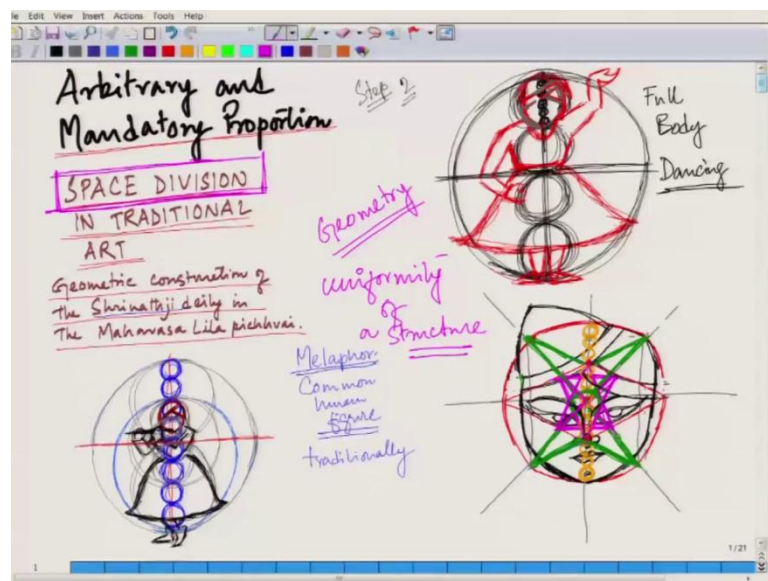


Elements of Visual Representation
Prof. Shatarupa Thakurta Roy
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences
Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur

Lecture – 23

In visual expression, some proportional norms are absolutely compulsory. As we went by the cultural norms, the kind of canons or rules that are set in a particular tradition that had to be maintained throughout. But in modern expression, we are taking the freedom and with our realization of the proportional functioning, we are taking our freedom to change the proportion and put them in different orders to support our expression. So, it totally depends on how we aim to express and the expression then follows the pattern; that is either arbitrary or mandatory. By the mandatory rules are limited now in today's culture.

(Refer Slide Time: 01:02)



Let us realize the mandatory proportion as a norm for traditional paintings. Now, let us see the norms of space division in a traditional art, when we see the art, we may not realize, how the space in that particular artwork is divided and how the rule is being maintained throughout. So, let us take the geometric construction of Shrinathji deity in the Nathdwara temple in their Maharas Lila pichwai. And try to understand, how the construction of composition play a very vital role in the style of this painting.

So, what they do in the step 1, they divide a space into 2 halves with a horizontal and vertical division, they divide this space into an upper half and a lower half and then a circle is created. In the next step, they create another two circles, and then they consider another circle to have another two circles within them. So, that divides the whole composition into many circles, which are interrelated. You create another circle in between and another small circle inside that, they are all constructed in relation to another circle; that finally operates the whole composition detail.

Now, when the artist puts a figure which is the main character of the whole narrative, they place that right there and the whole measurement of the figure, the body gets operated through all this circles, I will show you how. So, finally, you end up getting a body proportion, which has 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 heads and the idol of Shrinathji in the temple does not follow a 8 head body proportion, unlike the common human being.

In Indian art the idols must go by a metaphor and they should not resemble common human figure traditionally. So, they place the figure of the idol somewhere at the centre, where his face does not touch any of these heads. So, we get to see the face of the idol placed somewhere here and rest of the body follows a proportion, which is very unique. The deity plays the flute that he holds with his hand and rest of the figure follows the proportion as the deity wears a flurry skirt and stands in a crossed leg position to be more mathematical and logical, we place the figure in another order for analysis.

So, there step 2 of our analysis will show us another simplistic feature to decode the formation, which is we have a larger circle and we may divide the space into 4 halves. So, in this case, the head will occupy, the upper body, you can put the face to fit this circle, the neck will come down here, the shoulder, the torso, the skirt, the turban. So, now, we can remove the parts that are not needed and get the figure.

