TEME, Vol. XLVIII, Nº 2, April – June 2024, pp. 359–370

Original research paper https://doi.org/10.22190/TEME230928020G
Received: September 28, 2023 UDC 821.211.09-13
Revised: January 25, 2024
Accepted: January 25, 2024

DISTORTING REALITY IN ANCIENT INDIA: HYPERBOLE AND IMAGINATIVE TRANSREALISM [a]

Igor Grbić[*]

University of Juraj Dobrila in Pula, Faculty of Humanities, Pula, Croatia

ORCID iD: Igor Grbić https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0831-0882

Abstract

Hyperbole may be the most visible variation of immoderacy in ancient Indian literature, not infrequently developing into adynata. The West, conditioned as it is by mimetism in art, finds this feature one of the major obstacles in its reception of that literature. However, a realistic approach, not just to ancient Indian literature, but its containing culture in general, takes us only to a miscomprehension of a different way to treat reality. Distortion of characters, of plot, of the external, supposedly real, world, as well as of other coordinates of poetry remains loyal, in fact, to a higher reality, a reality that is imaginative and transreal. The article starts from various examples in the Indian epics, mostly the *Mahābhārata*, not just because this is the largest literary work of India, but also because it is a work claiming to be all-encompassing. In order to illustrate the far-reaching potential of the imaginative, instead of realistic, imperative in ancient India, examples are also included from non-literary texts, technical and legal, in which absence of realism becomes, by western standards, especially worrying.

Key words: hyperbole, ancient Indian literature, realism, transrealism, imagination.

ИЗОБЛИЧАВАЊЕ СТВАРНОСТИ У ДРЕВНОЈ ИНДИЈИ: ХИПЕРБОЛА И ИМАГИНАТИВНИ ТРАНСРЕАЛИЗАМ

Апстракт

Неумереност староиндијске књижевности можда је и највидљивија у њеној хиперболичности, која неретко достиже размере адинатона. Западу, условљеном миметичношћу у уметности, та је особина и једна од главних препрека у рецепцији те књижевности. Реалистички приступ, међутим, не само тој књижевности, већ и индијској култури уопште, води нас једино неразумевању једног другачијег начина третирања стварности. Изобличавање ликова, радње, ванског, тобоже стварног,

[a] The article was presented at the *Language, Literature, Process 2023 Conference* at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Niš, Serbia.

[*] Corresponding author: Igor Grbić, University of Juraj Dobrila in Pula, Faculty of Humanities, Zagrebačka ulica 30, 52100 Pula, Croatia, igor.grbic@unipu.hr

света те осталих координата приповедања, односно певања, заправо верно служи вишој стварности, која је имагинативна и трансреална. Чланак полази од разноврсних примера из индијске епике, првенствено „Махабхарате“, не само јер је реч о највећем делу индијске литературе, него и због њеног истицања властите свеобухватности. Да би се илустровала далекосежност имагинативног, а не реалистичког императива у старој Индији, укључени су и примери из некњижевних текстова, техничких и правних, у којима, по западним мерилима, изостанак реализма постаје особито забрињавајући.

Кључне речи: хипербола, староиндијска књижевност, реализам, трансреализам, имагинација.

INTRODUCTION

Immoderacy is certainly among the most conspicuous features of ancient Indian literature, and one of the most typical of its expressions is hyperbole. The hyperbolic register is not pronounced only quantitatively, but even qualitatively, with hyperboles growing with perfect ease so much out of all proportion that it is very frequently much more to the point to speak of adynata, instead of mere hyperboles. Adynaton is, in fact, hyperbole taken to such extremes that it completely baffles or even violates our most elementary realistic sensitivities. Common examples include phrases like *I've been waiting for you for a hundred years*, or *I've been looking for you a million times*. The West, obsessed as it has been all along with mimetic expectations from literature, finds this particular feature a major, even the most irritating obstacle in its reception of ancient Indian literature. However, seen in a much wider perspective, it is precisely from the experiences of non-western literatures, including Indian, that we should learn to understand and even appreciate to what extent the distortion of characters, plot, the outer, supposedly real, world and other narrative or poetic coordinates may very well remain loyal to reality. The catch here is that such reality is seen as surpassing what we regularly take to be real. I choose to call such an approach *imaginative transrealism.* Imaginative transrealism does not feel conditioned and blackmailed by the real as we normally understand it, but is instead inspired to go beyond such reality and the language serving it, in order to create a language and its concomitant world that will rather affirm an imaginative – not merely fanciful! – transformation of our perception and re-evaluation of the so-called real world itself. The literary procedure here is extremely playful, which is a dimension of paramount significance in Indian culture generally, since the very acts of God's creation, upholding and destruction of the worlds are seen just as many acts of His play (*līlā*).

