

# Representation in Painting and Drama : Arguments from Indian Aesthetics

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## 1. Preface

As early as the 4th c.B.C. drama was conceived in India as the representation of actions of the three worlds - heaven, earth and the underworld i.e. the actions of the gods, human beings and demons. The Sanskrit words used for representation by Bharata, the father of Indian aesthetics in general and dramaturgy in particular, in his work entitled *Nāṭyaśāstra* are *anukṛti* and *anukarana* which literally mean imitation or doing after. But Bharata creates problems when, in his definition of drama, he also uses two other Sanskrit terms *bhāvānukīrtana* and *anubhāvana* which mean re-(or after) description of emotion and re/after occurrence of emotion respectively. These two sets of terms allow a scope for the commentators of Bharata for interpreting the nature of representation in drama in different ways. But before coming to the commentators, it is necessary to understand Bharata's own conception of drama as available in the information he provides about the origin and the nature of the dramatic art taking both the art work itself and its experience by the audience into consideration.

## II. Introduction

The gods once appealed to Brahma, the proto-creator of the universe, to present them a toy (*kridaniyaka*) which should be both visible and audible. Such a toy would delightfully purify the creatures of Jambudvīpa (the mythical name of India) who had deviated from appropriate conduct being afflicted by passions (lust, jealousy and anger etc.). Brahma, the composer of the four Vedas, was pleased to grant the appeal and devised the drama, an audio-visual toy, combining physical gestures, dialogues, music, dance and costume. The first appropriate occasion for exhibiting this toy was the banner festival of Indra, the king of heaven and the action represented therein was the battle between the gods and demons that led to the defeat of the latter. The action naturally enraged the demons since their defeat delighted the gods, their rivals. Therefore, they immediately avenged their offence by destroying the stage and stopping the performance and finally complained that Brahma had exhibited parochialism by upholding the victory of the gods and ridiculing their own defeat. Brahma understood that the demons in the audience had identified themselves with the demons represented by the actors on the stage and this identification had been the root of all disturbance. He then addressed the demons, the core point of his

address being that the audience should not identify the dramatic representation with factual reality. As a toy, this representation is meant for the delight of the audience, and what is represented on the stage is not any particular action or event that could be identified with any such phenomenon ever occurring in course of history; it is rather the law of action, a general principle that governs the course of action. So the action and its agents represented in a drama are only the illustrations of this law of action. What was therefore represented in the particular drama staged by Bharata was the principle that in the battle of good and evil, the former always wins and the latter loses. It was only incidentally that Bharata took the gods and demons as the examples of good and evil. There might have been any other event and any other agents exemplifying this principle. The subject-matter of drama covers the whole range of cultural activities - religion, arts, philosophy, customs, laws, emotions and events - not in any particular but in a generalised form.<sup>1</sup>

At the same time Brahmá was aware of a critical point; the audience-demons' identification with the actor-demons was due to the fact that the whole event was factually true. It had happened in the very recent course of history with the same gods and demons, who constituted the audience of the drama, as actual participants. So this personal identification was due to the contemporaneity of the action represented. Brahmá therefore instructed that no contemporary action should be represented in the drama; and by such proscription Brahmá wanted to say that the dramatic representation is a fiction and not a fact and the fictionality of an action means a particular illustration of a general law of action. The same law of action may be illustrated severally by several particular actions and their agents. The particular events and characters in a drama do (or should) not have their counterparts in the real world. The nature of the events and agents of the drama is further explicated by Bharata in the sixth chapter of his text where he understands drama in terms of the experience of audience. Although in the first chapter he states that the subject-matter of drama is as wide-ranging as to include the whole range of learning and action - the arts, crafts, morals, history, religion and pragmatic information etc. - so as to attain the authenticity of the fifth Veda, in the sixth chapter Bharata mentions that the sole object (*artha*) of the dramatic representation is to generate emotional delight (*Rasa*). A correlation of both the contexts leads to an observation that the actions represented in the drama are necessarily expressive of emotions. In other words, representation of actions means representation of emotions through actions and their agents, which ultimately generate aesthetic delight. The same point, therefore, explains the nature of the dramatic representation as well as the nature of aesthetic experience. Although any discussion of this point tends toward an overlapping of both the issues, it

is possible to separate the issue of representation and examine it in the light of interpretations offered by several commentators of Bharata who lived during the 8th-10th centuries.

