical issues which Aristotle does not deal with. His limited view of imitation, coupled with the fact that he has no model to draw from that violated three unities and was still successful, forces him to essentialize three unities in making of a drama. Western dramatists, during and after the Renaissance, departed significantly from his theoretical postulations as his idea of imitation failed to stand the test of time, while the idea of *anukaraṇa* anticipates the need for modern drama as total theatre. It would be a mistake to presume that *anukaraṇa* in art has the simple sense of imitation or displaying/ reproducing something that already exists in reality; it is a new creation from all the elements of life, a creation by re-perception. A creative artist is not a reporter, narrator, historian, or philosopher, and the function of poetry is not dogmatic. Mammaṭa's definition of poetry is worth quoting here to understand the function of literature, which clearly distinguishes literary writing from other kinds of writing:

The chief aim of poetry, however, is the attainment of the pure unmixed pleasure that follows instantaneously on the sensing of Rasa. When poetry exercises its full function, it helps the development of the various Rasas (Emotions), sublating the direct effects of the word and its meaning. As such poetry differs from the Veda, in which the word, in the form of a master's command, predominates; it differs from the Purānas, in which the predominant element is friendly counsel (not to be followed literally). Such Poetry is the work of poets, clever in depicting things in a manner passing the comprehension of ordinary men, it offers to other poets and cultured men counsel most persuasively, like a beloved wife, by means of a moving tenderness in the manner of it (that is, in the words)—counsel such as that one should behave like Rāma and not like Rāvana. As such, poetry is, by all means, to be studied and cultivated. (Mammaṭa, *Kāvya prakāśa*. 1967, 2-3)

Thus the Platonic sense of imitation completely fails to define the nature of Nāṭya in the sense Bharata conceives and Aristotle's views too are inadequate in this regard. As Bharata has also stated and Abhinavagupta rightly defines Nāṭya as *kirtana* (narration) consisting of re-perception, a form of consciousness with various cognitions. Aristotle faced the problem of drama's

content in a specific social–historical context, where tragedy was regarded as contaminated and therefore unsuitable for a utopian state. Despite Aristotle’s successful solution to that problem, his theoretical postulations have set forth three units of dramaturgical forms. Bharata’s emphasis on *bhāvānukīrtanam* does not leave any scope for the use of the principle of unity of place for the action of an act. Bharata’s concept of ‘recreation of the emotional state’ does not conform to the Aristotelian concept of ‘unity of time’ (linear and irreversible). In contrast to linear time in realistic/proscenium theatre, classical Indian theatre explores the cyclic pace of time through its theatrical experience, where all bhavas of the entire world pass through a process of *sādhāraṇīkaraṇa* (the process by which the particular and specific is turned into the general and common-place (Kushwaha and Misra 97)) to be part of the spectator’s experience. Dramatic action in Sanskrit drama enjoys the liberty of violating time and space and Bharata has elaborated several methods to perform the sharp difference in localities and the change of space and time through the division of the stage (in *kakṣyā* or zonal division) into different portions, and use them strictly and carefully to enact the different scenes. There are many dramatic conventions Bharata recommends and classical dramatists continuously and consistently use in their dramatic scripts in the form of stage direction. By using his body and gestures, the actor brings everything to life in the spectator’s imagination. Bharata uses *anukaraṇa* as an imitation of the actions and conducts of people, animals, birds, plants, etc., rich in various emotions, representing the entire triple world’s emotional state (Bhāva), to create drama “instructive to all through actions and emotions depicted in it and through sentiments arising out of it” (I 113). This leads to the crux of the matter that the subject of *anukaraṇa* must be conducive to the production of rasa in the performance as well as in the spectators. Bharata made it explicit that there is no *Nāṭya* without rasa. In comparison to him, Aristotle’s emphasis is on catharsis which is basically concerned with the concept of emotional release through the sentiments of pity and fear. Here again, there is a basic difference in the aim of these two theories. Bharata’s theory of rasa requires complete emptying out of emotions before a spectator takes his/her seat. He is to be filled with rasa through the dramatic performance. An affective response on the part of the spectator is necessary. In neither sense is this a cathartic nor a sublime response, nor is it an affective fallacy. In Bharata’s conception, spectators should be competent enough to respond objectively, they should be persons of good character, high birth, quiet demeanour, sound education, respect for fame, devotion to virtue, impartiality, maturity, alertness, sensibility, detailed knowledge of histrionics, the musical instruments, the different kinds of abhinaya and the specialties of different lands and languages, acquaintance with arts and crafts, learning in grammar and metrics and the different śāstras and capacity to discern moods and, sentiments. The spectator as a competent connoisseur of art and literature has been called by the names of *Rasika* and *bhāvaka* but the most appropriate term is the term *sahṛdaya* who is a product of a cultured mind. It is to be cultivated through rigorous training; it may also be a faculty of an innate disposition that needs to be sharpened through constant practice. Reading Literature continuously leads to clarity of mind, the clarity of mind to empathy (*tanmay bhāva*), and empathy leads to heart-to-heart dialogue. Therefore, such a response of a *Sahṛdaya* will neither be cathartic nor sublime nor will it be an affective fallacy. In Bharata’s view, he would respond as an arbitrator who assessed the performance’s success based on the culmination of rasas.

