

RESEARCH ARTICLE



ISSN

INTERNATIONAL  
STANDARD  
SERIAL  
NUMBER

INDIA

2395-2636 (Print); 2321-3108 (online)

## POETIC DEFINITIONS: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF HEMCHANDRACHARYA AND WESTERN PERSPECTIVES

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Article info

Article Received: 20/02/2022

Article Accepted: 29/03/2022

Published online: 31/03/2022

DOI: [10.33329/rjelal.10.1.313](https://doi.org/10.33329/rjelal.10.1.313)

### Abstract

The definition of poetry has varied across time, cultures, and geographical locations, reflecting the diverse perspectives of writers and poets. Despite ongoing debates, a universal definition of poetry remains elusive. Instead, poets and writers from different traditions, such as Western and Sanskrit literature, have formulated definitions that are rooted in their respective cultural and literary contexts. I have tried here to do comparative study of definition of poetry by Western great poets with definition of poetry by Eleventh century Jain scholar, poet and polymath Shri Acharya Hemchandracharya who is well known as "Kalikal Sarvagya", "the all-knowing of the Kali Yuga".

**Key Words:** Poetry, Allegory, Stream-of-consciousness, persuasion, imagination, rhetoric.

### Discussion

The Western concept of poetry has evolved over time, influenced by various cultural, philosophical, and literary movements. The ancient Greeks and Romans valued poetry's rhetorical aspects, such as persuasion, ornamentation, and emotional appeal. Aristotle's concept of mimesis (imitation) emphasized poetry's role in imitating life, nature, and human experiences. Medieval poetry often employed allegory, where abstract concepts were represented through symbolic characters and events. The Renaissance saw the rise of courtly love poetry, which emphasized chivalry, romance, and the adoration of the beloved. Romantic poets like Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Keats focused on the emotional, personal, and expressive aspects of

poetry. The Romantics also stressed the importance of nature, imagination, and the individual's experience. Modernist poets like T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, and Wallace Stevens experimented with form, language, and narrative structures. Modernist poetry often employed stream-of-consciousness techniques, mirroring the natural flow of thoughts and emotions. Contemporary poetry is characterized by diversity, pluralism, and a wide range of styles, themes, and voices. Many contemporary poets blend different forms, languages, and cultural traditions to create unique and innovative works.

Percy Bysshe Shelley, a renowned English Romantic poet, defined poetry in his essay "A Defence of Poetry",

Poetry is indeed something divine. It is as once the centre and circumference of knowledge; it is that which comprehends all science, and that to which all science must be referred. It is at the same time the root and blossom of all other systems of thought; it is that from which all spring, and that which adorns all; and that which, if blighted, denies the fruit and the seed, and withholds from the barren world the nourishment and the succession of the scions of the tree of life. It is the perfect and consummate surface and bloom of all things; it is as the odour and the colour of the rose to the texture of the elements which compose it, as the form and splendour of unfolded beauty to the secrets of anatomy and corruption.

Shelley saw poetry as the expression of the imagination, which he believed was the source of all creative power. He emphasized the role of imagination and inspiration in poetry, stating that poets are inspired by a divine spark that allows them to see the world in a unique way. Shelley believed that poetry was a form of truth, as it conveyed the deepest and most profound aspects of human experience. He saw poetry as having the power to transform and elevate human beings, allowing them to access higher states of consciousness and understanding. Shelley's definition of poetry is closely tied to his vision of the poet as a visionary, a seer, and a prophet. He believed that poets had a unique role to play in shaping culture and society, and that their work could inspire and transform humanity.

Robert Frost, a celebrated American poet, offered various insights into the nature of poetry throughout his career. According to Frost, "Poetry is when an emotion has found its thought and the thought has found words." Frost believed that poetry should reveal the complexities and depths of human life. He sought to capture the essence of life in his poems, often using nature as a metaphor. Frost emphasized the importance of imagination in poetry, stating that it allows us to "see" the world in new and unexpected ways. Frost viewed poetry as a means of exploring the human condition, examining the intricacies of human emotions, and investigating the mysteries of life. Frost was a master of traditional forms and structures, and he believed

that these elements were essential to creating effective poetry. Overall, Frost's definition of poetry emphasizes the importance of revelation, imagination, exploration, and form in creating effective and meaningful poetry.

