



# Indian Poetics: The Concept of Rasa, Dhvani and Alankara

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**ABSTRACT:** This research paper is about Indian Poetics: Rasa, Dhvani and Alankara. As Literature is expression of life in the words of truth and beauty so it helps us in understanding our life in the best way. The function of criticism/poetics is to help us understanding literature by employing the various arenas of criticism. The discourses on poetics include explanations on literature, the genres, the function of literature, the contribution of poets and creative writers, the nature of aesthetic experience, figurative language, style, decorum, the qualities of a person who enjoys literature apart from several issues ranging from the appreciation, judgement and evaluation of works of art to propounding fresh insights into theory and criticism of literature. The evolution of Indian poetics can be traced down to the Vedas. The sages realised the importance of using sounds with proper pitch and intonation and employing appropriate words for achieving the intended effect while reciting shlokas or writing them down. Criticism of literature is an attempt to determine how accurately an object has been imitated, whereas writing is a form of mimicry that has a chief goal is to generate an authentic depiction of its subject, and to provide feedback of literature is the kind of attempt for determining how faithfully the counterfeit has imitated the original. It is easy to see how literature and criticism are intertwined in this context. In literary criticism, literary criticism is examined. It is not the most important discipline of criticism because of this. Critique may be distinct from theory in that it does not exclude theories. Practice, as in the form of practical critique, is a form of criticism that appears to be more fundamental and truer at first glance. When it comes to critics' work, theory is a kind of added metalanguage that takes critical practise into account; it's the way you talk about, organise, and reflect on it. Since the sixteenth century, these historical tendencies have been mirrored in Indian literature and criticism. Plato, Aristotle, and

Longinus marked out stances and debates that are still being played out today. When we doubt the sufficiency of Western critical methods to make sense of the vast array of foreign literatures, it is essential to remember that other equally ancient classical critical traditions exist. Indian culture has a long legacy of literary theory and criticism that predates the Western tradition. This is because the Indian tradition places literature in a more central role than the Greek tradition. In India, literary theory and criticism were profoundly entwined into religion and daily life. By criticising the Indian literature and theories, the paradigm, of different criticism has been accomplished in a more pragmatic and ethical way.

**KEY WORDS:** *Arena, Aesthetics, Criticism, Decorum, Didacticism, figurative language, Genre, Poetics, Pragmatics, Vedas*

## I. INTRODUCTION

The proper knowledge of language is called *Kamadhenu* that helps to satisfy desires. The six Vedangas are vyakarana (grammar), kalpa (ritual), chandas (prosody), shiksha (phonetics), Nirukta (etymology) and jyotisha (astronomy). The earliest systematic work on dramaturgy is Bharatamuni's *Natyashastra*, which contains the formative ideas on poetics that have been incorporated into the various branches of Indian aesthetics. Apart from *rasa*, Bharata also briefly comments on the other issues concerning literature like merits (*gunas*), defects (*doshas*) and the figures of speech (*alamkaras* /*lakshanas*) in *Natyashastra*. Details about the construction of theatres, gestures of the limbs (*angaharas*), postures (*karanas*), emotional states (*bhavas*), acting (*abhinaya*), realism (*lokadharmi*), and stylisation (*natyadharmi*) among others are also explained in a succinct manner. Bhamaha (7th century), apparently the foremost Sanskrit poet from Kashmir glorifies the art of poetry and concludes that eloquence devoid of the



gift of poetic expression is worthless. He critiqued the sphota doctrine of the grammarians and the Buddhist linguistic doctrine of apoha. In Kavyalankara he describes the specific nature of poetic language and several figures of speech.

