

Exploring *Navarasa* in the Selected Indian and Greek Mythological Short Stories for Children

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Abstract

The research explores *Navarasa* in the selected short stories from Indian and Greek versions with an aim to impart moral and emotional education in children. It analyzes the stories through the *Rasa* theory given by Bharat Muni in his work *Natyashastra*, identifying the nine emotions called *Navarasa* embedded within the narrative, characters' actions and illustrations in the stories. It aims to find out that despite the cultural difference, the stories still serve as an important work of literature to teach the valuable lessons to children and help them cope up with the emotions in their real life. Through a comparative and qualitative lens, the paper highlights how ancient storytelling traditions across cultures reflect shared emotional experiences and universal values.

Keywords: Children, Emotions, *Navarasa*, Indian, Greek

Introduction

Any form of art can be divided in two categories: *Shruti Kavya* or Narrative. For example, an Epic and another is *Drishyakavya* or performance. For example, a dance performance, sculpture or a drama. In Indian classical literature *Kavya* is associated with literature in general, usually Epics, Poetry or different forms of Drama. In both *Shruti Kavya* and *Drishyakavya* there is something which acts as a basic essence in evoking emotions and that is *Rasa* which is defined and explained by Bharatmuni in his book *Natya Shastra*.

Studying *Navarasa* in children's literature helps young readers to logically understand, feel and express the emotions in real life situations rather than just naming them. Through the actions of the characters, the narrative and illustration, they can learn how the emotions like courage, bravery, anger are created. When a character cries, laughs or shows affection towards others, children learn how to imbibe those emotions in their own experiences and relationships. This leads to their emotional development as they understand what they feel, and how to respond based on the emotions evoked.

Indian And Greek Mythological tales

India and Greece are among the oldest civilizations in the world with a rich tradition of mythological storytelling. Indian mythology introduces us to Gods, *Avatars* and moral lessons. Similarly, Greek mythological tales introduce us to heroes, Gods and supernatural events which serves as the best way to impart the mythological education to children. These stories are not just rich in culture and narrative, but are also deeply rooted in emotions. Emotions like fear, courage, love, laughter, are universal across cultures, thus using mythological stories from these two different cultures highlight that how each of them

uses stories to teach those universal emotions to children and it also helps explain how the stories, despite different cultural aspects, narrative styles, and values- express similar emotions which serves the best for children.

This study focuses on selected stories, from the well-known mythological, short stories, collections for children. The first Indian work is entitled 'Man from the Egg' by Sudha Murthy and the second 'The Greek work is D'Aulaire's book of Greek Myths' by Ingri and Edgar par in d'Aulaire. Both of these works are best suited for children because they are child friendly, they include simple language, understandable plots and characters' actions with illustrations. These two works also allow good comparison in terms of emotions through the lens of *Navarasa*.

Theoretical Framework

Bharat Muni wrote *Natya Shastra*, a discourse on classical theatre. It has greatly influenced dance, music and literary traditions in India. *Rasa* and *Bhava* are the key terms that are included in this work. *Rasa* is an aesthetic sentiment that evokes emotions in the audience or readers through any form of art. It is evoked through the combination of *Bhavas* (emotion), *Vibhava* (determinants) and *Anubhava* (consequences). *Rasa* emerges when a basic emotion (*Bhava*) is evoked by specific causes (*Vibhava*) and expressed through physical reactions (*Anubhava*).

There are nine types or *rasa* which together forms the idea of *Navarasa*:

Sringara Rasa (Love): Expresses parental, romantic or sensual emotions, attraction and beauty.

Hasya Rasa (Laughter): Evokes a feeling of joy, humor or playful amusements.

Karuna Rasa (Compassion): It depicts sorrow, pity and empathy for others' sufferings.

Raudra Rasa (Anger): Represents fury, rage and aggressive emotions.

Vira Rasa (Courage): Depicts bravery, heroism and confidence in action.

Bhayanaka Rasa (Fear): It conveys terror, anxiety and the feeling of danger.