In my elucidation of ancient Indian hyperbole, I am going to limit myself to Sanskrit literature. However massive and influential its production, this is far from total ancient Indian literature. Still, the impact of Sanskrit culture in general on all non-Sanskrit cultures in India, including

Tamil as the most powerful among them, was so great that the Sanskrit sample can safely be taken as the most representative for all classical India. Furthermore, although hyperbole is anything but absent even from *mahākāvya* – the epic forms clearly aiming at poetic excellence – I am sticking to the much more popular and relaxed *itihāsa* and *purāṇa* epic genres, for these are more than sufficient and exemplary for my present needs. The *purāṇa* is here represented by the *Bhāgavata*, which in terms of literature is the most ambitious of all *purāṇas*, while the *itihāsa* is represented by the *Mahābhārata*, not only because it is India's – and the world's – largest piece of literature, but also because of its own encouraging claim that "whatever [...] is contained in [the *Mahābhārata*] may be met with elsewhere; but whatever is not in it, is not to be found anywhere" (1.62.53), which itself turns out to be hyperbole.

INDIAN HYPERBOLE AT WORK

Hyperbole happens to be a rhetorical figure common to epic poetry in general, but in the East, it can with absolute ease reach staggering proportions and branch into a fascinating gamut of variations (which is here stated also to qualify Bowra's classical study of heroic poetry, where we read that hyperbole "is a familiar feature of oriental poetry" only (1952, p. 501); hyperbole certainly is much more typical of oriental than occidental poetry, but should not be taken as a *differentia specifica* of the latter). The typical strategy in the Indian epics is amplifying numbers. Thus, the *Mahābhārata* is the most massive epic, about the most massive war there ever has been, which it expresses – among other means – by stating that the Kurukṣetra field saw hundreds of millions warriors gathered for the final battle (6.4.6). On the tenth day, the great hero Bhīṣma killed, by himself, 10,000 elephants and another 10,000 horses, along with their riders, plus 100,000 foot soldiers (6.110.32-35). Even these numbers can be topped, and so Droṇa's human victims are counted by hundreds of thousands (7.8.30). To put such overstatements into a wider perspective, we can remember the familiar counterpart of Miloš Obilić, who, in South Slavic epic poetry (the poem *Car Lazar i carica Milica* (*Srb.* Emperor Lazar and Empress Milica)), after killing the sultan on the Kosovo field exterminates "only" another 12,000 Turks (Horo, 1987, p. 122).

Another conspicuous example of numerical hyperbole is offered in connection to the great kings of the past. The good king Rantideva used to lavish each of his priests with a golden bull, one hundred cows, eight hundred pieces of gold and everything necessary for the sacrifices, and he did so twice a month, over a period of one hundred years (7.67.8-9). We also learn that he had 200,000 cooks (7.67.1). Or, to take another life sphere in which those ancient rulers excelled, king Śaśabindu had one thousand wives – even the divine king Kṛṣṇa has traditionally been cred-

ited with no more than 16,108 – and each of the wives gave birth to one thousand sons – again, Kṛṣṇa fathered only eighty sons, with the eight fully legitimate wives from the above number – and each of the sons made ten million sacrifices (7.65.2-3), which anyone can easily calculate for themselves to offer a total of 10^{13} – ten trillion – sacrifices.

Such instances can be multiplied *ad nauseam*, which is surely not this article's point. Let me add just one more example, partly because, although itself belonging to the *Mahābhārata*, it refers to another war, the one sung in India's second largest epic poem, the *Rāmāyaṇa*, and partly because I am going to come back to it later in the text. The building of the bridge that will take Rāma's army to the island of Laṅkā sees human soldiers joined by their monkey and bear allies: Suṣeṇa comes with ten billion of his monkeys, Gaja and Gavaya with a billion each, Gavākṣa with six hundred billion, Gandhamādana with another billion, Panasa with 5.2 billion, while king Jāmbavān participates with a billion of his bears (3.283.2-8).