Bharata states that aesthetic delight is generated by the combination of *Vibhāvas* (1. characters that shelter the emotions and<sup>2</sup> the situations that stimulate the emotions) *anubhāvas* (the actions of the characters) and *vyabhicāribhāvas* (temporary feelings)<sup>4</sup>. So far as the question of representation is concerned, this statement, by implication, refers to the trilateral relation among reality, drama as a literary text and its performance on the stage. The combination as mentioned above takes place in the real world (where they are called cause and effect respectively), it is described in a literary text by the playwright and finally the text is performed on the stage. As Bharata has already stated, the events and characters of the drama (and by implication in all the literary forms such as epic, lyric and prose narrative) do not represent any particular fact or character of the real world, but illustrate the general laws of actions. Now what is the relation between the textual characters and the actors in the performance of the text ? A performance in general is a specific action or set of actions and a dramatic performance in particular is the single occurrence of a repeatable and preexistent text. The text therefore anticipates and even authorizes its several performances (or occurrences) logically transcending them all.<sup>5</sup>

In other words, if the characters etc. of a dramatic text are the illustrations of the general laws of actions, performances (or role-playing) by the actors in different occurrences of the same play are also illustrations of the characters and their actions. The fact that different performances of the same play are repeatedly attended by the same audience evidences the hypothetical 'perfection' of a performance.

The Sanskrit critics, however, have viewed the representational relations differently. Out of several commentaries on Bharata only one by Abhinavagupta (10th c.) survives, and it is rather risky to consider the views of other critics, as mentioned by Abhinava, that he rejects. But it is not unfair, though not adequate, to formulate some theories of representation depending upon Abhinava's elaborate discourse.

### III. Representation as Illusion

Lollata (9th c. A.D.) understands that the dramatic representation in a performance is an illusion of reality i.e. the characters etc. in the world are pre-existent to their representation by the actors.<sup>6</sup> He thinks that in the real world when an emotion (say love) is intensified (*upacita*) by virtue of its combination

with characters and their actions etc., it generates delight (*Rasa*) primarily in those characters, and secondarily in the actors when they represent those characters etc. Here Lollata is reported to have rejected the views of his predecessors Udbhata (8th c. A.D.) and his followers who did not accept such a view, because, they argued, if the actors would personally feel delighted or shocked (by the dramatic incident of death etc.) then it would be difficult for them to concentrate on acting. This kind of understanding is therefore erroneous (*bhrama*). But Lollata answers that since the actors are specially trained, by the power of their memory they can manage to keep up their concentration even when they are affected by pleasure and pain etc. To quote Abhinava's text on Lollata : "The state is present in both the character represented i.e. Rama etc. primarily (*Mukhyayá vrttyā*) and in the representing actor by the power of a recollection (*amusandhana*) of the nature of Rama etc."

The view thus presented does not make any reference to the audience explicitly. But any theory of representation must make a reference to the addressee: representation is always *of* something or someone, *by* something or someone, *to* someone. Bharata has very clearly mentioned the role of audience which is rather the centre of representation in his text. Since there is every doubt for an adequate presentation of Lollata in the text of Abhinava available so far, the purport of Lollata may be reformulated in a way which would mean that reality is the primary aesthetic object and art, its representation, is a secondary, aesthetic object by virtue of its becoming real (*tadátmaka*).

In other words, to the audience an actor represents the reality to the extent that he becomes reality. But the question is whether the actor really becomes real for the audience or for himself ? That is to say, whether the audience experiences an illusion of reality in the actor because of his semblance to the reality or the actor himself experiences an illusion of reality by factual identification (*tadátmakatva*) or both are true simultaneously. The issue becomes a serious one for the use of the Sanskrit words *amusandhi* and *amusandhana* : which are polysemous synonyms meaning recollection, memory, consciousness, reflection and awareness. If the trilateral structure of representation is read into Lollata's thesis the Sanskrit words play a significant role in establishing the theory of theatrical representation as an illusion of reality. Since both the words mean recollection, the theory of perceptual error relevant in the context refer to the Mīmāṃsā theory of *akhyāti* or non-apprehension as advanced by Prabhakara Bhatta (7th-8th c. A.D.).<sup>7</sup>

The Mimamsa school believes in the self-validity of knowledge i.e. every knowledge is intrinsically valid (*Svatah prámānya*) ; its validity is not determined

by extraneous factors. A necessary corollary of this theory, therefore, is that every apprehension must be valid. Prabhakara states, "It is strange indeed how a cognition can apprehend itself and yet be invalid." In explaining the nature of perceptual errors such as illusions and dreams Prabhakara distinguishes experience from memory and holds that while every experience (*anubhūti*) is valid, memory is not valid because it is the impression or recollection of the past experience. In an illusion when a shell is mistaken for a piece of silver, our cognition is 'this is silver.' This cognition, though appears as a single one, is a composite of two cognitions - apprehension and memory. 'This' (shell) is perceived, but 'silver' is remembered. The cognition as a whole is valid because its object 'this' is never sublated even in a sublating judgment. But the object of memory 'silver' is sublated by shell. The error consists in our non-apprehension of the distinction between the objects perceived and remembered. The common quality or qualities of the objects of our perception and memory is/are responsible for such non-apprehension (*akhyati*) of their difference.