Bharata calls it Siddhi and classified it on the basis of the different moods (bhava) and sentiments (rasas), which are expressed in three forms, vocal, physical, and mental. The first two factors relate to the human, hence they indicate human (mānuṣī) Siddhi, while the last one pertains to the divine, hence called the divine (daivī) Siddhi. Siddhi is a spectator-orientated concept for the final achievement resulting from the performance on the stage and it testifies to the drama being Nāṭyadharmi. This is followed by the classification of the various items of dramaturgy. *Abhinavabhāratī* cryptically puts Siddhi as the attainment of the purpose sought. It

relates to *sāmājika* the spectator as well as *Nata*. (Nagar 292-299) Referring to the concept of Bharata, V. Raghavan has stated that:

Bharata gives us a graphic picture of a living theatre in his chapter 27 on success in performance (*Siddhi*). In the opening sentence he says it is for success that a performance is given. When a performance succeeds, the performers draw from the audience appreciation and admiration ranging from smiles and laughter to exclamations of “wonderful”, well done” and “how sad.” Spectators register their appreciation physically by shivering with joy, rising from their seats spontaneously, and by offering presents to performers. The spectator moves with the actor and becomes one with him, whether it is joy or sorrow that is being depicted, he indeed is the ideal spectator. (Raghavan, 41-42)

Indeed this concept is still relevant. The best cinemas have a great effect on spectators. Even literary theories like reader response and reception owe a lot to this concept. The Aristotelian concept of catharsis does not leave any scope for such an enlightened view of a spectator.

Bharata is far ahead of Aristotle. Aristotle in *On the Art of Poetry* says that “the power of tragedy is independent both of performance and of actors ...” (Dorsch, 41). He emphasized plot as the primary element of drama, and regarded the other five elements — character, diction, thought, spectator, and song — as redundant; while Bharata believes that the *prayog*, which includes all elements equally, is an indispensable element. His emphasis is on the depiction of emotional states rather than the unfolding of the plot consisting of a beginning, a middle, and an end. Though both the poeticians talk about drama as composite art, but:

Aristotle has nothing parallel to *rasa*. The reason was that for Aristotle all art, and not just drama, was imitation— imitation of human action. Thus, though drama was composite, it was composed of similar entities, all aiming at imitation. This was also the reason why Aristotle could pick one of the elements— the plot in the case of drama as the most characteristic, the most “essential” part of drama. For Bharata, however, not all art was *anukaraṇa*. The most prestigious forms of dance and music that he had inherited, structures from which he transposed into his theatre, were acknowledgedly non-representational arts; they did not aim at *anukaraṇa* of *loksvabhāva* (the human condition). (Lath 1991, 3-4)