Whoever chooses to read such lists literally, like a historian, for instance, is doing nothing but forcing the wrong key into the keyhole. Such lists are parts of their respective texts, which again are parts of the culture that produced them. From the standpoint of the *Mahābhārata* and the whole of its culture, the war it describes is the ultimate war in the history of the world (which can freely be taken as another argument for the need of this poem to be the lengthiest work of world literature). This war is total – encompassing the whole world – and critical – it introduces the *kalī yuga* – the last, worst of the ages. The war's totality and the crisis the war stands for are also expressed by saying that there, on Kurukṣetra, foot soldiers slaughtered foot soldiers, horse riders slaughtered horse riders, and even horses and elephants slaughtered those of their kinds, which is subsequently only organically extended into all those incredible numbers, whose function, however, is not arithmetical, but imaginative. The numbers contained by texts like the *Mahābhārata* are not statistics, but rhetoric. They are poetic figures, but – let me make this perfectly clear – poetic figures with a very precise target: to violate the laws of logic, mathematics, positive mind and common sense, to the point that such violations in themselves signal the presence of something transcending any rationally acceptable words. Sometimes, it is the presence of the good old days that were actually so good the poet finds no better way out but only to *suggest* them, through obviously unrealistic numbers of gifts and sacrifices, because no *description* could possibly do justice to the golden age, when things were still *dharmic*, as the Indian would say, that is, each in its legitimate place as envisaged by the universal law. Śaśabindu's harem of one thousand wives should not be read as a lewdly overstated indicator of the king's sexual appetite and prowess – as such details have been read by puritanical minds – but rather as another expression of the goldenness of

the age, when the most righteous, *dharmic* of men saw to the sufficient propagation of *dharma*, the universal law, as expected from such rulers of men.

The presence of something defying human speech, and consequently triggering a hyperbole, can be of yet different kinds. I am here referring back to the building of the bridge to Laṅkā. It is, always, strongly advisable to carefully read what the text says itself, and then not pretend the text has not said it (just as one should avoid pretending the text has said something which in fact is only one's own interpretation of what the text has said, or has not). If one chooses to understand the enumerated builders as a meticulous, literal, list, and embarks on mathematically, realistically calculating how many monkeys and bears took part in building the bridge – but what is realistic about monkeys and bears building a bridge!? – how is one to incorporate into the calculation some of the addends I have so far deliberately omitted, such as Dadhimukha, who joined in with his "*large* monkey army [my italics, of course]" (*mahāsainyaṃ harīṇām*), or, especially, "many other monkey chiefs upon chiefs *without number*" (*anye ca bahavo hariyūthapayūthapāḥ asaṃkhyeyā*) (3.283.8)? How is one to calculate the number of soldiers in armies whose chiefs are themselves numberless?

These, and so many more, are 'just' different ways to stress – extremely poignantly, and unforgettably, especially for a traditional listener of the performing bard – how pious and generous those kings of yore were, how devoted and self-abnegating were the times when the entire world – including our fellow animals! – would join hands in building a bridge that would make possible the only thing that really matters: the triumph of God over non-God.

A final numerical, and within this kind different, example can be found in both *itihāsa* and *purāṇa*. Thus, their detailed descriptions of various lands and continents evidently do *not* have the intention to be scientific, but imaginative geography. Their 'untruths' can be exceptionally blatant, like stating that the innermost, 'our', continent (of the seven of them) is a hundred thousand *yojanas* across (*Śrīmad Bhāgavata Mahāpurāṇa*, 5.16.5), which is probably about 1,300,000 kilometres. Here we are not dealing with a ready-made world that is simply being described – and so brutally lied about – but with a world that is presently being created, in the exact moment we are listening to / reading the epic.

