



# The concept of realness in a literary text

Abhirami H Katayaprath

## Introduction

David Shulman narrates the concept of realness existing within Sanskrit literary text in "Singularity, Inexhaustibility, Insight: What Sanskrit Poeticians think is real". This paper aims at understanding the concept of realness in the Sanskrit literary texts. What aspect of a literary text can be recognized as real? This is the constant question carried throughout in this particular section of the book "*More Than Real: A History of imagination in South India*". The concept of what is real and what is not is entirely dependent upon the text's nature. The text itself uses poetic language to deliver a certain kind of reality to the readers. To do that, the author should use a Literary device called *Utpreksha*, to render a sense of realness to the readers. *Utpreksha* evinces an imaginative comparison between an object and a subject. Comparing a subject to an object within literary texts creates a sense of reality because the subject becomes real while being compared to an object. After all, it affirms the subject's existence through comparison. Through *Utpreksha*, the poets are validating the existence of both the subject and the object. In a rational context, it is understood that subject and object exist as it is in reality; however, within the literary realm, both subject and object are compared to emphasize poetic imagination.

## Imagination and reality

Imaginative texts are merged with the intervention of facts and fiction. The fact is interpreted with the help of imagination to develop a literary text; hence *Utpreksha* becomes an essential poetic device to amplify the fictional element within the literary text. Nevertheless, the readers of the literary text are free to interpret or accept the poet's comparison. According to the poet's understanding, the comparison between two subjects or an object happens to strengthen the text. Through *utpreksha*, a subject will possess different meanings. For instance, if a person is

compared to a rose flower, it is understood that the person is not the rose flower. However, while a person is being compared to a rose flower, it is also understood that the person possesses a rose flower's characteristics. Something about the flower itself reflects within the person; hence, the comparison highlights the elements of the character of a rose existing in the subject. Nevertheless, the realness of imagination exists within the context of comparison because a subject perceived through imaginary comparison will eventually embody the quality of being real to the poet. Nonetheless, the concept of constructed realness might not be apprehensible to the audience who witnessed a performance or who have read poetry because their realness manifests in performance according to their understanding of the discourse. For example, when an artist is performing an act, they are becoming the character through the medium of acting; therefore, the acting makes the essence of the character performed Infront of the audience real. The character's realness is manifested through the person performing the act; therefore, in the realm of acting, the character becomes real. In the book section, Shulman states, "you have to maintain the tension between real and unreal to experience the full effect of the figure" (Shulman 2012). Therefore, it is understood that the realness of a subject has to be interrupted by the metaphoric comparison of another object to craft something ethereal in the context of poetics. According to Shulman, *utpreksha* is not simile; he states, "*Utpreksha* as we all see in a moment, assumes a certain imaginative leap, something that goes well beyond a mere simile, *upama*." (Shulman 2012). This suggests how *Utpreksha* produces something new out of already existing facts juxtaposed with other objects. So, the realness aspect of the 'new' is on its newness of the subject because the newly created literary text has not existed before; therefore, the presence of its current existence makes it real. Hyperbole adds to the realness of the text because exaggerated comparison remains real within the fictional realm. The fictional realm consists of imaginative ideas; hence hyperbole is necessary in the poems or in a literary text to create something new out of already existing objects. To comprehend the subject's realness, it is also important to understand the differences between the subject and the object. For example, if a face is compared to the moon, it is already understood that the face is not the moon. The face alone has its own characteristics, which makes it face similarly; the moon also possesses its own distinct element, making the moon 'moon.' However, the comparison of the moon and the face merge both the subject and the object to create something new. Moreover, *Utpreksha* is the poetic device that is used to construct the comparison. Therefore, the face possesses the moon-ness; hence it can be compared to the moon. At the same time, it is also rationally understood that the face is not the moon. However, the comparison remains real in the poetic context.

Moreover, facts can also be exaggerated. The idea of face being face remains a fact, but the fact becomes fiction when it is compared to something else.

The question of 'real' remains a conundrum because one can experience the realness in the physical world. However, in a fictional milieu, the 'realness' cannot be seen or experienced; hence it should be convincing through literary narratives. The narrative makes the imaginative concept real not in the physical world but in the fictional world; therefore, the idea of realness exists as two different spheres, one in the material world and the other in literary world. Nonetheless, *Utpreksha* remains one of the primary poetic devices in Sanskrit literary text due to its ability to provide a space for imagination. The relativity aspect of *Utpreksha* brings out the aesthetics of the poem. Predominantly, the imaginative ideas and hyperbole are used in the poem for the aesthetic aspect of the language; however, it also determines the realness of the aesthetic because aesthetic apprehension within a poetic text is subjective so, the realness of the aesthetic can also differ according to the perception of the readers. The poets are aware of the real and unreal factor in their imaginative vision because without apprehending the differences it is not possible to compare an X to Y. The question of realness in a literary text exists within the literary realm; therefore, it does not claim the existence of its physical manifestation. The comparison of an object to a subject can differ extensively in terms of its external feature. Both can have distinctive features and shapes, which makes it unique. For instance, a comparison of a flower to a face does not assert that the face is a flower because both face and flower are entirely different from the rational perspective. While both being contrastingly different, it is in that space where poets use their imaginative ideas through *Utpreksha*. To compare, the face should have the element of a flower, and these elements are entirely subjective and imaginative according to the poets. Consequently, there should also be a relativity element in the comparison process “the observer can describe an entity only if there is at least one other entity from which he can distinguish it and with which he can observe it to interact or relate” (Schmidt, S. J H. Hauptmeier 2020); this understanding imply that there should be an existence of already familiar entity or an object in order to create something new. Because comparison can only be possible in the literary realm when at least one object or subject is familiar to the Poet or an author.

## Conclusion

The poetic devices like *Utpreksha* bring out the imaginative vision of a poet in their text. It allows the creation of comparison to be real in the sphere of fiction. The concept of realness in a literary text does not question the reality outside the literary sphere. Through imagination and comparisons, poets contemplate over philosophical ideas through poetic devices like *Utpreksha* and hyperbole. The imaginative text is not irrational; it is a rearrangement of ideas and concepts written with literary devices' help. The amalgamation of real and unreal is what makes the poem poetic; therefore, it is necessary to use comparison to make a poem poetic. The concept of realness in a literary text is determined through the apprehension of the text because the concept of realness can be different for the poet who is writing as well as for the readers who read it. To compare an object to an unreal phenomenon make it real within the context of the poem and the literary sphere. Therefore, what is real, according to Sanskrit poet, depends on their imaginative vision.

## References

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