Similarly, in a theatrical performance, an actor is a representation of reality (Rama etc.) for the audience by virtue of the common qualities - both formal and gestacular such as matted hair, bark garments, holding bow and arrows, weeping for separation from his wife etc. as described in the authentic text the epic *Rāmāyana* - to the extent that for the time being the actor becomes Rama and the audience cognizes Rama in the actor by virtue of his memory (*amusanadhana balat*) of the textual descriptions of Rama. The audience perceives only the actor, but remembers Rama. Therefore the cognition "This is Rama" is not a composite perceptual experience. It is a confusion of experience with memory and Prabhakara says, this confusion is due to a defect of mind (*manadosah*).

That art is an illusion of reality by virtue of the accuracy of its resemblance with reality is as old a notion as the Homeric appreciation of the shield of Achilles culminating in the legendary pictures of Zeuxis and Parrhasius that could confuse both birds and human beings so much so that the birds even pecked at the picture of a bunch of grapes made by the former.<sup>8</sup>

The theory of illusion has recently migrated from myths and legends to the psychology of artistic vision and the optics of aesthetic perception. E.H. Gombrich's critical popularity lies not on any resolution of the problem that seeks to determine the relation between art and the external world, but on his demonstration of the fact that the pictorial artist has always undertaken to produce a two-dimensional form which creates an illusion of the three-dimensional world. His approach through the psychology of visual perception avoids the epistemological problems that tend to determine the cognitive aspect of art distinguishing it from

the cognition of the external world that art represents. The areas of knowledge that Gombrich consults for his observations are the notion of visual perspectives in modern physics and the physical theory of relativity as reflected in both modern optics and structural linguistics. Gombrich confesses that he did not consider illusion in the sense of deceptive cognition as the main aim of art, nor did he make this point the central issue of his title *Art and Illusion* which was originally a series of lectures entitled 'The Visible World and the Language of Art'. "It so happens", he states, "however, that my publishers found this rather a mouthful, and since they also wanted to retain the word Art in the title I drew up a lengthy list of simple alternatives from which the final title was picked by a friend."<sup>9</sup> "Although the book title does not reflect the content as appropriately as the lecture title, the idea of illusion as the mode of our visual perception forms the key to Gombrich's understanding of art history. His work is essentially an answer to the anti-illusionists led by J. J. Gibson who is convinced that the visual perception of reality can never be mediated by painting because our visual perception based on our visual information of the environment containing the effects of movement and 'gradients' of texture cannot be fully simulated in a painting. But Gombrich argues and demonstrates that the artist simulates through stimulation of the effect of our visual experience, though not of the visual reality. Citing the example of a modern Buddha image of Cylon whose eye balls are put as two dots by the artist in its consecrating rituals, (which, it is believed religiously, enlivens the image) Gombrich argues that the artist is not to fashion a facsimile eye, but to find a way of stimulating the response to a living eye. "The question is not", he writes, "whether nature 'really looks' like these pictorial devices but whether pictures with such features suggest a reading in terms of natural objects . . . it is the meaning we perceive, not the means . . . This appearance of the world has been a constant theme of art educators who want to change our attitude."<sup>10</sup>

Gombrich's central thesis of artistic illusion is based on a relativist psychology of perception and he consciously avoids the epistemological questions in both our perception of the external world and its representation in art. He understands that the two types of reaction are particularly closely allied : the perception and representation. Since there is no innocent eye and because of the relativity of our vision there is no objectively 'correct vision' of things, transformation of the three-dimensional world into our two-dimensional perceptual vision is a question of psychological and physical perspectives. Both perception and representation heavily draw on conceptual schemata. Pictorial representation is therefore not a duplication (a two-dimensional form is not obviously a duplication of the three-dimensional world) but a visual description of what the artist sees. If what

the artist sees is not the objectively correct view of the world, then, in a sense, all our perceptual knowledge is only illusory, and further, its representation in a picture, if not an illusion of an illusion, aims at least at a partial subversion of belief by the spectator that he sees the world and not its representation. To put it symbolically,  $\bar{X}$  is a representation of Y, if there is at least a partial subversion of belief by the spectator that he is seeing Y and not X.<sup>11</sup>