However, the bizarre expressivity of adynaton is far from relying on numbers only. Not even human beings are spared, in their most obvious, physical aspect, and even if the distortions go against everything we have so far heard about a given individual (so, when Rabelais does similar things he actually comes much closer to oriental than occidental traditions). To all appearances, and to our no little surprise, shortly before his death, the already mentioned Bhīṣma turns into something of a gigantic

superman. Enemies can shower him with countless arrows, and hit him, and pierce him, but to no avail (instances are spread throughout the sixth book, named after him, but I can particularly draw attention to chapter 120, introducing Bhīṣma's fall). When he finally dies, it is because his time has come anyway (long before the war he was given the boon to live as long as he himself determined), not because he has succumbed to the many fatal wounds. Bhīṣma's demise is one of the *Mahābhārata's* most moving episodes. While it is perfectly true that a hero's unrealistically prolonged dying, filled with elevated speeches even amidst agonizing pain, is one of general epic features, here we inevitably find some additional touches: it takes days for Bhīṣma to die, while he is lying on a bed of arrows sticking out of his back, singing praises to Kṛṣṇa, and passing moral and political teachings to the new king Yudhiṣṭhira that take up the better part of the epic's twelfth book, extending for roughly 4,400 couplets!

In the West, close to Rabelais' and the poetics of the Irish myth is what can be adequately termed caricatural hyperbole. The sky in the *Mahābhārata* repeatedly becomes invisible because of the many arrows shooting from one side to the other, which then reach the heroes in such numbers as to make them reel in the field looking like porcupines (Ghaṭotkaca, one of the greatest among them, was so studded with arrows that you could not distinguish either himself or his horses, car and banner; 7.176.55-56). King Mandhata was born of a father only – which is by no means the unique case of male parthenogenesis in Indian mythology – after the latter had drunk sacrificial butter, and was subsequently taken care of by Indra himself, the king of the gods, who did not even try to breast-feed him, but finger fed him instead (7.62.3-6). If the Greek myth has king Midas, whose touch turns anything into gold, then the Indian myth has to go one significant, imaginative step further. So king Śrñjaya asks – and gets – in boon from the *brāhmaṇas* a son who, among his other virtues, will produce urine, excreta, secretions and perspiration made of gold (7.55.23). It is my feeling that the few colossal destructions of forest flora and fauna we find in the *Mahābhārata* are better appreciated as another hyperbolic – and, in this particular case, ominous − symptom of the fatefulness of the clash between good and evil and of the end of a world age, than as an abominably wanton, completely unexplainable ecological catastrophe at the hands of characters that we are expected to take as the good guys in the epic.

Anything can – and must – be subjected to imaginative transformation – and why not do it in a hyperbolic register? – once it enters the world of the imagination. The practice includes even paratextual parts such as the standard, hyper-realistic opening instructions as to how one is to listen to / read the forthcoming work, as well as the accompanying lists of all the incredible benefits resulting therefrom. Such examples of typically, but not exclusively, *purāṇic* hyperbole are not an aberration from

some presumed common sense, but variations on carefully composed didactic formulae, with a technical term of their own – *arthavāda* – their purpose being to stimulate the listener/reader towards the holy and avert them from the unholy, in a vivid, palpable, spectacular way, always befitting the aesthetic, imaginative and, more generally, cultural parameters of the literature in question.

Indeed, assessments like the one saying that, in India, "from the allusive cipher of the *Ṛg Veda* and the abrupt, broken narratives of the *Brāhmaṇas* [...] one passed to the ruthless redundance of the *Purāṇas*, their incessant dilution, their indulgence in hypnotic and hypertrophic detail" (Calasso, 1996, p. 61) can be acceptable only if, somehow, we do not take *ruthless redundance*, *dilution* and *hypnotic and hypertrophic detail* to necessarily connote something bad. The stated change – if there had been any such change in time, Vedic culture being from the start a product of the sophisticated elite, *purāṇic*, from the start rather catering to popular taste, with both these starts reaching into an unknown past – simply reflects a different sensitivity, one that finds in hyperbole a stylistic device most suitable to its expressive needs. Otherwise we are repeating one and the same pattern over and over again, of the western, itself basically provincial, standard elevated to the status of a universally binding criterion. We have seen such superimposition many times, even inside the West, with the 'true' West raging against a 'false' West. In the context of the present article, here are two relevant variations. The classical Latin world was quick to denounce the recent 'Asian' and, later 'African' style, versus the 'balanced Attic'. Still later appeared the especially repulsive 'Hisperic Aesthetic' – Ireland again! – against which the Church Fathers reacted for being not only barbaric and ugly but, here too, also gigantic and measureless, 'verbal witchcraft', as St Jerome put it, that was practised the most assiduously by Irish monks (see, e.g., Eco, 2007, p. 111).