Dandin lived in Kanchi during the 7th century. His most important contribution is Kavyadarshan and the prose narratives Dashakumaracharitam and Avantisundarikatha. He gives great importance to the gunas and doshas (merits and defects) in poetry. He believes that the reader should be able to distinguish between good poetry and the bad ones. He divides literature into three- poetry, prose and a fusion of both. He explains the characteristics of the epic (mahakavya), where the plot of the epic should be well-constructed. The plot could either be adapted from mythology or a subject of the poet's own imagination. The ultimate objective of the epic is the realisation of the four purusharthas- dharma, artha, kama and moksha. The hero must be a divine character. Instances of war, love, seasons, cities, and victory marches among others are the essential ingredients of an epic. Alamkaras and rasa are important for poetry. He discusses thirty-five figures of speech and two margas namely vyadharba and gowdiya. Udbhata (9th century) is a Kashmiri critic whose Kavyalankarasamgraha is one of the most authoritative books of rhetoric. He discusses forty alamkaras with illustrations from his work Kumarasambhava. He is considered the first critic to mention about the shanta rasa. His contemporary Rudhratha, in Kavyalankara discusses figures of speech, rasas and poetic genres. He explains concepts like similarity, exaggeration and plural meanings. His works Agnipurana and Vishnudharmodharapurana also deal with poetic and aesthetic theories. Indian poetics gained new insights and reached great heights due to the contribution of Anandavardhana and Abhinavguptha. Anandavardhana's (9th century) critical treatise is known by several names, Dwanyaloka, Kavyaloka, Sahrdayaloka and Sahrdayahrdyaloka. The word sahrudhaya or sachetas was used in the Ramayana and Kalidasa's Kumarasambhava in the sense of a sympathetic person says the writer Kane, but in the technical sense of a competent reader of poetry it occurs for the first time in Vamana's Kavyalamkara. Anandavardhana's contemporary Abhinavgupta is the most authoritative exponent of Pratyabhijna philosophy that is centered on Kashmiri Shaivism. His commentaries on the Natyashastra are known as Abinavabharati and Dhwanyaloka, which are considered as landmark contributions to Indian

aesthetics. Rajashekhara's Kavyamimamsa is in the form of an instruction manual for poets. He believes that prathibha (talent) is of two kinds, karayitri and bhavayitri. Karayitri refers to the creative ability of the poet and bhavayitri is the ability of the reader to respond imaginatively to the poem. He also discusses plagiarism in detail. Kuntaka (11th century) is a Kashmiri scholar whose Vakroktijivita is famous for the discussion of vakrata (indirection or obliqueness) in expression in poetry. He describes alliterative use of syllables, words, suffixes, sentences, content and composition. He has expressed his disagreement with many formulations of his predecessors regarding figures of speech, style and qualities. His contemporary Mahimabhata, in Vyaktiviveka subordinates dhvani to anumana (inference). Words have only one operation called abida (denotation) and they have only two meanings, the literal and inferential. The soul of poetry is rasa which is inferred by the reader. Bhoja's Sringaraprakasha elaborates on several aspects related to drama and poetry. He talks of abhimana, self-consciousness which originates from ahamkara (ego) and asserts that this principle of abhimana is the basis of rasa experience. He divides rasa into four categories – dharma sringara, arthasringara, kamasringara and moksha sringara. Kshemendra, the disciple of Abhinavgupta gives importance to auchitya (decorum) which is the life of poetry. He insists that the principle of decorum should be observed in words, sentences, figures of speech, gender, number, time and space. The other important works related to several dimensions of Indian aesthetics are Ruyyaka's Alamkarasarvaswa; Vishwanatha's Sahityadharpana; Brahmadata's Rasamanjari; Roopagoswami's Bhaktirasamrutasindhu and Ujwalanilamani; and Ayyapadikshita's Kuvalayanandha. However, the two most important works are Mammata's Kavyaprakasha and Jagannatha's School of Distance Education Literary Criticism and Theory – Part I (Upto New Criticism) Rasagangadhara. Jagannatha, the tailanga scholar, who was a prominent poet in the court of the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan, was conferred the title Panditaraja. His definition of poetry as words that express charming sense is popular as "vakyam rasatmakam kavyam" (any composition which gives tasteful pleasure is poetry) Various schools of literary criticism refer to Indian poetics and offer valuable insights into the process of creation and appreciation of poetry as well as the structural and formal characteristics of a poem. Though many of these schools share certain common fundamental theoretical assumptions they are also different in many other ways. Due to



colonialism, Western literary theories are foregrounded and traditional criticism has been confined to Sanskrit scholarship. Thus, Indian academies concentrate on Western critical tradition beginning from Aristotle and often ignore India's rich critical tradition. Major school of Indian Poetics are: Rasa, Alankara, Riti, Dhvani, Vakroki, and Auchitya.