Bibhatsa Rasa (Disgust): It shows aversion, ugliness and repulsion.

Adbhuta Rasa (Wonder): It evokes a sense of awe, curiosity and amazement.

Santa Rasa (Peace): It symbolizes calmness, contentment, and spiritual tranquility.

Rasa theory, though deeply rooted in performative art forms such as dance and drama, can also be applied in literature. It helps the readers to understand the true essence of emotions, which makes it suitable for analyzing stories, especially the emotional expressions embedded with the texts. It allows the readers to connect with the characters and narratives in the text on an emotional level.

Furthermore, application of the *Rasa* theory (9 aesthetic emotions), helps children to understand the intensity of these emotions and teaches them the correct way to express them, based on different situations. This helps children to become emotionally strong as they learn to manage and express emotions thoughtfully. Thus, *Navarasa* becomes the most suitable framework to be studied in children's Literature.

Overview of Available Literature

Misra Sumantra and Chakraborty Manjari's paper "Application of The *Navarasa* Theory In Architecture", examines the *Rasa* theory's influence on contemporary Indian Architecture and evaluations of its western metaphors, with an attempt to identify a few architectural edifices that perhaps have drawn inspiration from these *Rasas*. Here emotional responses have been used to replace *Rasa*- to evoke a desired emotion from the observer, thereby relating to its associative architectural style.

Kapila Vatsyayan in her paper "Aesthetics in Indian Art", explains how Indian art and literature are deeply

connected to emotions through the theory of *Navarasa*—the nine basic feelings like love, anger, courage, fear, and joy. She says that ancient Indian artists and storytellers didn't just want to tell stories, they wanted people to feel something powerful. This emotional theory, which started in classical dance and drama, is also useful in understanding mythological stories for children, because those stories are full of these same emotions. Vatsyayan shows that the goal of Indian stories is not only to entertain, but to help people, even children, connect with emotions and morals through characters and events. This makes her work important for studying how children learn through myths and emotional storytelling.

considered that books written for children may not be considered as literature in a general sense. On the contrary this concept cannot be justified by literary figures as children's books speak on multiple levels beside literature. Children's literature, traditionally defined as literature specifically written for young readers, excludes forms like young adult fiction and comic books. It has a long history, with examples dating back to the seventeenth century. Over time, children's literature has evolved into a formal academic field, supported by professional organizations, scholarly publications, and university-level courses. Scholars have increasingly examined it through sociological lenses to explore how stories reflect and shape social and cultural patterns, especially Heather Merrick's article "The Role of Greek Gods and Yahweh: Emotions or Morals?", examines how high moral principles are established through religious doctrines. It explains that believers are expected to follow divine standards set by the Church or God, using Christianity as an example, where followers refer to the Bible and strive to obey the Ten Commandments. In contrast, the article notes that the Homeric Greeks did not follow a set of moral standards that instructed them on how to act. Instead, they believed that their lives were controlled by immortal gods who determined their destinies. These gods often interfered with human goals, either helping or hindering them based on divine will.

Lingamurthy Mukkera's article "Expression of Feelings and Emotions of Children in Johannaspyri's Novel, Heidi - A Sociological Study Of Children's Literature", scrutinizes the opinions of certain critics within families. Recent studies also emphasize the role of emotions in children's narratives, highlighting how literature helps children understand life and express their feelings.

Debasree Ghosh's dissertation, "A Literature of One's Own: British Literary influence on the development of Indian Children's Genres", explores how Indian children's literature was shaped under the influence of British literary traditions, particularly during the colonial and postcolonial periods. While English books were introduced in Indian schools to promote British cultural ideals, Indian authors responded not by imitation but through creative adaptation. Writers such as Satyajit Ray and Leela Majumdar drew from popular British genres like detective fiction and ghost stories but reimaged them within Indian cultural contexts. The study also highlights the influence of British writers like Kipling on Indian authors such as Ruskin Bond and Dhan Gopal Mukerji. Ghosh's work reveals how Indian children's literature evolved into a unique narrative space that blended Western literary forms with indigenous themes, making it an important foundation for cross-cultural studies in children's storytelling.

