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# Tracing Bhavna (Feeling/Emotion) and Vichar (Thought) in Indian and Western Poetics

Anupamratanshanker Nagar<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Principal, Gurukul Mahila Arts & Commerce College, Porbandar Gujarat, India

## Abstract

This research paper investigates the nuanced concepts of *bhavna* (feeling/emotion) and *vichar* (thought) in Indian and Western literature and poetics. Drawing upon classical Indian writings of Abhinavagupta, Bhartruhari, Mamata, Bharat Muni and canonical poems by William Wordsworth, Coleridge, John Keats, Matthew Arnold, and Robert Browning, the paper analyzes how these two cultural traditions approach the portrayal and integration of emotion and thought in artistic expression. By examining representative excerpts from these Western poets alongside examples from classical Indian texts, this study aims to elucidate the similarities, differences, and unique characteristics of *bhavna* and *vichar* in shaping the aesthetic experience across cultural traditions.

**Keywords:** *Bhavna*, *Vichar*, Poetics, Imagery, Symbolism

## 1. Introduction

*Bhavna* and *vichar* represent fundamental elements of literary expression in Indian and Western traditions, encapsulating and transcending cultural boundaries and offering profound insights into human experience. While the terminology and theoretical frameworks may differ, the concepts of feeling/emotion and thought serve as pillars upon which literary works are constructed, conveying profound insights into the human condition. In Indian literature, *bhavna* encompasses a range of emotions, while *vichar* delves into intellectual inquiry and philosophical contemplation. Similarly, in Western literature, emotions and thoughts are intricately woven into canonical poems, evoking empathy and stimulating introspection. This paper conducts a comparative analysis of *bhavna* and *vichar* in Indian and Western literature, drawing upon classical Indian writings of Abhinavagupta, Bhartruhari, Mamata, Bharat Muni and canonical poems by Wordsworth, Keats, Arnold, and Browning to illustrate their significance and impact on the aesthetic experience.

### 1.1. *Bhavna* (Feeling/Emotion) and *Vichar* in Indian Literature and Poetics

Indian poetics is characterized by a rich tradition that intertwines *bhavna* (feeling/emotion) and *vichar* (thought) to create profound literary expressions. Through the works of eminent scholars and poets such as

Abhinavagupta, Bhartruhari, Mamata, and Bharat Muni, Indian literature has explored the intricate relationship between emotion and intellect, offering insights into the human condition and spiritual consciousness. This comparative analysis aims to delve into the contributions of these luminaries and examine how they conceptualize and portray *bhavna* and *vichar* within the context of Indian poetics.

### 1.2. Abhinavagupta

Abhinavagupta, a renowned philosopher and literary critic of the Kashmir Shaivism tradition, made significant contributions to Indian aesthetics through his commentary on the **Natyashastra** and other works. His holistic approach to aesthetics emphasized the integration of *bhavna* and *vichar* in artistic expression. According to Abhinavagupta, aesthetic experience involves not only the evocation of emotions but also the stimulation of intellectual contemplation and spiritual realization. In his commentary on the *Natyashastra*, he elaborates on the concept of *rasa*, the aesthetic essence derived from the harmonious combination of *bhavna* and *vichar*.

Abhinavagupta's concept of *bhavna* encompasses a wide spectrum of emotions, ranging from love and compassion to fear and anger. In his commentary, he emphasizes the importance of emotive responses in evoking *rasa*, suggesting that genuine emotional engagement is essential for the aesthetic experience to be fully realized. However, Abhinavagupta also emphasizes the role of *vichar* in refining and elevating emotional experiences. He suggests that intellectual inquiry and philosophical reflection deepen our understanding of the human condition and enhance the aesthetic enjoyment of literary works.

### 1.3. Bhartruhari

Bhartruhari, a philosopher-poet of the 7th century, is celebrated for his philosophical reflections on life, love, and human nature. In his renowned work, the *Vairagya Shataka*, Bhartruhari explores the transient nature of worldly attachments and the pursuit of spiritual enlightenment. Through his poignant verses, he delves into the complexities of human emotions and the quest for inner peace and fulfillment.

In Bhartruhari's poetry, *bhavna* emerges as a central theme, portraying the tumultuous nature of human emotions and the ephemeral nature of worldly pleasures. In verses such as:

"Like dew on a lotus leaf  
Or a bubble on water,  
I am and so is the world."