Instead of making any attempt at criticising Gombrich's view of art as illusion (which has been already done by several others)<sup>12</sup> we now examine its relevance, by way of putting it as a contrast rather than a parallel, in the context of Lollata's view of the theatre as illusion. Leaving aside the question of visual perspectives and the conceptual schemata in case of the pictorial representation of the three-dimensional world, because it is not applicable to the theatre which is a three-dimensional representation in movement, it is pertinent to ask whether there is any subversion of belief by the spectator that it is not a drama but reality - whether, as Gombrich thought of painting, it is impossible to 'stalk' the illusion in dramatic representation. Obviously not so. Gombrich's duck-rabbit analogy does not hold good here. Actors etc, are not sometimes taken as actors and sometimes as real characters. Nor is there any confusion of the configuration with the representation, because in the theatre both the configuration and representation are ontologically identical - here action is represented by means of action. Besides, as Wollheim observes, Gombrich's notion of representation does not explain the nature of representation in general, i.e. a representation is always different from what is represented.<sup>13</sup> If to see the picture of a horse is to see it as a horse, then the picture is not a representation of a horse. The point is, praecisely, Gombrich's treatment being purely pshychological, it eludes the epistemological aspect of the problem which is extremely significant. What might be true of the situation is that in seeing the picture of a horse, we psychologically see it as a horse, but not epistemologically. Therefore the story of the birds pecking at Zeuxis' picture of a bunch of grapes is only a legend and has nothing to do with any philosophical treatment of the subject.

Apart from the major differences noted in the approaches of Lollata and Gombrich to the notion of illusion in art - Lollata's being an epistemological and Gombrich's psychological or perspectival - both the critics almost agree on one point that in art the representation is taken as the represented. Although Lollata's ideas do not approve of any subversion of vision and beliefs swinging between seeing art as a configuration and as a representation, Gombrich's idea of the impossibility of stalking the illusion only partly explains Lollata's drawing

upon the Mimamsa theory of illusion that the confusion of art with reality or the perceptual experience with memory is due to a defect of mind.

Besides, if understood correctly, Gombrich's theory of art as illusion overlaps the Indian doctrines of illusion and doubt. Gombrich understands the artistic illusion as an ambiguity of vision typified in the duck-rabbit figure, a visual puzzle where either the duck or the rabbit can be seen at a time, not both. Similarly there is the 'canvas or nature' dichotomy i.e. the difference between seeing something as a configuration and as a representation. But apart from the truth that it is absolutely possible to see the configuration as a configuration and as a representation simultaneously, Gombrich's duck-rabbit figure is not an appropriate example of his 'canvas or nature' dichotomy : because while in case of the puzzle it is a question to choose one from the two representations, in the other case it is a question of choosing either a configuration or a representation.<sup>14</sup> To follow the Indian thinkers, an illusion is free from doubt, it is a definite cognition. One *sees* a snake in a rope, does not vacillate between a snake and a rope. In that case it will be doubt (*samsaya*). If a statue is accepted as a man, then it is a case of illusion. If the vision moves in between a man and a statue (*sthāmurva puruṣova*), it is a case of doubt. Gombrich's idea of the impossibility of 'stalking the illusion' does not form part of the Indian theory of illusion. No Indian critic, however, has considered art as a form of doubt.

However, the principal defect that is true of both the theorists of illusion is to ignore that a representation should be experienced as a representation and not as reality. In other words, the audience perceives art as the representation of reality and not as the reality itself. It is logically unwarranted to ascribe any 'defect of vision' or 'defect of mind' to the audience.

#### **IV. Representation as Artificial Reproduction, Replica and Re-representation.**

Sankuka, (9th c. A.D.) the successor of Lollata as a commentator on Bharata, appears to have understood the defects of an illusion theory; and since Sankuka's thesis has been presented by Abhinavagupta in a more detailed and unambiguous discourse, it is easier to examine the thesis with greater accuracy. Sankuka criticizes Lollata pinpointing his attack on Lollata's view of representation as the illusion of reality. He views art as a representation and distinguishes the nature of this representation from four types of related phenomena such as illusion, reality, doubt, and similitude (analogy).<sup>15</sup> He also acknowledges three modes of communication or sign systems - linguistic, pictorial and theatrical and, while distinguishing the linguistic sign system of denotation from the theatrical sign system of acting, he considers the pictorial and theatrical systems as of the same



kind. The main thrust of Sankuka's argument against Lollata is on the nature of the aesthetic object as a representation of reality. Lollata thinks that an emotion in the real world becomes itself an aesthetic object when it is intensified by the combination of characters or determinants and their actions etc. (*Vibhavadi*), and the same (combination of emotion or permanent mental state with determinants etc.) is represented in the theatre by the actor by way of an illusion. But Sankuka says that since Bharata does not mention the combination of the emotion in his axiom where he mentions the combination of the determinants etc. only, it is obviously the purport of Bharata that the emotion is represented in the theatre not directly but through its lexical signs (*linga*) such as the combination of the determinants etc.