Rasa is a master concept that interweaves eleven diverse elements into one unit, creating the ‘organic’ artifact and arousing a sense of aesthetic appreciation. They are called ‘dramatic rasas’ because the focus is on the actor and, “indissociably, the character the actor is representing.” (Pollock 49)

It is remarkable to discover that behind the specific yet progressive techniques, methods, and behavior of theater that are explained in *Nāṭyaśāstra*, there is a vision of life, a sense of universal human values, and a philosophy of theatre that make it cultural. As a performing art drama, as intended by Bharata, is a centripetal force which balances theory and praxis; *Nāṭyaśāstra* talks about all major forms of drama, yet leaves room for minor forms to be explored. This widens the scope of *anukaraṇa* in drama. Techniques and methods are presented by Aristotle as well, but their nature is more or less static, and the vision is dependent upon destiny, instead of Karma. Mimesis is limited by the role of destiny in Greek theater and Aristotle’s emphasis is on plot and catharsis, whereas Bharata’s emphasis on Indian values, instilled in his *Rasa* discussion that is rooted in *Puruṣārtha Bōdha* or perception of the objectives of men, provides actors with the freedom to represent the entire cosmos’ emotions.

Theoretical connotations and the textual making of a drama seem to dominate Aristotle’s *Poetics* while Bharata is more concerned with all the probable experiments in performance on the stage. Aristotle does not state how to imitate, but only classes it according to its medium (language), its object (men in action) and its manner (narrative or dramatic); he remains silent and does not explain or elaborate on the dramatic manner, whereas Bharata, on the other hand, explains and elaborates on the problems of generating plays. When Bharata declares that the subject of representation is not action, but the recreation of *bhava* or emotional state (*Bhāvā-*

nukirtanmī), because actions are individual and emotions are universal, his emphasis is more on the *Nāṭyadharmī* mode of presentation rather than the *Lokdharmī*. An artist is not limited to portraying physical action alone; a good actor should be able to evoke strong emotions in his audience by recreating various moods onstage for a more effective and authentic portrayal of the story or event being depicted. *Bhavanukirtanmī*, unlike mimesis, is not a replica of the world; it is an artistic imaginative recreation that strives to transform reality into a stylized form, which Bharata calls *Nāṭyadharmi* (having traits peculiar to *Nāṭya*). The function of *Nāṭyadharmi* is to stylize the *lokdharmi* by incorporating all such devices and conversions which any theatre must use if it aims at representing the *lokasvabhāva* on stage. Bharata proclaims that what is left out in the compendium should be searched in the folk traditions. To search for such traditions Bharata, based on geo-socio-cultural diversity, defines *pravṛttis* (different usages regarding language, dress, custom, and behavior of people from different regions of India) and *Vṛtti* (literally “the manner of being or doing” or the style of composition) of people.

Like Aristotle’s concept of imitation, which is a kind of remaking of the original; *Lokdharmī* is a realistic or worldly imitation of natural events, or in other words, factual representation in the stage as is happening around us. *Nāṭyadharmī* is stylized or conventional or theatrical representation as Bharata explains in chapter XIV entitled “Zones and Local Usages”:

If a play depends on natural behaviour [in its characters] and is simple and not artificial, and has in its [plot] profession and activities of the people and has [simple acting and] no playful flourish of limbs and depends on men and women of different types, it is called Realistic (*lokadharmī*).

If a play modifies a traditional story, introduces supernatural powers, disregards the usual practice about the use of languages, and requires acting with graceful *Aṅgahāras*, and possesses characteristics of dance, and requires conventional enunciation and is dependent on a heavenly scene and heaven-born males, it is to be known as Conventional.

If anything not admitted as real by people is invested in a play with a corporal form and speech the practice is [also] called Conventional (*nāṭyadharmī*).

The practice in a play according to which persons are supposed] not to hear words uttered in proximity, or to hear what has not been uttered at all, is [also] called Conventional.