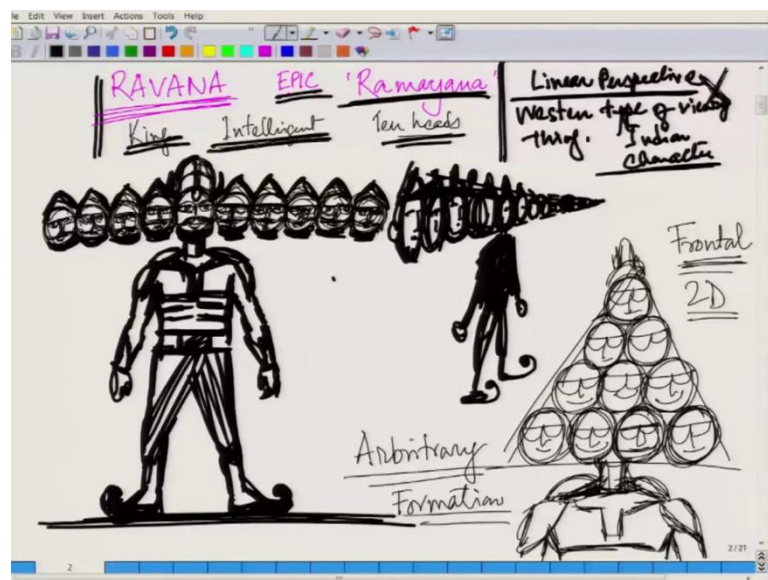
Now, this whole head is a combination of many heads ideally they fit 6 heads 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6. And then they divide the whole face into different halves, I will show you in detail, how that takes place. So, this is the full body in a dancing gesture, and then let us concentrate on the face part. So, this is a very rough and comprehensive drawing of the space division and these are the basic rule that operates the geometry.

And thus, they continue with the uniformity and then with this knowledge, we will also try to see, how to be creative and unfollow the mandatory norms, straightaway get down

to something which is more innovative and arbitrary. So, what is that arbitrariness, even the mandatory proportions are following some norms that has a logic; that is connected to the metaphorical aspects and there set rules.

So, no logic and justify the norms of creativity, we do not know where it comes from, but a person with some humor with some intelligence and also the reactivity, the responsiveness, that they have with his surrounding or with his society and people. They may react in many different ways and that way the artists, they are free to use their artistic freedom and operate with proportional norms as per their wish. So, let us try and see, how it can happen with a small example, a very arbitrary example of our choice.

(Refer Slide Time: 11:42)



So, let us pick up a character Ravana from the Indian mythology; that is the Indian epic named Ramayana. So, Ravana is a demon, who has 10 heads. Now, none of us has seen Ravana, but we know that he is an intelligent person; that is his nature; he is a king, that is his status. And also his physical structure is described to some uniqueness that makes him different from other people and he gets his demon status, because of his 10 heads.

Now, we see from different references that he has a central head and 9 more heads. So, we imagine, we assume that those 9 heads are spreaded at both the sides like 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 1, 2, 3, 4 and the 5th head; that is the main head. So, we have this 4 plus 5 plus 1, 10 heads for Ravana. So, this is how the character is sketched out. Now, for the sake of composition, if we want to show Ravana in linear perspective, which we discussed

earlier in our lectures; that is a very, very western type of viewing things and Ravana is quite an Indian character.