## II. THE CONCEPT OF RASA

Rasa is quintessence of almost all literatures of the world. Two stall words – Nandkeshwar and Bharat Muni are treated as the founder of Rasa's School of Indian Poetics. However, it is Bharat Muni who is known as the progenitor of the concept of Rasa. This school vitally animates all the constitutive elements of literature from within. And even like life in living body its existence can not be gain said. Though it eludes our sense-perception – literally 'Rasa' means 'Sap', 'Juice', 'Taste' 'Supreme Joy', 'Mental Feeling' and 'Aesthetic Enjoyment'. All these sense of feeling, somehow fuse in its ultimate connotation so-understood, it is 'Ultima Thule' (Ultimate End) of all literature, the highest aesthetic value which an end in itself. It cannot be attained only by a few gifted soul with hearts akin to the poets (Sahridayas or Rasikas) because it is highly imaginative on the one hand and spiritual on the other hand. It is a state far from one's personal likes and dislikes, Loves and

Hates. It is a disinterested, impersonal, contemplative sate of ecstasy (Sue Generis).

The Concept of 'Rasa' drags our attention to a transcendental, and spiritual level in their attempt to solve the difficulties which arise in the mind of philosophers which it is viewed as ethical or aesthetic experience. In order to generate 'Rasa' there is a sort of intellectual activities leading to unity endowed with an organic wholeness created by the genius of the creative artist. Such unity is caused by one 'Angi Rasa'(Basic Rasa) or ruling sentiment in the midst of other seven or eight subordinate ones when the given work is an art-epic or a play or a romantic tale. In self-complete stanzas which bring but a passing mood which surely save no scope fully delineated 'Rasa' therefore, one got to visualise their vital essence s 'Bhava' and not 'Rasa' Thus from the in defeasible heights of spiritual 'Rasa' one comes down to the level of 'Diverse Rasa' and 'Bhavas' both objectively and objectively yet they are not life emotions; They are only emotions embodied in literature or literary emotions. In our day to day life all emotions and mental states known as 'Chittavrittis, are fleeting but in literature at least some emotions can be delineated in a way more abiding and lasting and as such they are called 'Sthayibhavas'. According to Bharat Muni there are nine 'Sthayibhavas' and their corresponding aesthetic counterparts are the nine 'Rasa' as written below:

	Stahyibhavas	Rasa
1.	Love of Sex (Rati)	The Erotic (Shringar)
2.	Laughter (Hasya)	The Comic ( Hasya)
3.	Sorrow ( Shoka)	Pathetic ( Karun)
4.	Heroic Energy ( Utsah )	Heroic (Veer)
5.	Fear (Bhaya)	The Frightful (Bhayanak)
6.	Anger (Krodh)	The Furious (Raudra)
7.	Disgust (Jugupsa)	The Odious or Unpleasant (Veebhatsa)
8.	Wonderment (Vismay)	The Marvellous (Adbhut)
9.	Dispassion (Sham)	The Tranquil (Shant)

However, in the Mediaeval age two more 'Rasas' known as 'Bhakti' and 'Vatsalya' have also been added. The most srtriking feature of this categorization is that the names of 'Sthayibhavas are nouns whereas those of 'Rasas' are adjectives. This is because of aesthetic experience of the connoisseur (Shriday), the common denominator of all the emotional states or Bhavas delineated at length in the literary world outside as located in character and at the same time, rooted within the connoisseur heart as primordial instincts. Only the above nine or eleven mental states can permit of such elaborate delineation in literature. Technically, Bhava is

tantamount to 'Vyabhachari' Bhavas fleeting moods and feelings are thirty-three in numbers VIZ:

1. Revulsion (Nirveda) strong feeling of disgust
2. Anguish (Glani) Graet mental suffering or physical
3. Suspicion (Shanka)
4. Jealousy (Asueya) Envy (Irshya)
5. Arrogance (Mada) If one believes that he is important that the others this feeling is Mada (almost like pride)
6. Fatigue (Shrana) tiredness
7. Latitude (Alsaya)
8. Wretchedness (Dhanya) Feeling of unpleasant