Edgar Allan Poe, a renowned American poet, writer, and critic, offered a unique and influential definition of poetry. As Poe said,

"I would define, in brief, the poetry of words as the Rhythmical Creation of Beauty. Its sole arbiter is taste. With the intellect or with the conscience, it has only collateral relations. Unless incidentally, it has no concern whatever either with duty or with truth."

Poe believed that poetry should be a form of music, with a focus on rhythm, melody, and harmony. He emphasized the importance of sound and musicality in poetry. Poe saw poetry as a pursuit of beauty and truth. He believed that poetry should strive to capture the essence of beauty and convey profound truths about human experience. Poe emphasized the importance of evoking emotions in the reader. He believed that poetry should create a sense of emotional resonance, often through the use of symbolism, imagery, and other literary devices. 4. Poe believed that poetry should suggest rather than state. He advocated for a subtle and indirect approach to conveying meaning, allowing the reader to fill in the gaps and interpret the poem in their own way. Overall, Poe's definition of poetry emphasizes the importance of beauty, truth, emotional resonance, and musicality in creating effective and meaningful poetry.

T.S. Eliot, a renowned British-American poet, playwright, and critic, offered a complex and nuanced definition of poetry. He defined poetry in his work, *'The Wasteland'*,

"Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality. But, of course, only those who have personality and emotions know what it means to want to escape from these things."

Eliot believed that poetry was a unique form of knowledge, distinct from other disciplines like science or philosophy. Eliot saw emotion as a crucial element in poetry, but emphasized that it should be disciplined and controlled by the poet's intellect. Eliot believed that poetry was deeply rooted in tradition and that poets should be aware of and engage with the literary heritage that preceded them. Eliot's poetry often reflected his belief that reality is fragmented and disjointed, and that poetry should reflect this dislocation. Overall, Eliot's definition of poetry emphasizes the importance of tradition, emotion, and intellectual discipline in creating a unique and powerful form of knowledge.

Kahlil Gibran, a Lebanese-American poet, writer, and artist, offered a spiritual and philosophical definition of poetry. Gibran believed that poetry was a mean of expressing the deepest and most profound aspects of the human spirit. He saw poetry as the language of the soul, capable of conveying emotions, thoughts, and experiences that transcend the mundane. Gibran believed that poetry served as a bridge between the finite world of human experience and the infinite realm of the divine. He saw poetry as a celebration of beauty and truth, with the power to inspire, uplift, and transform humanity.

William Wordsworth, a major English Romantic poet, defined poetry in his *Preface to Lyrical Ballads* (1800) and other writings.

Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity: the emotion is contemplated till, by a species of reaction, the tranquillity gradually disappears, and an emotion, kindred to that which was before the subject of contemplation, is gradually produced, and does itself actually exist in the mind.

Wordsworth believed that poetry is the natural expression of powerful emotions, which are triggered by experiences and observations. He saw imagination as a vital component of poetry, allowing poets to transform and elevate their experiences into something more profound and meaningful. Wordsworth believed that nature is a primary

source of inspiration for poetry, and that it has the power to evoke strong emotions and spiritual experiences. He saw the poet as a person who is particularly attuned to the natural world and the human experience, and who has the ability to convey their insights and emotions through language.

Kalikal Sarvagya Hemchandracharya, a Jain monk and scholar from the 12th century, made extraordinary contribution for a long spell of seven decades to varied fields like poetry and grammar, history and purana, yoga and spiritual knowledge, lexicon and poetics, renunciation and penance, self-restraint and self-discipline and the state welfare and popular welfare. The Acharya was the first one to put non-violence on a political platform. In the field of metaphysics, he was a Yogi. His work '*Yoga-Shastra*', a treatise on yoga, is very famous. People called him "Kalikal Sarvagya" meaning "all-knower in the dark period". He died in 1173 A.D. at the age of eighty-four. The Jain culture still shines brightly in Gujarat, due to the influence of the literary works contributed by him.