Sankuka's discourse, as reported by Abhinavagupta, makes the point clear that it is the theatrical performance which is the ontology of the dramatic art. In other words, no phenomenon of the real world is an aesthetic object, only its representation (*anukarana, anukrti*) in art becomes the aesthetic object, and aesthetic perception is not the perception of this representation as reality - experiencing an illusion thereby - but the perception of this representation as the representation of reality.

Sankuka insightfully distinguishes between the verbal representation or denotation (*abhidhana*) and the theatrical representation or acting (*abhinayana*). Both are the media of communication different from each other. Even there is a difference between reading the dialogues of a dramatic text by a non-actor and that by an actor in a theatrical performance. An actor's reading his dialogues involves the illocutionary function of language whereas a reader's reading the same involves the locutionary function. In other words, the dialogues of a dramatic text communicate their meaning by the referential power of language, but the dialogues read by an actor communicate by their perceptible gesticular form. Sankuka explains this difference by several examples quoted from different plays. One such example is from Sriharsa's *Ratnāvali*:

"This multitude of droplets, fine rain of tears falling while she painted, produces on my body the effect of a perspiration born from the touch of her hand." A reader understands the happiness of the love-struck hero Udayana as described here by way of reference; but an audience experiences this state of the hero directly perceiving the illocutionary functions of the language as performed by the actor when he touches his body and projects the state of perspiration as the sign of happiness.

It is understood that the linguistic representation is referential. But what exactly is the nature of theatrical representation? Sankuka states, "Though these

determinants etc. are brought into existence by the conscious efforts (*Prayatna*) of the actor) and are thus artificial (*krtrima*), yet they do not appear so (*atthanabhimanayamana*). Since the characteristic signs (such as tears, beating hands on the forehead, choaked voice etc.) of an emotion (permanent mental state of sorrow) lie in (or projected by the actor), the emotion that actually belongs to the original characters (in the epics or legends) such as Rama is (necessarily) represented by in the actor. Therefore Rasa (aesthetic emotion or drama as an aesthetic object) is nothing but another name for the representation (or replica/reproduction) of emotion....; not the same as (*tadatma*) or derived from emotion (*tatprabhava*) as Lollata thought."

Sankuka's distinction between the verbal description of the events, characters and their emotions and their theatrical performance is clear enough for understanding the difference between the narrative and the theatre. But a doubt lurks as regards the status of Rama whom the actor represents. Does he mean the Rama who is supposed to have actually lived some time in India or the Rama who is described in the epic? It seems Sankuka means the latter, since he says that the determinants (characters *vibhavah*) are known from poetry (*kavyaharat*). Therefore the actor's representation of Rama does not imply any factual existence of a real Rama whom he has seen or is expected to have seen. Sankuka further says that the gesticular movements, the very means of acting are learnt by the actor through training (*siksa*), obviously referring to the director's instruction and the actor's rehearsal and not to the actor's imitating (copying/replicating) any actual Rama. Sankuka also stresses the actor's own experience of the transitory feelings which he employs in acting.

According to Sankuka, what actually is given on the stage is the performance of the combination of determinants (*vibhava*), gesticular movements (*anubhava*) and facial expression of the feelings (*vyabhiaribhava*) which forms the lexical signs of the permanent emotion. As fire is not directly seen in the smoke but is inferred from it, so also the emotion through its lexical signs is inferred (*pratiyamana*) by the audience.

Coming to the experience of the audience, for whom this representation is intended, Sankuka straight rejects Lollata's theory of illusion and explains that when the audience infers the permanent emotion from its signs as performed by the actors, it does not identify the actor with the *real* Rama, nor does he have an illusion of Rama, nor does he doubt whether the actor is real Rama or not, nor does he cognise the actor as somebody bearing the similitude (*sadrsya*) of Rama as a crow looks like cuckoo, or a cat like a tiger or a wild ox (*gavaya*) like an ox. He concludes, as in the case of a picture horse, the beholder cognises

'This is a horse', so also in the case of the actor the audience cognises - "This is that happy Rama" and not "This actor is happy", "This is real Rama," or "this is somebody like Rama" or "Is this Rama or not?"