9. Worry (Chinta)
10. Studefaction or bewilderment (Moha)
11. Remembrance (Smriti)
12. Steadfastness (Dhriti) firmness
13. Shame (Lazza)
14. Fickleness (Chapasta ) often changing minded
15. Joy (Harsha)
16. Despair (Vishada)
17. Agitation (Avega) feeling of worriedness
18. Foolishness (Jarta)
19. Pride ( Garva)
20. Eagerness (Autsukya) Curiosity
21. Sleep (Nidra)
22. Forgetfulness (Apsamarg)
23. Dreamness ( Supti)
24. Wakefulness (Vivodha)
25. Indignation (Amarsha) feeling of shock or anger when we think that something is unjust or unfair
26. Dissimulation (Avahittha) feeling of hiding intentions or nature or true feeling
27. Ferocity (Ugrata) something that is of fierce or violent nature.
28. Decision (Mati)
29. Sickness (Vyadhi)
30. Madness (Unmaad)
31. Death ( Mara)
32. Terror(Trasa)
33. Doubt (Vitra)

In Life all these and many more are merely mental states with their attendant pleasures and pains. But when delineation in literary characters and poetic situation . They become aesthetic exclusive enjoyable merging into 'Rasa'. The 'Natyashastra' of Bharat Muni is virtually his locus-classiest namely 'Rasa Sutra'. It crystallly states 'Rasa' results when there is a harmonious fusion of the three elements in Drama, namely 'Vibhavas' , 'Anuvhavas' and 'Vyabhichari bhavas':

विभावानुभाव-व्यभिचारी-संयोगाद् रसनिष्पत्तिः।

### III. THE CONCEPT OF DHWANI

The primary text which deals with 'Dhwani' is 'Dhvanyaloka' of Anandavardhana who is presumed to have lived in the ninth century A.D.. In the very first verse of 'Dhvanyaloka', we are told that 'Dhwani' or suggestion is the soul of poetry, the breath of life. The body of poetry can be scientifically analysed by a knowledge of grammar and the dictionary , prosody, metaphor, and the rest. But 'Dhvani', its soul can only be felt directly by cultivated and sensitive persons who understand its true nature by direct appreciation. It is only great poets who have the power of using language in such

a way as to evoke in sensitive mind a suggested meaning over and above the primary meaning of words. However, Anandavardhana does not mean to suggest that words and primary meaning are unimportant. The expressed meaning is important; yet the suggested meaning remains the all important thing. The primary source of aesthetic appeal in the poetry of the first rank. The relation of the two is compared to the relation of the meanings of individual to the meaning of a sentence as a whole. No can really grasp the meaning of a sentence unless he knows the meaning the words. But those who know the language do not form mental images of the meaning of the words and then put them together to get the meaning of a sentence. By the time the sentence is finished its meaning as a unit fleshes through the mind of the listener. In the same way, 'Dhwani', flashes into the mind of the aesthetically sensitive listener the moment he grasps the prima facie meaning. Anand's basic postulate is that utterance possess a literal meaning , and can also convey a further meaning.

The scheme of 'Clarification' which he adopts is fairly detailed and one can give only the outlines of it here. The main subdivision is into two types first the type where the literal sense is not intended (avivaksitavacya) and second type

Where literal sense is in fact intended, but subserves the implies sense (Vivaksitanyapara-vacya) the first of these is again subdivided into two: the type where the literal sense is completely set aside (atyantatiraskita-vacya) and the type where the literal meaning is shifted (arthant-arasamkramita-vacya) . The first of those embraces what we should normally call metaphor; but it is so to speak motivated metaphor where the metaphorically used words are employed with the definite intention of conveying their associations or producing a striking effect. The second sub-variety is an interesting one, and covers cases where a word is used in an enhanced or diminished sense.