A DIFFERENT SENSITIVITY, A DIFFERENT POETICS

If the supposed 'truly western' West finally stopped viewing other traditions through the evaluative grid of its own tradition, it just might notice that the ancient Indian one has maintained a relationship to hyperbole quite at variance with the western. Classical treatises in poetics distinguish several types of what is in the West jointly known as hyperbole. Common exaggeration, called *atyukti* or *adhika*, is just the simplest variation. Some further distinguish between *adhika* and *ādhikya*. In the former, in its most typical manifestation, "a thing is said to exceed or surpass in size or grandeur its own basis or container", while in the latter, which we may understand as superabundance, "a quality or attribute is quantitatively exaggerated out of all proportion" (Gerow, 1971, p. 102). Then there is the already mentioned *arthavāda*, a hyperbolic account inciting to a moral

line of action, but also, and for the present consideration even more important, to imaginative processing and, ultimately, transcending the so-called reality. Finally, *atiśayokti* is hyperbole functioning first of all as defamiliarization or poetic exaltation (Banerjee, 2002, p. 8). The understanding of hyperbole as offered here is not shared by all classical Indian poeticians, but even this difference of opinions only further testifies to the significant engagement of tradition with this figure and the prominent status it has had in it. A Western author recently elaborated her understanding that it is even wrong to take *atiśayokti* to mean hyperbole, since she finds the most important feature about this figure to be not excess, exaggeration, implying a transcendence of reality, but intensification, "as it is typically concerned with amplifying the beauty of tangible objects, what may be effected by transcending or transforming the sensual domain, and not the other way round, as in the case of hyperbole" (Matyszkiewicz, 2022, p. 101). Matyszkiewicz's position comes very close to Banerjee's, and they seem to be conditioned by instances of *atiśayokti* as found in *kāvya*, refined Sanskrit literature (in the context of Matyszkiewicz's article, this is actually quite obvious), where the figure is typically found in relation to the various parts of the female body and movements. My point, however, is that, outside *kāvya* – as shown in the examples presented here − *atiśayokti*, including all kinds of hyperbole and stylizations that can be connected to a stricter use of the term, has other typical functions, such as in fact are very much in line with transcending the sensual domain, by which I mean the whole world as we know it. Anyhow, the sometimes contrary polyphony surrounding *atiśayokti* only ulteriorly shows how encompassing and omnipresent a figure it is in Indian tradition. *Atiśayokti* not only attracted the attention of Bhāmaha, the very first extant Indian poeticians (7th century), but, as a super figure materializing itself in various shapes and forms, it may even be said to present the very core of his treatise *Kāvyālaṃkāra* (*The Ornament of Literature*). In the first book-length study of the *Mahābhārata* as literature, R. K. Sharma (1964) divided the work's figures of speech into eight main groups, one of which is hyperbole. Even more, *atiśayokti* is admitted as a separate category among only three kinds of poetic diction classical Indian poetics generally recommends (Banerjee, 2002, p. 4).

By now it should have become clearer why I have been motivated to recognize the presence of what I call transrealism within Indian hyperbole. It is my feeling that, outside its rigorously regulated appearances in high literature, Indian hyperbole always tends to be basically metaphysical, one way or another, even when it is funny, and probably especially when it is funny. It gives the allegedly real world twists that are so grotesque that they completely deconstruct the expectation parameters defined by our habit and belief in that world, thus kicking us out into a

mode of existence beyond physics, chemistry, geography, history, statistics – beyond everything all too human.