If objects like a hill, a conveyance, an aerial car, a shield, an armour, a weapon or a banner-staff are made to appear on the stage (lit. are used) in [human] form, it is known as an [instance of] Conventional Practice.

If after appearing in a role, one assumes a different role [in the same play], on account of his being an expert in both the cases or being the sole actor available for both the roles, it is known to be an instance of Conventional Practice. (Ghosh NS XIV 63-70 245-246)

This pretense of listening to the unspoken word but not hearing the spoken word never occurs in life. *Lokadharmī*, without the use of artificial devices, confines itself to represent only the natural behavior of people, while *Nāṭyadharmi* has the potential to introduce supernatural powers and heavenly scenes, and other objects disregarding the usual practice of the use of languages, and insists upon conventional enunciation over natural enunciation. Such *Nāṭyadharmī* conventions allow the actor to evoke emotions more strongly in his spectators and thus add charm to the performance. Bharata goes on to define and explore the scope of *Nāṭyadharmī* by adding every possible convention, including stage representation, acting in more than one role at a time, etc., which makes drama an organic unity with grace and charm. Bharata makes *Nāṭyaśāstra* theatre-oriented while Aristotle is script-oriented. Bharata not only provides subtle and fine distinctions between *Lokadharmi* and *Nāṭyadharmī* but also asserts that drama should be presented in the *Nāṭyadharmī* style.

The concept of *Nāṭyadharmī* anticipates subtle nuances of the modern theatre, in which “every object, action and area of the stage—what more, the stage itself—is a sign” and “in the

terminology of modern day theatre semiotics, may be phrased as the constitutiveness of all the sensory possibilities of performance, the arbitrary relationship between the theatrical signifiers and signifieds, the transferability of the signs etc. (Narayanan 137) Lokadharmī and Nāṭyadharmī lend new dimensions to the theory of imitation. Aside from illustrating the poetic activity within art itself, it also explains how the stage can be used to communicate.

The theory of *anukaraṇa* swerves away from the idea of actual imitation of the ideal. Though the relationship to the original is a point of consideration, Bharata's emphasis is on *bhāvānukīrtana*; the recreation of emotional states through *abhinaya*. The greatest commentator on *Nāṭyaśāstra* Abhinavagupta "has objected to understanding the term *anukṛti* in the sense of imitation or mimesis. To him, it is a creative process leading to *rasa*-realization." (Tripathi 56) He defines that Nāṭya is neither an *anukaraṇa* of any specific person, general thing, a state of mind, nor of the same consequents, rather it is a kind of re-perception (*anuvyaṣāya*). According to the *Nyāya* School of philosophy, *anuvyaṣāya* is a mental ascertainment of a matter which our mind determines after its perceptual cognition. This process of mental ascertainment of an object has a great affinity with the process of creation because it rejects the materialistic and sensationalist theory of self. Rather it conceives

... the self as a conscious agent which receives impressions of sense, knows external objects through them, and acts upon things according to its subjective purpose. Knowledge is a cognitive fact by which we have apprehension or understanding of objects. But it is bound with certain affective elements, namely the feelings of pleasure and displeasure ... In any particular act of knowledge of an object, there is a feeling of being pleased or displeased with it and an active attitude of desire or aversion which may lead to certain overt movements towards or away from the object. (Chatterjee 10-11)

Nāṭya is concerned with this "acting upon things" bound with the "feeling of being pleased or displeased" to recreate the perception of an object. This re-perception, which depends upon the re-taking or re-imagining of the actor (hiding his identity through representation) of the real, is the light of an innate bliss of consciousness, coloured with various forms of mental states whose shapes are joy or sorrow. (*Abhinavabharati* I. 37) Any re-perception conveys an experience of life in a concrete and convincing shape through the construction/development of a theme and plot or story. Thus, the imaginatively created construction of an experience in literature fuses several elements drawn from totally unrelated aspects of life.