### IV. THE CONCEPT OF ALAMKAR

Since the days of Bharat Muni's 'Natyashastra' till the 7<sup>th</sup> century the 'Rasa' school of Indian Poetics prevail. But in the 7<sup>th</sup> century A.D Bhamah introduced the Alamkar school which testifies to the Indian analytical mind etymologically, the word 'Alankara' is 'Saundarya' (अलम् + कृ + घञ् + भाव ) meaning thereby Alam karoto iti alamkrah. The device of Alamkar was called rhetoric in ancient Greek and Latin to the western mind it was associated with the art of oratory but according to the Indian Poetics it offers



aesthetic pleasure among the leading figures of Alamkar school of Indian Poetics Bhamah, Dandya, Udbhat, Rudra, Jaydev, Keshav, et al have established this school at highest pedestal. Bhamah defines Alamkar as, “vacham vakrarthshabdoktrialmkarah, kalpate” in his magnum opus ‘Kavyalankar’. Of course, Bharat called Rasa as the soul of poetry. Jaydev has gone to the extent of reiterating that “Poetry is without the alamkar almost like fire without heat”. Though Bharat has referred to four Alamkar in his ‘Natyashastra’ he has talked about thirty six lakshanas of Kavya the rhetorician or thinker down the ages have categorized Alamkar in their own ways. They have classified Alamkar as Shabdalanakar, Arthalanakar, Ubhayalanakar following the main alamkaras. Upma (Simile), Rupak (Metaphor), Shlesh (Pun), Dhvanichitra (Onomatopoeia) Punurupunrupti (Repetition), Atishayokti (Exaggeration), Virodhabhash (Paradox), Asangati (Oxymoron) etc. There is chain of scholars of Indian Poetics who have analytically discussed and classified Alamkar in their own ways. It could be an unending list if one ventures to mention the details of classification made by oriental in dust, however, it has been found that Bhamah has enlisted thirty eight Alamkaras, Dandi thirty six Udbhat forty-one, Vaman thirty three, Rudrat fiveshabda alankar, fifty arthalanakar, Mammat eight shabdalanakar, sixty-two arthalanakar, Bhoja twenty four arthalanakar Ruyyak eighty-four alankars Pvagbhat thirty nine Hemchandra thirty five Jaydev ninety Vishnunath ninety and Appaydikshit have gone to the extent of tracing one hundred and twenty five alamkaras.

The underlined principle of all figures is therefore described as Vakrokti or oblique expression or poetic conceits. It is universally accepted that it is an activity of the exclusively poetic imagination, involving original turns of thought and language. Thus, one may find likeness in things different through simile, referring to one as another through metaphor. It fancies non-existent comparisons through utpreksha and indulges freely an exaggeration through Atishayokati one finds two or more things simultaneously through shleshas. It notices strength and minute aspects of everything in nature through savbhavbti. It overturns logic and reverses the role of cause and effect through Vibhavana and makes impossible things possible through Asthangati. It adduces parallel between remote objects by (Dristanta)

One may mention the parallelism between the Gunas vis- a -vis alankars in order to highlight the inevitability of both. The gunas are more important to poetry because they are intimately

bound up with rasas while Alankaras are like external ornaments. Hence while the imagery of alamkar, it is extremely desirable in poetry so long as they appear as spontaneous effusions of a creative genius suffused with Rasa they become sources of Revulsion when indulged in excess because their artificiality is then obvious and they mar Rasa. There can be good poetry even without an obvious figures of speech but not without poetic quality or style. Broadly speaking there are three literary qualities or gunas- vigour ( Ojas), sweetness ( Madhurya) and lucidity (Prasada). The formalist approach of the early theorists accommodated even Rasa bhavas under a class of Alamkar or gunas in the field of poetry. Thus Alankaras play vital role in creating interest and enhancing poetic beauty.

## V. CONCLUSION

Thus, Indian poetics has been developed by a group of scholars over the centuries who actually focused on the Kavya and Natya and issues of alamkara, artha, shabda and rasa, dhvani and alamkar of these literary forms. It is important to mention here that the Sanskrit word Kavya not only means the poetry or epic but it is actually a term used for literature in broader sense. Sanskrit poetics had been evolved with different schools of thoughts and those schools are as follows:

1. Alamkara (poetic figures) school
2. Rasa (aesthetic pleasure) school
3. Riti (style) school
4. Guna (attribute) school
5. Dhvani (suggestion) school
6. Vakrokti (obliquity) school
7. Anumana (inference) school
8. Aucitya (propriety) school