Research Scope

Several researches have been done on cross-cultural comparisons in children's literature, on *Navarasa* theory, and on Greek myths. Also, emotions in Greek myths have been studied widely. But very little work has been done on combining Indian and Greek mythological stories in children's literature. The emotional part of both traditions has not been studied together using *Navarasa*. So, this paper will try to fill that gap by comparing Indian and Greek myths for children through emotions and storytelling.

Analysis

The following section discusses the exploration of *Rasa* in the selected Indian and Greek short stories from both Indian and Greek based on characters' actions, illustration (if any), and narrative structure. Comparing them on the basis of emotional similarities despite the cultural difference.

Exploration of *Navarasa* in Indian Short Stories

'The Story of Sati'

The following story from Sudha Murthy's short story collection, "The Man from The Egg", presents a tragic tale that is embedded with several *Rasas*. It evokes *Sringara Rasa* in the description of the happy marriage between Dakshyani and Shiva, as it states, "Dakshyani who was also known as Rudrani was very happy with her husband and enjoyed her time with him... no matter where they were." The line where Daksha expresses his dislike for Shiva, because he either spends his time meditating on Mount Kailash or wandering cremation grounds, evokes *Bhibhatsa Rasa*. This emotion is reflected in Daksha's repulsion toward Shiva's dreadful appearance: his long, matted locks, his ash-covered body, and the snake wrapped around his neck

like a garland. Daksha believed that his beautiful daughter deserved a more suitable husband, and this contrast between his perception and Shiva's form intensifies the emotion of disgust. The story further progresses to present *Karuna Rasa* when Dakshyani is insulted by her father as he was angry with Shiva, which also highlights the *Raudra Rasa*, as seen in this line, "Go back dear daughter, to your husband...welcome here." When Dakshyani commits sati, the story again evokes *Karuna Rasa* as we feel pity for her. Alongside this it expresses *Vira Rasa* as Dakshyani shows the courage to not bear any insult about her husband. It shifts back to *Raudra Rasa* when Shiva, angry as Dakshyani commits *Sati*, he wreaks vengeance, gets the king beheaded and begins his *Tandava* of destruction. The anger depicted by Shiva also evokes *Bhayanaka Rasa*. Lastly the story culminates with the evocation of *Santa Rasa* when Shiva is persuaded by Brahma to pardon King Daksha.

The accompanying illustration further enhances the emotional impact and evokes both *Karuna Rasa* as Dakshyani in the moment of *sati*, while the image of Shiva standing behind radiating in anger evokes *Rudra* and *Bhayanak Rasa*.



Fig.1 'The Man from The Egg'

The story effectively presents the moral that one should never insult someone who is higher in dignity or respect to us and always show hospitality, and also teaches the noble form of love rooted in honor and devotion. Thus, the story serves as a perfect narrative for children's literature, explaining complex emotions in a subtle and engaging way.

(The Legend of the Elephant God)

'The God of Knowledge'

The story of 'The God of Knowledge' encompasses several Rasas. Beginning with *Karuna Rasa*, it is expressed when Parvati sees Shiva after completing her bath. She realizes that Nandi is loyal only to Shiva and not to her. Moving forward, she decides to create a statue of a young boy, breathes life into him, and names him Ganesha. This scene evokes *Adbhuta Rasa*, as a sculpture made of mud is brought to life. The story then provides us with a glimpse of *Vira Rasa*, shown by Ganesha refuses Lord Shiva entry into his own house, obeying Parvati's command not to let anyone in until her bath is complete. And he says, "I am sorry, but I cannot allow you inside until...do so," it also presents *Sringara Rasa* as it expresses Ganesha's devotional love for his mother. The narrative then shifts to *Raudra Rasa*, when Shiva beheads Ganesha, which in turn creates *Karuna Rasa* for both Ganesha and Parvati, as she cries out over the scene. *Bhibhatsa Rasa* is also evoked in the episode where an elephant is slain so that its head can be attached to Ganesha's body. Although softened in children's retellings, the act of killing an innocent creature and performing an unnatural transformation reflects the aesthetic of revulsion and physical grotesqueness, central to this *Rasa*. It further moves to highlight *Hasya Rasa*, in the scene when Shiva and Parvati arrange a playful contest for their son claiming whosoever wins the contest will be given the fruit of knowledge. Ganesha, in a playful manner evoking *Hasya Rasa*, encircles around his parents and claims that they are his whole world, which again evokes *Sringara Rasa*.