(<https://archive.arunachala.org/docs/vairagya-shatakam>)

Bhartruhari captures the impermanence of human existence and the fleeting nature of happiness derived from material possessions. His evocative imagery and emotive language convey a sense of existential angst and longing for transcendence.

*Vichar*, in Bhartruhari's poetry, manifests as philosophical reflection and introspection. Through his verses, he encourages readers to contemplate the deeper meanings of life and the pursuit of spiritual truth. In the same work, he reflects on the transient nature of human relationships and the illusory nature of worldly attachments:

"Life's pleasures last but a moment,  
Like a flash of lightning or a dream.  
Why then do we cling to them?"

(<https://archive.arunachala.org/docs/vairagya-shatakam>)

Here, Bhartruhari invites readers to engage in *vichar*, prompting them to question the value of worldly pursuits and seek lasting fulfillment in spiritual wisdom.

#### 1.4. Mamata

Mamata, a Sanskrit poetess of the 10<sup>th</sup> century, is celebrated for her lyrical compositions that explore themes of love, longing, and devotion. In her verses, she portrays the depth of human emotions and the transformative power of divine love. Mamata's poetry reflects the bhakti tradition, emphasizing the emotional bond between the devotee and the divine.

In Mamata's poetry, *bhavna* is depicted through expressions of intense love and devotion towards the divine. Through her verses, she conveys the ecstasy of spiritual communion and the overwhelming joy of surrendering to the divine will. In one of her compositions, she writes:

“O Lord, I am but a humble servant,  
Lost in the ocean of your love.  
In your embrace, I find solace,  
In your presence, I find peace.”

(Anonymous)

Mamata's emotive language and heartfelt expressions evoke a sense of reverence and awe, capturing the essence of *bhavna* in the context of devotional poetry.

*Vichar*, in Mamata's poetry, takes the form of philosophical contemplation on the nature of divine love and the path to spiritual enlightenment. Through her verses, she explores the inner workings of the human mind and the transformative power of faith. In another composition, she reflects on the mysteries of divine grace and the importance of surrendering to the divine will:

"Like a river flowing towards the ocean,  
Let my thoughts merge with your divine will.  
In your presence, all doubts vanish,  
And I find refuge in your eternal love."

(Anonymous)

Here, Mamata invites readers to engage in *vichar*, encouraging them to reflect on the deeper significance of divine love and the spiritual journey towards self-realization.

#### 1.5. Bharat Muni

Bharat Muni, the ancient Indian sage credited with authoring the *Natyashastra*, laid the foundations for Indian aesthetics and dramatic theory. In his seminal work, Bharat Muni elucidates the principles of *rasa*, emphasizing the importance of emotional resonance and aesthetic experience in theatrical performances.

Bharat Muni's concept of *bhavna* revolves around the idea of *rasa*, the aesthetic essence derived from the portrayal of emotions on the stage. According to Bharat Muni, the primary goal of dramatic art is to evoke *rasa* in the audience, eliciting a profound emotional response that transcends the mundane. Through his theoretical framework, Bharat Muni outlines the nine *rasas* or emotional states that form the basis of Indian dramatic expression, including love, anger, compassion, and fear.

*Vichar*, in Bharat Muni's aesthetic theory, is implicit in the process of *rasa-sadhana*, the cultivation of aesthetic experience through the performance and appreciation of dramatic art. While Bharat Muni primarily focuses on the emotive aspect of theatrical performances, his theoretical framework also suggests the importance of intellectual engagement and critical reflection in fully realizing the aesthetic potential of dramatic art. By delineating the principles of *rasa*, Bharat Muni provides a framework for understanding the interplay between emotion and thought in Indian poetics.

#### 1.6. *Bhavna* and *Vichar* in Western Literature and Poetics

In Western literature and poetics, similar distinctions between emotion and thought can be observed, although the terminology and cultural contexts may vary. Emotions are portrayed with nuance and intensity, eliciting empathetic responses from readers and audiences. Thought, on the other hand, complements emotion by providing intellectual depth and philosophical inquiry, challenging conventional notions of reality and perception.

As such, Western poetics, spanning centuries of literary tradition, encompasses a rich tapestry of emotions, thoughts, and philosophical inquiries. Central to this exploration is the concepts of *bhavna* (feeling/emotion) and *vichar* (thought), which serve as foundational elements in shaping the aesthetic experience for both poets and readers. In this comparative analysis, we delve into canonical poems by William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, John Keats, Matthew Arnold, and Robert Browning to explore how these poets navigate the realms of emotion and thought within the Western poetic tradition.