A prodigious writer, Hemchandracharya wrote grammars of Sanskrit and Prakrit, poetry, prosody, lexicons, texts on science and logic and practically all branches on Indian philosophy. It is said that Hemchandracharya composed in total of 3.5 crore verses of which many are now lost. Acharya Hemchandracharya is known for his grammar '*Siddha-Hema-Sabdanusasana*'. It was written in the style of Panini and Bhoj. It is the only known Apabhramsa grammar. To illustrate the grammar, he produced the epic poetry '*Dvyashraya Kavya*' on the history of Solanki dynasty. Hemchandracharya's epic poem '*Trisastisalakapurushacaritra*' or '*Lives of Sixty-Three Great Men*' is a hagiographical treatment of the twenty four tirthankaras and other important persons instrumental in defining the Jain philosophical position, collectively called the "*Salakapurusas*", their asceticism and eventual liberation from the cycle of death and rebirth, as well as the legendary spread of the Jain influence.

Acharya Hemchandracharya's views on various topics of literary aesthetics can be evaluated with reference to his work '*Kavyanushasan*'. In this

work, he defines poetry and provides a comprehensive analysis of its various aspects. Hemchandracharya defines poetry as "the adornment of speech with the ornaments of sound and sense" (Shabda-artha-alankara). He emphasizes that poetry should possess both sonic beauty (sound) and semantic depth (sense). He categorizes poetry into two main types. Drishya Kavya (visible poetry): This type of poetry is meant to be seen or performed, such as drama or puppet shows. Shravya Kavya (audible poetry): This type of poetry is meant to be heard, such as lyrical poetry or narrative verse. Hemchandracharya identifies four essential elements of poetry. Shabda (word): The poet's choice of words and their arrangement. Artha (meaning): The poet's intended meaning or message. Alankara (ornamentation): The use of rhetorical devices, such as metaphor, simile, and alliteration. Rasa (sentiment): The emotional tone or atmosphere evoked by the poem. Hemchandracharya recognizes eight primary rasas (sentiments) in poetry: Shringara (love), Hasya (humor), Karuna (compassion), Raudra (anger), Veera (courage), Bhayanaka (fear), Bibhatsa (disgust), Adbhuta (wonder). Hemchandracharya classifies alankaras (rhetorical devices) into several categories, including: Upama (simile), Rupaka (metaphor), Yamaka (alliteration), Anuprasa (consonance). Hemchandracharya's work on poetics provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the nature and structure of poetry. His definitions and analysis remain influential in the study of Sanskrit literature and poetry to this day.

Hemchandracharya observes that purpose of poetry is for joy, fame and also for instruction in the fashion of a beloved. Poetry is poet's extraordinary creation. The Acharya rejects the other three purposes of poetry such as "artha-krite, vyavahara-vide, sivatara-ksataye" – i.e. "For procurement of wealth, knowledge of the ways of the world and cessation of the inauspicious." Hemchandracharya holds that wealth can be procured through many ways or means, expertise in worldly matters can result from scriptures also, and removal of the inauspicious also can be secured through other means. For him, therefore, ananda (joy, bliss), yasa (fame for the poet), and priti-

purvaka-upadesa (instruction in a pleasing and charming fashion) make for the purpose of poetry. The Acharya observes that by 'ananda' is meant that bliss which is born instantly through the relish of rasa, and one wherein all other objects of knowledge are thrown out of consciousness, and is of the nature of the tasting of brahma. This he holds as the supreme purpose of poetry- "Sarva-Prayojano'panisad-bhuta". In his Viveka he adds: "Yaso-vyupatti phalatve'pi paryante sarvatra anandasyaiva sadhyatvat-tatha hi kaves tavat kirty'pi priti-eva sampadya" – i.e. even if fame and knowledge were considered as the purpose of poetry, ultimately only ananda – joy is aimed at by the poet. The poet tries to secure pleasure over and above even fame.