The story provides a very insightful understanding of respecting a person's boundary, teaches the moral of loyalty and also highlights the importance of knowing full truth before action. It altogether teaches children to navigate the complex emotions of love, devotion, anger, sadness on a deeper level. Thus, making it an ideal narrative for imparting social and emotional learning in children.

Exploration of Navarasa in Greek Stories

'Zeus and His Family'

The story "Zeus and His Family" includes several *Rasas* within its narrative. It begins with a hint of *Sringara Rasa*, seen in the devotion shown by the nymphs for Lord Zeus. Then it evokes *Adbhuta Rasa*, as Zeus grows very rapidly, indicating with the lines "it was not long before he strode out of the cave as a great new god." It further highlights *Sringara Rasa* when young Zeus gets married to Metis, a Titan's daughter, which reflects a lover's emotion between them. The story then highlights *Vira Rasa* when Metis bravely goes to Cronus and cunningly tricks him into eating a magic herb. This shows the courage she takes to help her husband bring down Cronus.

The narrative then progresses toward *Bhibhatsa Rasa*, shown through the depiction when Cronus vomits not only the stone but also the five other children he had swallowed. When Cronus sees the six young gods rising against him, he becomes fearful that his time has come, which evokes *Bhayanaka Rasa*. *Karuna Rasa* is evoked when Mother Earth, out of maternal compassion, hopes that Zeus will liberate her other children, the Titans, from imprisonment. However, this hope is shattered when Zeus, after a fierce battle, locks them deeper into Tartarus, placing the hundred-armed monsters as guards to ensure they never

escape. From Mother Earth's perspective, this act represents a tragic betrayal and intensifies her grief, as her plea for mercy is answered with further punishment for her children. Her sorrow reflects the essence of *Karuna Rasa*, rooted in unfulfilled maternal expectation and the pain of witnessing the continued suffering of her offspring.

The story again shifts to *Bhibhatsa Rasa* with the description of the monstrous Typhon, who has a hundred horrible heads that touch the stars. "Venom drips from his evil eyes, and lava and red-hot stones pour from his gaping mouth. Hissing like a hundred snakes and roaring like a hundred lions, he tears up whole mountains and throws them at the gods."

It again highlights *Vira Rasa* when Zeus strikes Typhon with a hundred well-aimed thunderbolts, causing the mountain to fall back down. *Adbhuta Rasa* is again evoked in the description of the one-eyed Cyclopes—though monstrous in appearance, they are skilful smiths and masons who build a towering palace for the gods on Mount Olympus, the highest mountain in Greece. This suggests that despite their terrifying form, they are a helpful hand to the gods.

The story ends by highlighting *Santa Rasa* when Mother Earth gives up her struggle against Zeus, and peace is restored. There are no more upheavals, and the wounds of war are soon healed.

The illustration followed by the narrative evokes *Sringara* and *Santa Rasa* as the goat horns were a gift from Lord Zeus to the nymphs who took great care of him, *Santa Rasa* is shown through the peaceful environment it depicts where the nymphs are happy.



Fig. 2 'D'Aulaires' Book of Greek Myths'



Fig. 3 'D'Aulaires' Book of Greek Myths'

This Illustration of Zeus evokes *Vira Rasa* as he shows his strengths and using his thunderbolts defeats the monsters from Tartarus sent by an angry Mother Earth to teach Zeus a lesson, for disobeying her orders.

The story highlights several important lessons for children, such as the value of fighting against evil, the importance of protecting and supporting one's family, and the idea that evil is ultimately defeated. It helps children identify the right moral roles in their lives and teaches them to respect the power of the divine.