But Sankuka explains that although the gesticular movements etc. are made by the actor by his conscious effort and are therefore artificial, the audience does not realise so. In other words, although artificial it looks real (or natural). If this experience is not an illusion then what it is?

Sankuka answers that acting is not an illusion or mistaken cognition which misguides the subject. It is true that illusion takes place when something appears as some other thing. But all such case are not of the same type. There are some cases where something appearing as some other thing, far from misguiding the subject, rather guides him properly, and therefore, is not a case of illusion. Sankuka takes recourse to the arguments of Dharmakirti, a logician of the Sautrantika school of Buddhism, who considers causal efficiency (practical efficacy), the capacity to produce the desired effect (*arthakriyakaritva*) the criterion of valid cognition and the real existence of a thing. Mirage is a common example of illusion where the subject is misguided. Similar are the cases of a shell's appearing as silver or a rope's appearing as snake. But Dharmakirti provides the example of a peculiar case. A gem and a lamp remit rays of light. From a distant place two different persons see only these two rays of light, not the objects that remit the rays. Since none of them has seen the object but only its lexical sign, the ray, each one is under the illusion that the ray comes from a gem. So both of them run to the objects concerned guided by this illusion. But where one gets the gem, the other does not. Now Dharmakirti argues that although both are under illusion in the beginning, the illusion of the man who gets the gem is practically not an illusion since it produces the desired effect i.e. getting the gem.

Since Sankuka distinguishes dramatic representation from both illusion and reality, the more judicious interpretation of his observation in the light of Dharmakirti's logic happens to be this: drama is not an illusion of reality because it does not misguide the audience. It is not that they visit the drama with a hope for getting something, but finally return frustrated. They rather come back fully satisfied because they have got the thing they wanted. But what did they want to get and how did they get it? They did certainly not want to see the real Rama, the Rama of the *Ramayana* moving in flesh and bones or even his similitude, because they know very well that, as described in the epic and other texts, Rama lived (or might have lived) long long ago and there is no possibility of his re-living now. They wanted simply to cognise directly or perceptually the

performance of Rama as described in the verbal discourses. Very clearly, in this sense, Sankuka distinguishes between the communication (*avagamana*) by verbal description (*abhidhāna/vācāna*) and the communication by acting (*abhinaya*). Dramatic representation means the audio-visual presentation (or transformation) of the textual description. Therefore, the accuracy of representation as cognised by the audience is judged by comparing the performance with the verbal description and/or with other performances of the same play. Sankuka's understanding of the dramatic representation as 'artificial' is the same as to understand the literary representation as 'fictional'. They have nothing to do with the external reality. Artificiality is not necessarily a property of illusion, nor are all illusions artificial. It is only at times that artificial objects create illusions. The primary difference between artificial object and an illusion is that the former is always a man-made object whereas the latter is a natural occurrence. The Sanskrit word *krtrima*, equivalent to the English word artificial, literally means an object intentionally made/composed/manufactured by a human agency (*karanajjata/racita*). Sankuka's concept of artificiality also corroborates Bharata's treatment of drama as a toy. Although the terms natural and artificial are antonyms, some artificial objects sometimes (not always) create illusions with or without the intention of the maker. But no illusion is artificial. Artificiality is not also necessarily pretension. Dramatic performance is artificial in the sense that the costume, speech and action of the actor have no reference to his natural identity. In this sense, acting is not necessarily an illusion because the actor does not intend to create any illusion although sometimes, for some audience, it becomes an illusion.

The relation of the gem and its ray in Dharmakirti's example explains the relation of the permanent emotion with the gesticular movements etc. respectively; and although the gesticular movements etc. which are the lexical signs of the emotion appear to be *illusory* because of their artificiality, they are *not practically illusory* because the desired object i.e. the permanent emotion is cognised through them.

The next important point in Sankuka's discourse is the 'comparison of acting with painting. Sankuka states that the actor's status as Rama is similar to a picture's status as the object it depicts. Pointing out to a picture of a horse one says— "this is a horse" and similarly, pointing out to the actor one says "this is Rama." In saying so, Sankuka obviously considers the artificiality of both the arts, and the point of resemblance pertaining to the term *anukrti* in Bharata's definition of dramatic representation is also obvious. But the deeper critical implication of this comparison becomes clear when viewed in the light of recent scholarship. If representation is interpreted in the sense of 'standing for' then