Hemchandracharya considers only 'Pratibha', i.e. genius as the cause of poetry. Pratibha is explained by the Acharya as Prajna (intelligence) which creates newer and newer forms. This is the principal cause of poetry. The Acharya observes that it will be said that learning and practice only enhance i.e. are only the refining agents of Pratibha or inborn genius or talent. The Acharya further discusses the concept of 'Pratibha', which for him is two-fold, i.e. 'Sahaja' or in-born and 'aupadhiki' i.e. acquired, or conditional, i.e. caused by other factors. The inborn is caused due to total removal of existing obstacles or appeasement of future obstacles. Obstacles are those that cover up the knowledge of the soul, which is of the nature of light, like a cluster of veils of clouds covering the Sun which also is self-luminous. That manifestation of light which removes an already existing obstacle or which causes to appease the advent of future obstacle, is itself the 'Sahaja' or in-born genius.

Hemchandracharya discusses the other type of 'Pratibha', viz. conditional or acquired. It is said to be 'aupadhiki' or conditional, as it is caused through the instrumentation of 'mantra' i.e. incarnation, or grace of the divine, etc. This also is due to the removal of existing obstacles or appeasement of future obstacles. Hemchandracharya observes that this two-fold genius is to be cultivated through proficiency and practice. Learning is expertise in worldly business, scriptures i.e. various disciplines and in poetic works

of great poets. 'Abhyasa' or practice is explained by Hemchandracharya as repeated activity under the guidance of those who know poetry. This 'abhyasa' or practice is imparted through instructions received from the experts in the field.

After treating 'Kavya-hetu', Hemchandracharya picks up the topic of 'Kavya-laksana' i.e. the definition of poetry. As per Hemchandracharya, poetry makes up of such 'word and sense', which are "a-dosau" i.e. "free from blemishes", "sagunau" i.e. "qualified by excellences" and are also having figures of speech, i.e. "Salarankarauca". Hemchandracharya observes that by the term 'nir-alamkarayorapi', which is meant to be suggested is that in poetry the presence of excellences is a must and is therefore unavoidable, because he observes, "an-alamprtam api gunavad vacah svadate" – an expression, though not adorned by figures of speech becomes an object of relish, if it is having excellences, and also – "alamkrtam apinirgunam na svadate" – poetry, though adorned, but if bereft of excellences does not become an object or relish.

The key differences between the Western Poets definition of poetry and Hemchandracharya's definition of poetry are: (1) Western poets tend to focus on the emotional, expressive, and representational aspects of poetry. Hemchandracharya, on the other hand, emphasizes the importance of both sound and sense in poetry. (2) Western poets often view poetry as a means of conveying emotions, ideas, or experiences. Hemchandracharya's approach is more formalistic, highlighting the importance of poetic devices and ornamentation. (3) Western poets' definitions are often rooted in their cultural and historical contexts, reflecting the values and aesthetics of their time. Hemchandracharya's definition, as a Jain monk and scholar, is influenced by Indian aesthetics and the tradition of Sanskrit poetry.

### Conclusion

There are some similarities in Western definition of poetry and Hemchandracharya's definition of poetry. Both Western poets and Hemchandracharya recognize the significance of language in poetry. They emphasize the need for

careful word choice, arrangement, and ornamentation. Both perspectives view poetry as an art form, requiring skill, craftsmanship, and attention to detail. Both Western poets and Hemchandracharya acknowledge the importance of beauty in poetry, whether it be sonic, semantic, or emotional.

Finally, we can conclude that for western writers' poetry is a spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings, recollected in tranquillity but for Hemchandracharya, poetry is joy, fame for the poet. He considers talent of the poet as the only cause of the poetry. For Hemchandracharya poetry makes up of such 'word and sense', which are free from blemishes, and which are qualified by excellences and are also having figures of speech.

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