‘Hermes’

The story of Hermes highlights several Rasas embedded within its narrative. It begins by highlighting *Santa Rasa* when Maia, Hermes's mother—one of Zeus's wives—lives in a cave on lofty Mount Cyllene, a cave so deep that Hera never knew about her. It is there that Maia gives birth to Hermes in peace. Further, we get hints of *Adbhuta Rasa* from the way Hermes, despite being very young, manages to steal Apollo's cows from the pasture. He drives the cows backward and ties bundles of branches to his own little feet so it looks as if a giant had led something into the pasture but nothing out. *Adbhuta Rasa* is again evoked when he takes the entrails of the sacrificed cows, makes seven strings out of them, and stretches them across an empty tortoise shell—thus inventing the first lyre, a musical instrument created by a child.

The story also highlights *Hasya Rasa* when Apollo chases Hermes and brings him straight to Olympus, where all the gods burst into laughter on seeing the innocent-looking little Hermes running with furious Apollo at his heels. *Hasya Rasa* is further reinforced when Zeus hides his smile in his beard, feeling proud that both his sons would become friends. When Hermes pulls out the lyre and begins to play, Apollo listens, spellbound by the beautiful sound of the new musical instrument, and forgets his anger. Here, Apollo's reaction evokes both *Santa Rasa* and *Sringara Rasa* toward Hermes, as the God of Music is deeply moved by Hermes's sweet melodies. The story ends by highlighting *Vira Rasa*, when Hermes, gifted by Zeus with a pair of winged sandals and a magical cape, sets out to use his powers to help and guide people who worshipped Hermes.

The illustrations following highlight *Sringara*, *Hasya* and *Santa Rasa* as Hermes the merriest of the Olympians is seen smiling with a hint of Mischief, the second evokes *Adbhuta Rasa* as it shows the lyre created by him at such a young age.



Fig. 4 ‘D’Aulaires’ Book of Greek Myths



Fig. 5 'D'Aulaires' Book of Greek Myths'

A Cross-Cultural Comparison of Indian and Greek Mythological Short Stories

Both Indian and Greek mythological stories explore deep emotions through their characters and events and illustrations. Although they come from different cultures, they share many emotional expressions. Using the theory of *Navarasa*, we can see that both types of stories include love, bravery, wonder, fear, peace, and more. However, the way these emotions are shown, and the values behind them, are sometimes different. This section compares the Indian and Greek stories based on the emotions they express, the roles of gods and heroes, the lessons they teach, and how the stories are told. The emotions expressed in Indian stories include more of devotion and peace, while the same is depicted with power and action in the Greek version. Indian gods are shown as powerful, yet calm and sympathetic, while Greek Gods though powerful are sometimes proud of their power and tricky. Indian stories teach the lessons of love, respect, and the triumph of good over evil. On the other hand, Greek stories teach the importance of power, conquering, and bravery—traits that are equally important to impart to children. *Sringara, Adbhuta, Raudra, Bhayanka and Karuna Rasas* are common in both the versions, though their portrayal is different. Thus, these emotional portrayals, though different in expression, serve the common role of teaching children valuable moral lessons and enriching their understanding of complex emotions in a very subtle way, thus shaping their knowledge about their selection of life choices through the mythological tales.

Conclusion

This research explored *Navarasa* in selected Indian and Greek children's short stories. With the findings that all the *Rasas*(emotions) were present across both Indian and Greek stories though their expressions were different, both cultures used storytelling to express emotions, teach moral lessons and enrich children's emotional development along with it, broadening their understanding of good and evil, courage and love. Indian stories focus more on devotion and forgiveness while Greek stories focus more on power, bravery and clever actions. Through these stories children learn how to feel, how to respond logically in the situation and understand the use of the same emotions in different contexts according to the real-life situation. Finally, despite the cultural differences both Indian and Greek tales show that emotions are

universal despite cultural differences and children's literature from any culture has the power to nurture emotional education or intelligence in children.

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