Bharata's Natyashastra is the oldest text found in the field of alamkara and rasan theory. After Bharata, Dandi talks about alamkara in his Kavyadarsha, and thereafter Bamana deals with alamkara in his Kavyatairikara. Rasa theory becomes major concern of theorists like Rudrata, Lollata, Shankuka, Bhatta Nayaka after Bharata proposed Natya-rasa and Kavya-rasa. Later Anandavardhana talks about Dhvanirasa and Abhinavagupta works on the entire theoretical development on rasa and proposed his ideas in his Abhinavabharati. Dandin in his Kavyadarsha and Vamana in his Kavyalankar-sutra, respectively talks about Riti as one of the major components of poetry. Vamana, Abhinavagupta and Dandin also developed



the idea of Guna in poetry. Anandavardhana in his Dhvanyaloka proposed them doctrine of Dhvani as the major component of poetry and he claimed that none of the alamkara or shabdārtha is the only condition of poetry. Anandavardhana therefore talks about dhvani-rasa what creates a successful poetry. Kuntaka is another brilliant linguist and literary theorist who talks about Vakrokti in his Vakrokti-Jivita. Mahim Bhatta proposed the idea of Anumana as the process to comprehend different aspects of Dhvani in poetry. Kshemendra's Auchitya-Vichara and Kavi-kanthavarana are two books what contains his doctrine of auchitya. Besides Sanskrit, another major field of Indian poetics is Tamil. It is also ancient and contemporary school of Indian poetics as Sanskrit. Major theorist of Tamil poetics is Tholkappiyar. He was a linguist and grammarian also. His book Tholkappiyam deals with diction and syntax mainly. This book actually concerned as descriptive linguistics of Tamil. Though his work deals with grammar and other parts of linguistics, its major reference was poetry. Therefore, word, meaning, syntax in poetry are analysed with keen interest. Persian language in India has a very rich history of literature. Entire medieval India has observed Persian as an influential literary culture and many modern Indian languages have adapted or translated texts from Persian. Therefore, history of Persian literature in India is not only the history of Persian alone but a comparative history of influence study also. Different literary genres and themes adapted from the Persian and Arabic literature. Besides this, Persian as an official language of the Nawabs and the Mughal Empire influenced the common language of the people of India. There are innumerable loan-words in different modern Indian languages from Persian. Persian also influenced the prose style in different modern Indian languages. Al-Badaoni and Amir Khusru are very significant figures in the history of medieval Indian thoughts. They have contributed a lot in Indian literary thinking. Persian contribution in Indian literary theory keeps the continuation of the heritage of knowledge began with the Sanskrit Albadaoni is celebrated because of his contribution in historiography and documentation of historical knowledge of medieval Indian literature, culture, society and politics. Perhaps the model of writing history proposed by Albadaoni is one among very few historiography proposed by the Indian thinkers. His history of literature of India or history of medieval India is not history but methodology and discursive framework for writing history. This may be called as the Indian model of writing history. His understanding about the literature of India also can

be recognized as the categorization of the literature of India as Indian Literature. Besides this Amir Khusru, a rare genius is one among the very famous poets who has life in popular culture. But Khusru is not only a poet; he is a chronicler, musician, composer, author and poet all in one mind. His idea of literary history is also a model of writing history of literature. Like Badaoni he also proposed a historiography of Indian literary history and Indian history also. Albadaoni's Twarikh and Amir Khusru's Nuh Siphir is the texts which contains theoretical thinkings of these two great mind. Poetics and Literary Thoughts in Indian Bhasha Indian bhasha literature has rich heritage of literature more than thousand years old. Indian bhasha develops with the influence and reception of literature from Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic, European literature and obviously literature from different Indian languages. Whole history of bhasha reflects the poetics of influence and reception. Bhakti movement the major changing force in Indian literature and Bhakti also is one of the denominators in Indian literature. Indian bhasha has observed different ideas and doctrines have been developed during the bhakti movement in Indian literatures. Bhakti-rasa itself is a major rasa what was widely practiced in entire Indian culture, life and literature. Srila Rup Goswami is one of the major theorists who talks about Bhakti-rasa in literature.

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