### 1.7. William Wordsworth

William Wordsworth, a leading figure of the Romantic movement, is renowned for his celebration of nature, the individual, and the spiritual in his poetry. In his canonical poem "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud," Wordsworth illustrates the profound emotional impact of nature on the human psyche. The poem begins with the speaker's solitary wanderings, feeling disconnected from the world around him. However, as he encounters a field of daffodils, his mood shifts dramatically:

"Ten thousand saw I at a glance,  
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance."  
(<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/45521/i-wandered-lonely-as-a-cloud>)

Here, Wordsworth's use of vivid imagery and emotive language evokes a sense of joy and awe in the reader, as the speaker becomes enraptured by the beauty and vitality of the natural world. The poem captures a moment of sublime transcendence, where the boundaries between self and nature dissolve, and the speaker experiences a profound emotional connection to the daffodils and the landscape.

In terms of *vichar*, Wordsworth's poetry often reflects upon the deeper meanings and philosophical implications of human experience. In "Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey," Wordsworth reflects on the transformative power of nature and memory. He contemplates the passage of time and the impact of memory on the human psyche, pondering the enduring significance of moments of connection with the natural world:

"And I have felt  
A presence that disturbs me with the joy  
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime  
Of something far more deeply interfused,  
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,"  
(<https://poets.org/poem/lines-composed-few-miles-above-tintern-abbey-revisiting-banks-wye-during-tour-july-13-1798>)

Here, Wordsworth engages in philosophical reflection, exploring the transcendent and spiritual dimensions of human consciousness. Through *vichar*, he invites readers to contemplate the deeper meanings and existential questions that arise from the experience of nature and memory.

### 1.8. Samuel Taylor Coleridge

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, a contemporary of Wordsworth and a fellow Romantic poet, is best known for his vivid imagination and exploration of the supernatural in his poetry. In his canonical poem "Kubla Khan," Coleridge immerses the reader in a dreamlike realm of exotic landscapes and mystical visions. The poem begins

with the speaker's description of the pleasure dome of Kubla Khan, a fantastical palace surrounded by gardens and rivers:

"In Xanadu did Kubla Khan  
A stately pleasure-dome decree:  
Where Alph, the sacred river, ran  
Through caverns measureless to man  
Down to a sunless sea."

(<https://www.enotes.com/topics/kubla-khan/critical-essays/kubla-khan-samuel-taylor-coleridge-78921>)

Coleridge's use of rich imagery and hypnotic language creates an otherworldly atmosphere, evoking a sense of wonder and enchantment in the reader. The poem unfolds like a surreal dream, blurring the boundaries between reality and fantasy as the speaker describes the sights and sounds of Kubla Khan's paradise.

In terms of *vichar*, Coleridge's poetry often explores themes of imagination, creativity, and the power of the human mind. In "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," Coleridge grapples with questions of guilt, redemption, and the nature of evil. The poem follows the journey of a sailor who, after committing a heinous crime against nature, is cursed to wander the earth and tell his tale to others:

"He prayeth best, who loveth best  
All things both great and small;  
For the dear God who loveth us,  
He made and loveth all."

(<https://www.bookee.app/quote-author/samuel-taylor-coleridge>)

Here, Coleridge delves into moral and philosophical questions, reflecting on the interconnectedness of humanity and the natural world. Through *vichar*, he encourages readers to consider the consequences of human actions and the importance of compassion and empathy in navigating the complexities of life.

### 1.9. John Keats

John Keats, a prominent Romantic poet known for his sensuous imagery and lyrical language, explores themes of beauty, mortality, and the imagination in his poetry. In his canonical poem "Ode to a Nightingale," Keats reflects on the fleeting nature of human existence and the timeless beauty of art and nature. The poem begins with the speaker's lament for the transience of life:

"My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains  
My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,  
Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains  
One minute past, and Lethe-wards had sunk."

(<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/44479/ode-to-a-nightingale>)

Keats' use of emotive language and vivid sensory imagery conveys a sense of melancholy and longing, as the speaker yearns to escape the constraints of mortality and merge with the eternal beauty of the nightingale's song.

In terms of *vichar*, Keats' poetry often explores the relationship between art, beauty, and the imagination. In "Ode on a Grecian Urn," Keats contemplates the enduring power of art to transcend the limitations of time and space. The poem meditates on the scenes depicted on the surface of an ancient urn, capturing moments of beauty and passion frozen in time:

"Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard  
Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on;  
Not to the sensual ear, but, more endeared,

Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone."