there is a justification for Sankuka's comparison. As the configuration stands for a horse, so also the actor stands for Rama. Both of them are distinguished from reality, illusion (though sometimes some pictures like *trome l' oeil* are illusory, not necessarily all), doubt and similitude. But the interpretation of "standing for" in the light of linguistic denotation, as a purely conventional symbol - ignoring completely the question of resemblance, ignoring the pictoriality of a picture - accepting anything as standing for any other thing does not hold good of Sankuka; because while equating pictorial representation with acting, he explicitly distinguishes acting from linguistic denotation (contra Goodman). For Sankuka acting and painting belong to one order while a verbal text to another. The common characters that Sankuka observes between these two representations are undoubtedly their visibility and artificiality. In both the cases there is a difference between the represented and the representation as well as a correspondence. Although prior to Sankuka, in the vocabulary of pictorial art, Indian antiquity conceived of symbolic representation not as any material picture but as an abstract, spiritual likeness (*pratirupa*)<sup>18</sup>, it seems, he considers only the cases of pictorial or iconic images and not the aniconic ones and what he further considers necessary to make a representation is not accuracy of depiction or realism, but depiction of something visible and the intention to depict. Since he excludes the non-representational arts from his discussion, on the basis of pictorial signs, he uses the expression "this is a horse" and not 'this represents a horse'; and similarly 'this (actor) is Rama' and not "this (actor) represents Rama." Nor does he distinguish between 'simple' and 'complex' objects of representation.<sup>19</sup> Like a word a representation should not only refer to a thing. It should necessarily involve something about the shape or form (*akrti*) of the thing.

Hanna Pitkin, probably of all the recent critics on the subject, comes very close to Sankuka and puts her analogy rather reversely. When Sankuka explains acting in terms of pictorial art Pitkin explains pictorial art in terms of acting: "... the way in which an artist represents is closely related to the way in which an actor represents a character on the stage. For if we are merely identifying the part an actor plays, who he is supposed to be, we say simply 'He is Hamlet.' In the same way we would identify a piece of scenery: 'That is the castle gate' ... Again, as with the picture of a tree which simply 'is a tree', the scenery and the character of Hamlet lack the distance or difference that representation requires: they *are* what they are supposed to be. But in another sense the actor represents Hamlet, and the whole company represents the *Hamlet* on the stage. This refers to their activity of presenting the play and the character in a certain way."<sup>20</sup>

Pitkin proposes here two kinds of representation : representation as the identification of the represented with the representation as in the case of 'is' relation where the representation is what it is supposed to be and representation as re-presentation or presenting again, or presenting of something not present. Pitkin examines the political notion of artificiality as proposed by Thomas Hobbes. An actor's performance is artificial in the sense that he is not the owner of the stage-action and the ownership of an action is defined in terms of authority or right. Therefore an actor, like a legal representative acts for others. Correlating an actor with the notion of dramatic *persona*, Hobbes understands that since in its Latin origin *persona* signifies the disguise or outward appearance, an actor as a person, like a mask, is always a false front. Therefore to personate necessarily means to act or to represent either himself or another.<sup>21</sup> But the difference between the political or legal representative on the one hand and the dramatic actor on the other is that while the first two are authorised by the 'owner of action' to act for them, there is no such authorisation for the dramatic actor. Pitkin therefore argues for an illusion theory of theatrical representation. "He (actor) does not pretend to act on authority of Hamlet, but to *be* Hamlet. His entire manner and appearance are directed to creating the illusion that he is someone else, someone whom he is playing or, as we say, representing on the stage."<sup>22</sup>

But Sankuka upholds the difference between the representation and the represented and rejects the identity (*tadatmakatvam*) relation as proposed by Lollata. The actor might be psychologically identifying himself with the character, a situation implied by Sankuka's stress on the actor's education and effort necessary for acting, but the audience does not cognise this identity which would lead him to an illusory experience. Identity relation, however, is accepted by the Indian tradition only in case of religious rituals where the material images are identical not only with the spiritual potency they represent but also with the worshipper, the priest implying an identity of all the three points in the triangular structure of representation- 'of', 'by' and 'to' (*devo bhutva devam yajet*). The same also holds true of a ritualised dramatic representation.