Though the cathartic effect is a common phenomenon there are some basic differences in the theories as well as in the practices of ancient Greek and Indian dramaturgy. While Aristotle enumerates six elements of drama (plot, character, diction, thought, spectacle (scenic effect), and song (music)), Bharata explains eleven elements: *Rasas*, *Bhāva* (emotions), *Abhinaya* (representation by gestures), *Dharmīs* (rules of dramatic representation), *Vṛttis* (dramatic styles), *Pravṛtti*, *Siddhi* (achievement), *Svaras* (notes), *Ātodyas* (instrumental music), *Gāna* (song), and *Mandap* (the stage). A very interesting fact here is that for a director and performers the last element comes first and practically they have to continue in the reverse order while for the script writer first comes first. Before the playwright begins writing the script, he conceives the dominant *rasa* which is to be presented on the stage and everything else follows its own course. The "seed" of the *rasa* experience is implicit in a drama and made explicit by the actors as they perform" (Zarrilli, 2006, p. 131) Further, the mimetic concept in Greek drama conceptualizes time as linear and irreversible, focuses on the actor as a vessel for an idea to produce a cathartic effect, and revolves around a single character, a single plot, a single transformation, and a single dominant emotion. In order to achieve the desired dramatic impact, the first dramatic element (plot) is given the highest priority and the last element is given the least. Drama in ancient India transcends time and space with a multitude of stories intertwined with each other that depict a variety of situations while nourishing the spectator with a variety of emotions. In the

context of this concept, drama has a huge amount of potential to recreate where non-mimetic/non-representational arts like dance and music play a vital role: while mimesis is confined to representing action alone, Bharata aims to represent the emotional state (Bhāva) of the entire triple world, in which a mimicry of actions and conduct of people whose emotions are vast, is a natural characteristic.

Though Aristotle is conscious of the importance of character in the making of man, his emphasis is more on the imitation of the outward action that he performs than the inner character. Therefore he does not bother to define any subtle distinction between characters. His concept of character is modeled on the theory of destiny which inevitably leads the action, thus character is 'subsidiary' to action.

Aristotle's idea of imitation as a basic instinct of human beings would always remain significant for every art and its production. Bharata expands various possible dimensions of art and literature through his idea of *anukarāṇa*. Aristotle's application of mimesis has its limited significance; Bharata's theory of *anukarāṇa* encapsulates the idea of total theatre (which visualises *Nāṭya* as an activity leading to the realization of four *Puruṣārtha* (goals of human life)). It has influenced not only Asian theatre but world theatre has also drawn direct or indirect inspiration from *Nāṭyaśāstra*. It is quite significant that when Bharata declares further possibilities of artistic innovation in dramaturgy he anticipates the need of future generations across the globe. Brecht "in his search for artistic impulse, which bridged centuries and continents, did not fail to notice the attractions of Indian Classical drama". (Lutze 101) When Brecht talks about "a certain stylistic resemblance" (Brecht 2) between Russian, American, and German theatre in introducing technical and artistic innovations, he echoes the concept of the *Nāṭyadharmi* mode of presentation. His concept of epic theatre has strong connotations of the tradition of ancient Sanskrit plays which easily fuse narrative or epic elements with dramatic elements successfully. He acknowledges that the concept of epic theatre is very "close to the old Asiatic theatre". (Brecht 13) In watching the Balinese theater, Artaud recognized that Western models were missing key elements of Total Theatre, which Bharata's theory and experiment could easily fill.