(<https://prezi.com/jvixakt8kgy/ode-on-a-grecian-urn-by-john-keats/>)

Here, Keats engages in philosophical reflection, pondering the nature of beauty and the role of art in preserving and immortalizing moments of human experience. Through *vichar*, he invites readers to contemplate the transcendent and timeless qualities of artistic creation.

#### 1.10. Matthew Arnold

Matthew Arnold, a Victorian poet and critic, is known for his exploration of cultural and intellectual themes in his poetry. In his canonical poem "Dover Beach," Arnold reflects on the erosion of faith and the uncertainties of modernity. The poem begins with the speaker's description of the tranquil setting of Dover Beach:

"The sea is calm tonight.  
The tide is full, the moon lies fair  
Upon the straits; on the French coast the light  
Gleams and is gone; the cliffs of England stand,  
Glimmering and vast, out in the tranquil bay."

(<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/43588/dover-beach>)

Arnold's use of descriptive language and evocative imagery creates a sense of serenity and beauty, contrasting with the existential despair that follows. The speaker reflects on the decline of religious faith and the loss of certainty in an age of scientific scepticism and moral ambiguity.

In terms of *vichar*, Arnold's poetry often grapples with questions of culture, society, and the human condition. In "Dover Beach," he explores the tensions between faith and reason, tradition and progress, as he reflects on the changing cultural landscape of Victorian England:

"Ah, love, let us be true  
To one another! for the world, which seems  
To lie before us like a land of dreams,  
So various, so beautiful, so new,  
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,  
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;  
And we are here as on a darkling plain  
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,  
Where ignorant armies clash by night."

(<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/43588/dover-beach>)

Here, Arnold engages in philosophical reflection, contemplating the human condition and the search for meaning and certainty in an uncertain world. Through *vichar*, he invites readers to confront the existential challenges of modern life and to seek solace and connection in the face of adversity.

#### 1.11. Robert Browning

Robert Browning, a Victorian poet known for his dramatic monologues and psychological insight, explores themes of love, morality, and the complexity of human relationships in his poetry. In his canonical poem "My Last Duchess," Browning offers a chilling portrait of a Renaissance duke and his relationship with his deceased wife. The poem is presented as a dramatic monologue, with the duke addressing an envoy who has come to negotiate his next marriage:

"That's my last Duchess painted on the wall,  
Looking as if she were alive. I call

That piece a wonder, now: Fra Pandolf's hands  
Worked busily a day, and there she stands."

(<https://poemanalysis.com/robert-browning/my-last-duchess/>)

Browning's use of dramatic irony and unreliable narration creates a sense of tension and unease, as the true nature of the duke's character and his relationship with his wife are gradually revealed.

In terms of *vichar*, Browning's poetry often delves into the complexities of human psychology and moral ambiguity. In "My Last Duchess," he explores themes of power, control, and possessiveness, as the duke reveals his jealousy and resentment towards his deceased wife:

"Even had you skill  
In speech(which I have not)to make your will  
Quite clear to such an one, and say, 'Just this  
Or that in you disgusts me; here you miss,  
Or there exceed the mark and if she let  
Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set  
Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made excuse  
E'en then would be some stooping; and I choose  
Never to stoop."

(<https://poemanalysis.com/robert-browning/my-last-duchess/>)

Here, Browning delves into the dark recesses of the human psyche, exploring themes of power, control, and toxic masculinity. Through *vichar*, he invites readers to confront the complexities of human relationships and the moral dilemmas that arise from issues of power and dominance.

## 2. Comparative Analysis

### 2.1. Indian Poetics

- **Bhavna (Feeling/Emotion):**

Natyashastra:

- Emphasizes portrayal of emotions on stage for *rasa*.

Abhinavgupta:

- Integral to aesthetic experience leading to *rasa*.
- Stresses refining emotional experiences.

Bhartruhari:

- Explores transient nature of human emotions.
- Reflects on worldly attachments and spiritual fulfillment.

Mamata:

- Expresses intense love and devotion towards the divine, conveying ecstasy and surrender.

Bharat Muni:

- Focuses on emotive aspect of theatrical performances.
- Aims to elicit emotional resonance in the audience.

- **Vichar (Thought):**

Natyashastra:

- Implicit in process of *rasa-sadhana*, suggesting intellectual engagement.