Now the question is : if Sankuka rejects the identity relationship between representation and represented both in drama and painting, then what exactly are the terms in which this relationship is defined? It is already observed that according to Sankuka theatrical signs are lexical. Obviously the means of theatrical representation is different from that of painting. Lines and colours are the media of painting and gesticular movements, language, facial expressions and costume (*angika, vacika, sattvika, aharya* respectively) are the four constituents of acting

*abhinaya*)<sup>23</sup>. All these are in conformity with the verbal description of the *Ramayana* (or *Mahabhārata* what the case may be) the authors of which are believed to have personally witnessed the action of Rama etc. that they have described. The actor's conformity to such description may be termed as *nominal portrayal*<sup>24</sup>. But not all the pictures are of this kind of representation. Particularly the example cited by Śankuka, i.e. picture of a horse is a *real portrayal*, a visible shape or *akṛti* of an animal which exists in the external world. The nature of such an *akṛti* is explained by Mimamsa philosophers of the 7th and 8th centuries.<sup>25</sup> There is a Vedic injunction that "One should construct an altar like a syena-bird (*Syena-citam civita*)." The meaning of this likeness is analysed by Kumarila in terms of Sabara's definition of differentia, a specific combination of substance, properties and qualities. This ontic factor is signified by the word *akṛti* (the visual shape) which is not only an epistemological percept (*samsthānam*), but also a mental concept. It is the aspect through which an individual of a class is formed. *Akṛti* does not mean any universal (*Jati*) existing independent of an individual. Since it is always realised in a concretised particular, Kumarila holds, as against the Vaiśeṣika realism, that there is no absolute difference between an individual and a universal.

Applying this notion of *akṛti* Kumarila interpretes the Vedic injunction. Construction of an altar *like* a syena-bird means that one should construct an altar with bricks the visual form of which must be similar (*sadrśya*) to the *akṛti* of not a particular syena bird, but to that of any syena bird that is born or is yet to be born.

The picture of a horse, interpreted in the light of Kumarila's doctrine, means a visual shape of two dimensions made of lines and colours which is similar to the *akṛti* of a horse. This is the meaning of Śankuka's statement "This is a horse"; and in the cases of non-existent objects Śankuka would accept the notion of *nominal* portrayals. Representation of *akṛti* comes very close to the representation of the essential characteristics, representation of the species rather than the individual. But according to Kumarila *vastutvam* (thing-ness-the Sanskrit parallel for essence) is an abstract concept which cannot form part of the denotation of a word and therefore, like *Sattā* (beinghood), it cannot form (*akriyate*) the concrete individual or *akṛti*.

This may lead to an understanding that by analogizing an actor with a picture, Śankuka thinks that if a picture of a horse is a visual representation of the *akṛti* of a horse, or, for that matter, even of any non-existent objects described in a text or a legend, an actor is an audio-visual representation of the *akṛti* of the character in the epic or a legend. If this hypothesis is accepted, then the

characters of the narrative genre are treated not as unique (*asámánya*) individuals but as members of a class (*sámánya*). In other words, proper names are only different names given to the members of a common class, and the emotions they shelter are also common (*sádháranya*, *sámánya*). This hypothesis finds a strong grounding in the classification of the dramatic characters such as Dhirodatta, Dhiraprasanta, Dhiralalita and Dhiroddhata among males and Mugdha, Pragalbha etc. among females. All the characters available in the whole range of Sanskrit literature are accommodated within this principle of classification. Sankuka's statement "This (actor) is Rama", therefore, most probably means that this actor audio-visually represents the *akrti* of Rama i.e. a Dhirodatta character, Rama being only one proper name for a member of this class, there may be as many names as possible for other members. Rama is not the only member of Dhirodatta class. Yudhisthira is another member. Similarly, representation of this character by the actor in the sense of performance is either an illustration of the principle of classification or a re-presentation of a member of the same class i.e. presenting again the same character as described in the epic or elsewhere in a different medium (*anukirtana*-Bharata). The relation among several such presentations or re-presentations may be defined in terms of the relation of one horse to another horse i.e. not in terms of similarity but in terms of belonging to the same class. Although the pictorial and theatrical representations differ in their representational codes (or media of representation) and the manners (style/genre) of representation, the principle of their representation is the same i.e. representation of the *akrti* of an object or character.

#### V. Representation as the Determinate Presentation of there Indeterminate Reality

Sankuka's tendency for propagating a sister arts theory as evident in his analogising the arts of the theatre and painting has been severely criticised by his successor Abhinavagupta (10th C A.D.) who is the last among the classical commentators on Bharata's *Natyasastra*. Abhinavagupta strongly argues that the codes and genres of representation determine the uniqueness of each art form. He Writes :

Some people say, 'The pigment, orpiment, etc. undoubtedly compose a (*samyaj*) a cow.' Now if the word 'compose' is understood in the sense of 'manifest (*abhivyaj*)', these people also are in error. For we cannot say that minium, etc. manifest a real (*paramarthika*) cow like the one which might be manifested by a lamp etc. All they do is produce (*nirvrt*) a particular aggregate (*samuha*) similar to a cow. The only object of the image 'It is like a cow' is simply this mimium etc., applied so as to constitute a particular arrangement of