The Indian unwillingness to take the world for granted and the fascination with substituting an 'objectivized', unilateral and single way of addressing it by a plethora of imaginative takes on it goes even further and can embrace spheres that, in the West, even in pre-scientific days, were protected against such wild onslaughts of blatant inaccuracy. Some of the sexual positions as represented in Indian paintings and outer walls of Hindu temples have long and rightly so been regarded as simply physically impossible. And yet, they seem to be nothing but visualizations of what we find in the *Kāmasūtra*, the best-known and the most authoritative handbook in erotology (*sūtra* is a highly technical term, designating texts that the West would call scientific, scholarly). If despite their physical impossibility these positions were also included into a supposedly exact text, the reason must have been that the limitless possibilities of the playful and much more deeply insightful imagination were considered to have the upper hand over any kind of sexological precision. In such cases, we should not readily dismiss the possible presence of a more strictly didactic intention, too, such as relativization of all sexuality and its consequent overcoming (Vātsyāyana, the author of the *Kāmasūtra*, is traditionally believed to have spent a lifetime of celibacy). Much along the same lines, it has been calculated (by the psychoanalyst Sudhir Kakar) that were a husband to literally apply even the most authoritative legal text of ancient India, which is the *Manusmṛti*, and stay away from his wife on all the nights on which sex is to be avoided, there would be minus three days a month left (qtd. in Doniger, 2013, p. 263). The ancient Indian scholarly love of meticulously categorizing and classifying virtually everything, no matter how insignificant or even ludicrous the objects of these mental operations, has regularly been made fun of in the West. Again, my feeling is that these have simply been read in the wrong key. The Indian mind has never favoured or particularly valued an objective, intellectually neutral record of the outer world, however incredible, preposterous or even offensive this may seem to the western mind, and it has done so simply because it has never favoured or particularly valued that very world to begin with. (Of course, amidst the globalized world things have somewhat changed, but given the huge preponderance of basically traditional communities the overall picture remains the same.) Intellectually reconfiguring the world, seeing through it with the eye of imagination, taking it as only prime matter for the creations of the spirit – such an approach to the outside world, which is centrally active and incorporated into a larger hierarchy, has always been seen as the right way to perceive and use the world we are born into. This is so much so that it applies 'even' to the most important Vedic science: the science of the ritual. The great French authority in the Vedic studies claims that the complex structures as de-

scribed in ritual texts are sometimes "simply" imaginative exercises, not to be confused with actual practices (Renou, 1968, p. 30).

CONCLUSION

Atiśayokti is not quite Western hyperbole, but it does include it, only to go beyond it and encompass all kinds of distortions of the so-called real world. Transrealism is a possible way to term such width of scope. As already mentioned, besides mere exaggeration, it embraces twists on common sense and its expectations as familiar to the West through Rabelais (to take just the best-known example), as well as the bizarre, grotesque, caricatural, and virtually anything that abolishes reality as we know it, ushering us into worlds that are being created right before our ears/eyes by imagination − instead of a world passively received by our minds as ready-made − only to be themselves surpassed, in a metaphysical *tour de force*, by hinting at a reality beyond human powers and words. This makes *atiśayokti* essentially metaphysical. Indian hyperbole is a whole language, a language of ludic, holy mockery of everything we cherish as actual. It spares not an inch of our mind-set that may be thought to be inviolable only by our all too human considerations towards what has be taken as real by the same all too human subject.

This is actually the true purpose of art itself. At its greatest, it does not comply with the world as we take it to be, but breaks through it. One of the twentieth-century Westerners who were still most acutely aware of this fact was also one of the most neglected Westerners of the same century, the Hungarian Béla Hamvas. His most explicit text in this regard is the very short essay "Metapoesis". "Metapoesis" turns out, in fact, to be Hamvas' term for what I have been calling transrealism. Hamvas explains that a work worthy of being called artistic cannot be just a masterly achievement, but such a masterly achievement in which what is manifested is a surplus of being. Here he resorts to Nietzsche: such a work is not merely *Schöpfung*, creation, but *Überschöpfung*, supercreation, creation that transcends itself. In other words, it is not poesis, but metapoesis (Hamvaš, 1994, p. 152). He then recognizes that:

> [A]rt assumes that man's being has no object that would possess some corresponding complete value. Art is the activity creating a world of complete value corresponding to man's essence. This is metapoesis. The metapoetic world is not real, but hyperreal.
>
> (Hamvaš, 1994, p. 153)

Hamvas finishes his essay with the following words:

> Metapoesis happens when man does not express himself, but creates what surpasses him: when man elevates himself above himself. This is

> the only way to make his essence real. *And nature expects from man to be raised by means of man's art to himself in the* vita nuova.
>
> (Hamvaš, 1994, p. 153; my italics)

In its many and various employments, this is precisely what Indian hyperbole achieves.

REFERENCES

Banerjee, D. (2002). *A Handbook of Classical Sanskrit Rhetoric*. Kolkata: Sanskrit Pustak Bhandar.

Bhāmaha. (1970). *Kāvyālaṅkāra*. (Sans. orig. and P. V. Naganatha Sastry, Trans.). New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers.