He eulogizes the Eastern theatre in his *The Theatre and Its Double* and laments that the verbal theatre of the West was actually unaware of the sum total of theatre. Artaud has a holistic view of theatre that no Western theory can deliver, and he explicitly condemns Western theories, which more or less remain theories of tragedies or comedies. (Bansat-Boudon 56) The Modern Western drama goes against Aristotle's warning about avoiding epic stories to dramatize and even utilizes the story of *Mahābhārata* to put on stage. This distinction of form and content finds its perfect synthesis in *Nāṭyaśāstra* and ancient Sanskrit drama. Modern Western theatre craves for this kind of synthesis and total theatre and perhaps one of the biggest experiments in this direction has been done by Peter Brooke. Peter Brook's 1985 stimulating transformation of *Mahābhārata* for the Stage with an international cast (the first time adaptation of the whole epic in the stage history of the world) registered "overwhelming critical acclaim" and the play, "did nothing less than attempt to transform Hindu myth into universalized art, accessible to any culture." (Croyden 1985) This claim to universalism may be challenged as being orientalist (Bharucha 1991 & 2005, Dasgupta 1987), and "authoritarian and self-serving" (Williams 24) but Bharata's idea of *Anukarāṇa* gains its universal significance as it envisages such theatrical experimentations towards an idea of total theatre. While Aristotle limits the scope of drama as a branch of fine arts, *Nāṭyaśāstra* subsumes all the fine arts to make a whole, to create a total theatre with all its expression of theatricality which modern theatre explores and is still trying to redefine. And when they grapple with such a definition they seem to be trying to paraphrase Bharata; consciously or unconsciously they prove how relevant Bharata's theory of *anukarāṇa* is in defining the concept of the Total Theatre.

Bhāvānukīrtanam, a subtle and integral concept of *Nāṭya*, seeks to capture the presence of emotional states and attempts to create its universe; it also exalts the notion of the creator as a

visionary who can visualize the inherent vision of life and creation. The discussion of the above three points makes it clear that Indian classical theatre, apart from entertainment as one of its essential features, is bound to create life values irrespective of linear time and limited space. Bharata's theater in this sense becomes a meditation; *Nāṭya* becomes *yajña* to liberate human society, and it breaks the shackles of consciousness and consecrates human beings at the center of the entire creation. *Nāṭya* as *yajña* is considered a great collaborative performative act to create, preserve and disseminate the highest human values for the sake of humanity. Bharata's theory of *bhāvānukīrtanam* becomes the backbone of the fundamental concepts of theatre, literature, aesthetics, music, and various dance and folk forms. Indian folk theater and dance traditions like Yakshagāna, Kuchipudi, Kathakali, Koodiyattam, etc., reflect the perceptions and techniques of *Nāṭyaśāstra*. The theory and practice of *Nāṭyaśāstra* are alive, well preserved, and transmigrated in various forms of regional theater traditions and the stage people who have knowledge of both the classical as well as folk traditions have experimented with them in their art. A strong relationship exists between man and nature in Bharata's theory of *bhāvānukīrtanam*, in which actors are required to portray a variety of animals, birds, plants, etc. By using his body and gestures, he brings everything to life in the spectator's imagination. We need the vision of a total theatre which brings us from a parochial to a cosmopolitan world. Whereas Aristotle's re-schematization of the idea of imitation sinks into a state of servile conformism to the destiny-controlled plots of the classical Greek drama, Bharata's theory of *bhāvānukīrtanam* shows a greater possibility for synthesizing and guiding multiple traditions in different times and spaces. Unlike a self-contained aesthetic theory of imitation dependent on a universe of classically controlled actions of men operated through destiny, Bharata's theory of *bhāvānukīrtanam* breaks this sphinx of destiny through the theory of Karma and thus it responds beyond the universe of actions of men. There is something magnificent and awe-inspiring about the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, with its stupendous authority, scientific precision, and marvelous sophistication, which may cause some to suspect esotericism and insularity. But it is not confined to a rigid and conservative form and technique of theatre, it is not just a "Book", but a great tradition that has nurtured all the theatrical traditions of India throughout history, wherever they have been practiced and has the capacity to nourish and guide the world stage as well. Its masterful fusion of the temporal and the universal, of values of joy and duty, of worldliness and otherworldliness, could be profound education –both moral and aesthetic – for the modern man. It is a treaty which combines the consciousness of the theatre with the user, and the consciousness of the user with the spectator. The vision of life and the fundamental consciousness which it carries forward is still needed in our times. It is attested to material life, spirituality, and Vedas. In light of these attestations, there is always the possibility of innovation in a treaty, and tradition extends throughout it. The possibility of bold experimentation and innovation never dies.

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