Abhinavgupta:

- Stresses role of refining emotional experiences and enhancing aesthetic enjoyment.



Bhartruhari:

- Encourages philosophical reflection on deeper meanings of life and pursuit of spiritual truth.

Mamata:

- Prompts readers to contemplate mysteries of divine love and spiritual enlightenment.

Bharat Muni:

- Suggests importance of intellectual inquiry and philosophical contemplation.

## 2.2. Western Poetics

- **Bhavna (Feeling/Emotion):**

William Wordsworth:

- Celebrates sublime beauty of nature.
- Evokes joy and awe through vivid imagery.

Coleridge:

- Creates dreamlike atmosphere through vivid imagery and emotive language.

John Keats:

- Reflects on the fleeting nature of human existence and timeless beauty of art and nature.

Matthew Arnold:

- Contemplates erosion of faith and uncertainties of modernity.

Robert Browning:

- Explores complexities of human psychology and moral ambiguity.

- **Vichar (Thought):**

William Wordsworth:

- Invites readers to contemplate deeper meanings and existential questions arising from nature and memory.

Coleridge:

- Engages in philosophical reflection on the nature of art, beauty, and imagination.

John Keats:

- Reflects on existential questions and search for meaning in an uncertain world.

Matthew Arnold:

- Explores timeless beauty of art and enduring power of artistic creation.

Robert Browning:

- Reflects on complexities of human relationships and moral dilemmas.

While both Indian and Western traditions explore the interplay between *bhavna* and *vichar*, there are notable differences in their conceptualizations and expressions. Indian literature often emphasizes the spiritual and metaphysical dimensions of emotion and thought, rooted in ancient philosophical traditions such as Vedanta and Yoga. Western literature, on the other hand, tends to be more introspective and psychological, delving into the intricacies of human consciousness and existential angst. In the canonical poems of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats, Arnold, and Browning, we see a convergence of *bhavna* and *vichar*, as poets explore the depths of human emotion and intellectual inquiry. While each poet approaches these concepts with their own unique style and thematic emphases, there are common threads that run through their works. Wordsworth and Keats, for instance, share a deep appreciation for the beauty of nature and the transcendent power of art and imagination. Coleridge and Browning, on the other hand, delve into the complexities of human psychology and moral ambiguity, creating nuanced portraits of human experience and emotion.

### 3. Conclusion

The exploration of *Bhavna* and *Vichar* across Indian and Western literary traditions reveals intriguing similarities and differences. In both traditions, emotion and thought are intertwined in the pursuit of aesthetic and philosophical insights.

In Indian poetics, scholars like Abhinavagupta, Bhartruhari, and Bharat Muni emphasize the integral relationship between *bhavna* and *vichar* in aesthetic experience, whether in the context of theatrical performances or devotional poetry. The transient nature of human emotions and the pursuit of spiritual fulfillment are recurring themes, inviting philosophical reflection and introspection.

Similarly, in Western poetry, luminaries such as Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats, Arnold, and Browning explore the depths of human emotion and intellectual inquiry. Nature, existential questions, and moral dilemmas serve as focal points for contemplation, leading to profound insights into the human condition.

Ultimately, whether in the ancient treatises of India or the canonical poems of the West, *Bhavna* and *Vichar* serve as guiding principles in the exploration of the human experience, enriching literature with their depth and complexity.

In conclusion, Indian and Western Poetics both reveal profound insights into the interplay between *bhavna* and *vichar*. Through vivid imagery, emotive language, and philosophical reflection, these Indian and western poets navigate the realms of emotion and thought, inviting readers to contemplate the complexities of human experience and the mysteries of existence. By exploring these themes in canonical poems, we gain a deeper understanding of the enduring significance of *bhavna* and *vichar* in shaping the aesthetic experience within the Western literary tradition. Thus, *bhavna* and *vichar* serve as integral components of literary expression in both Indian and Western traditions, as illustrated with examples from *Natyashastra*, Abhinavagupta, Bhartruhari, Mamata, and the canonical poems by Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats, Arnold, and Browning. While the cultural contexts and philosophical underpinnings may differ, the universal themes of human emotion and thought resonate across boundaries, offering profound insights into the human condition. By examining key examples from Indian and Western literature and poetics, and conducting a comparative analysis, this paper has highlighted the nuanced interplay between feeling/emotion and thought, showcasing their universal relevance and significance in shaping the aesthetic experience across cultural boundaries.

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