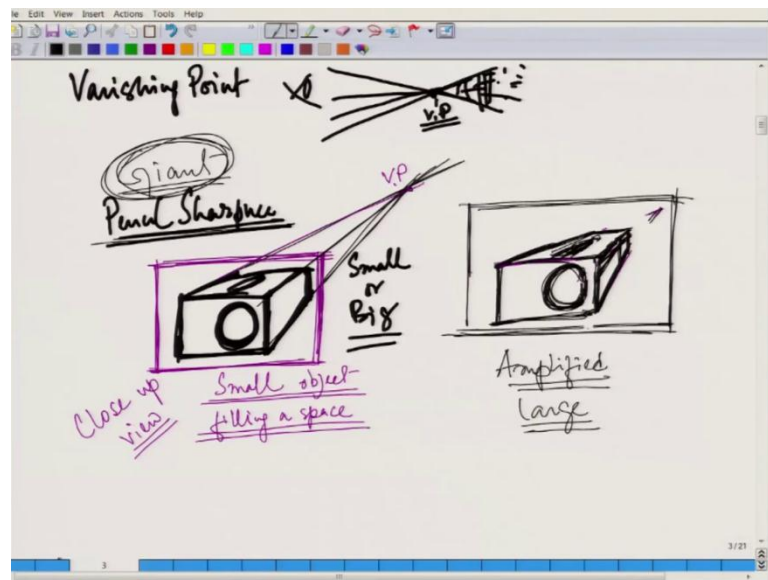
So, we may not want a western look in Ravana. So, when we put the 10 heads in perspective, in linear perspective, it will appear something like this. Now, the design problem indicates, he is a king, he is intelligent, he is from the Indian epic Ramayana, he has 10 heads and we need to maintain each one of them. So, you cannot afford to become ignorant of his Indian identity.

So, how to place that he is from a place which is the present Srilanka. So, he must have an Indian look. So, to be creative, we can think of a different space division, which is not following the mandatory mythological norms of Indian art. But, in a modern context, we can place the heads in a much economic way. So, we are going to place the heads in a paramedical order and we can do a lot of space economy through it.

So, if you feel he was intelligent, this is an intelligent and innovative way to place the heads. So, that is perhaps an arbitrary formation, you divide the space make it frontal, you do not follow the European renaissance norm of linear perspective. We totally reject it; we make it frontal, two dimensional with a different arrangement. So, that is all about, what is mandatory and what is arbitrary.

So, in the previous topics about, how to decide a proportion, how to work on different scaling, we did not talk about a single thing, we talked about the relativity factors. But, what if we are drawing a single object and we do not have another object to indicate, whether the object is large or small as compared to the other object, what we will do there. So, we can follow the same rule of vanishing point and that is generated from the linear perspective and we will see how a single object may look big or small.

(Refer Slide Time: 18:42)



So, let us come back to the topic of vanishing point once again, a point where everything resides and by the convergence, it all ends into a small point and after this point everything gets disappeared. So, we do not get to see the appearance of any object beyond this particular point, which is known as the vanishing point and we know it. Now, if we have a single object placed here, maybe this is something as small as a small pencil sharpener, we draw it this big.

Now, we do not know whether it is small or big, we have a vanishing point in the same drawing that is placed somewhere here, if we extend these two lines, which are not parallel, when they all meet there. So, the vanishing point for this drawing is somewhere which is not very far from the page. But, if we want to join giant pencil sharpener or any other object in the similar category, maybe an eraser or a duster or just a box or anything else in the same category, we can also show that.

So, if our paper size is this big and we try to place the vanishing point within the paper, unlike here, if we take another example and we feel that the paper was this big. And the vanishing point was placed somewhere far of much outside the paper, the scale will come down, the physical appearance for the same object will look reduced. So, this will look like a small object which is filling a space.

So, this is basically a closer view and that does not necessarily tell you that. this is a very large object. So, we can keep it small by placing the vanishing point far off. Whereas, if

we place the vanishing point somewhere in the picture and draw the object in reference to that. The amount of foreshortening will be heightened which will be rather amplified and it will appear to be much larger.

So, if you want to take one object and call it a giant object, we need to operate the vanishing points accordingly. With that in our next lecture, we are going to talk about another very important aspect, which is neither mandatory nor arbitrary. But, creating a space which is of our own, it may come from dream, it may also come from imagination, but this is a space which we may experience, but we cannot access physically. So, let us talk about those visual paradox and let us also discuss the way to represent them on a physical space.