Bowra, C. M. (1952). *Heroic Poetry*. London: Macmillan.

Calasso, R. (1996). *Ka*. (T. Parks, Trans.). London: Vintage.

Doniger, W. (2103). *On Hinduism*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Eco, U. (2007). *On Ugliness*. (A. McEwen, Trans.). London: Harvill Secker.

Gerow, E. (1971). *A Glossary of Indian Figures of Speech*. The Hague: Mouton.

Hamvaš, B. (1994). *Patam*. (*Patmos*). (S. Babić, Trans.). Beograd: Centar za geopetiku.

Mahābhārata. (2020). (Sans. orig. and M. N. Dutt, Trans.). New Delhi: Parimal Publications.

Matyszkiewicz, A. (2022). The notion of *atiśaya* in Sanskrit literary theory. *Rocznik orientalistyczny*, 75(1), 99-116. doi: 10.24425/ro.2022.141416.

Ного, Р. П. (Ед.). (1987). *Српске јуначке пјесме [Serbian heroic poems]*. Београд: БИГЗ.

Renou, L. (1968). *Religions of Ancient India*. New York: Schocken Books.

Sharma, R. K. (1964). *Elements of Poetry in the Mahābhārata*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Śrīmad Bhāgavata Mahāpurāṇa (Vol. 2.). (2008). (Sans. orig. and C. L. Goswami, M. A., Shastri, Trans.). Gorakhpur: Gita Press.

ИЗОБЛИЧАВАЊЕ СТВАРНОСТИ У ДРЕВНОЈ ИНДИЈИ: ХИПЕРБОЛА И ИМАГИНАТИВНИ ТРАНСРЕАЛИЗАМ

Игор Грбић

Универзитет Јурја Добриле у Пули, Филозофски факултет, Пула, Хрватска

Резиме

Хипербола, која лако прелази у још неумеренији адинатон, присутна је у целокупној староиндијској литератури, али се у чланку пре свега посматрају њене специфичне варијације и функције у епици. Најочитија је бројчана хипербола, примерице у множини војске, али је поред квантитативне сасвим уобичајена и квалитативна хипербола, примерице у истицању неке физичке или духовне особине. Уместо иритираног одбацивања толиког огрешења о здрав разум и добар укус својственог западној рецепцији те књижевности, далеко је упутније и привидну фактографију третирати као стварну реторику, фигуру која на овај или начин избија слушатеља/читатеља из његовог уобичајеног дефинисања стварног, те га приводи слутњи која се у Индији одвајкада узима као чињеница: овај

је свет, са свом својом тобожњом стварношћу, обичан привид, тек у подлози којег налазимо истинску стварност. Отуд имагинативни трансреализам: снагом имагинације – типичне управо за уметност – продрети на другу страну стварности коју узимамо здраво за готово. У суштини је, дакле, функција индијске хиперболе метафизичка. То не значи да она мора увек ићи тако далеко. У примерима који се у чланку разматрају, узетим из „Махабхарате“, хипербола свакако кроз своја изобличавања има улогу да истакне и сву драматичност великог рата описаног у том епу: хипербола постаје симптом уласка у ново, мрачније доба, обележеног управо битком на Курукшетри. Западни израз хипербола заиста тек врло делимично покрива atiśayokti, главни кореспондирајући санскритски израз. Овај означава сваковрсно очуђавање и уопште свако карикирање или другачије деформисање стварности каква, верујемо тако, јесте. Кључна разлика у односу на Запад лежи у приступу свету, а онда и у сензибилитету кроз који се тај приступ артикулише, па тако и староиндијску поетику не треба посматрати као аберацију од претпостављеног јединог исправног естетског становишта, него као дотеран израз управо таквог другачијег приступа и сензибилитета. Поштеђени хиперболе нису у староиндијској литератури чак ни паратекстуални делови, па ни техничка, научна, правна дела – дакле управо она код којих Запад објективну егзактност и одсутност било какве субјективности сматра нечим неупитним. У класичној Индији, међутим, свет никада није већ створен, него се увек тек ствара у чину слушања/читања, а снагом боголике имагинације. Овде промовисаном изразу имагинативни трансреализам увелико одговара израз метапоезија мађарског аутора Беле Хамваша.