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## Political Metaphors in the *Mahākāvya*: The Conceptual Metaphor THE STATE IS THE HUMAN BODY in Māgha's *Śiśupālavadha*

SUMMARY: Politics is one of the subjects most frequently dealt with in Classical Sanskrit literature (*kāvya*), which, naturally, reflects, in its own specific manner, the most important aspects of the reality of life in its predominantly courtly milieu. In Sanskrit court epic poems (*mahākāvya*, *sargabandha*), stanzas concerning politics figure prominently especially in descriptions of rulers and their activities (rituals, military campaigns, etc.), as well as in speeches of characters taking part in the scenes of councils (*mantra*) and the dispatch or reception of envoys (*dūta*), which are all typical elements of the genre. The present paper employs the methods of cognitive linguistics, which have proven to be highly applicable in literary criticism, including the analysis of Vedic texts and Aśvaghōṣa's *Saundarananda*, as well as in research into politics and social issues, to examine in detail the conceptual metaphor THE STATE IS THE HUMAN BODY in the relevant passages of Māgha's *Śiśupālavadha*.

KEYWORDS: metaphor, the state, the human body, Māgha, *Śiśupālavadha*.

### 1. Introduction

Politics is one of the subjects most frequently dealt with in Classical Sanskrit literature (*kāvya*), which, naturally, reflects, in its own specific manner, the most important aspects of the reality of life in its predominantly courtly milieu.

In Sanskrit court epic poems (*mahākāvya*, *sargabandha*), stanzas concerning politics figure prominently especially in descriptions of

rulers and their activities (rituals, military campaigns, etc.), as well as in speeches of characters taking part in the scenes of councils (*mantra*) and the dispatch or reception of envoys (*dūta*), which are all typical elements of the genre.

These interesting passages have been studied before, with different aims and by different methods: see, for example, Smith 1985: 55–102, 150–178; Rusanov 2002: 62–99; Peterson 2003: 47–87; Sudyka 2004: 195–230.

In my current research, I search for and examine in detail political metaphors in the relevant cantos (*sarga*) of four Sanskrit *mahākāvyas*, namely Kālidāsa's *Raghuvamśa* (5<sup>th</sup> century AD),<sup>1</sup> Bhāravi's *Kirāt-ārjunīya* (6<sup>th</sup> century AD),<sup>2</sup> Bhaṭṭi's *Rāvaṇavadha* (7<sup>th</sup> century AD)<sup>3</sup> and Māgha's *Śiśupālavadha* (7<sup>th</sup> century AD),<sup>4</sup> by the methods of cognitive linguistics, introduced by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson in their now classic book *Metaphors We Live By* (Lakoff and Johnson 1980) and developed further by Mark Turner, Zoltán Kövecses and many others. These tools have already proven to be highly applicable in literary criticism, including the analysis of Vedic texts (see Jurewicz 2010) and Aśvaghōṣa's *Saundarananda* (see Covill 2009), as well as in research into politics and social issues. In January 2012, during the 15<sup>th</sup> World Sanskrit Conference, organized by the International Association of Sanskrit Studies and the Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan in New Delhi, I presented a paper on *Amaruśataka* 2, to be published as Trynkowska forthcoming, in which I employed these methods in a metaphorical reading of this complex *muktaka*. Since they seem to have served me well in my interpretation of the poem, I have decided to put them to the test in my current research as well.

As I wrote in the above-mentioned paper on *Amaruśataka*,<sup>2</sup> 'In brief, in the cognitive linguists' view, a metaphor is a mental process, in which certain aspects of one *conceptual domain* (as any coherent

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<sup>1</sup> According to Warder 1990: 123.

<sup>2</sup> According to Warder 1990: 199.

<sup>3</sup> According to Warder 1983: 118.

<sup>4</sup> According to Warder 1983: 133.

organization of knowledge is called), usually more abstract and elusive, referred to as *target domain*, are comprehended in terms of certain aspects of another conceptual domain, usually more concrete and better known, referred to as *source domain*; to be more precise, a metaphor consists in a set of correspondences, referred to as *mappings*, between the constituent elements of a source domain and the constituent elements of a target domain. Many metaphors also map our additional extensive and detailed knowledge about source domains onto target domains; such mappings are referred to as *metaphorical entailments*. These *conceptual metaphors*, as they are called, manifest themselves in *metaphorical linguistic expressions*. Some conceptual metaphors seem to be universal; others are culture-specific.<sup>5</sup>

Poets employ the same conceptual metaphors in their works as ordinary people do in their everyday life, but they use them differently by extending them, elaborating them, questioning them and combining them, as first demonstrated by George Lakoff and Mark Turner in another now classic book worth mentioning here, namely *More Than Cool Reason* (Lakoff and Turner 1989).<sup>6</sup>

For the purposes of my current research, it is also important that some conceptual metaphors constitute *metaphor systems*. In one of such systems, possibly universal, identified by George Lakoff and Mark Turner (Lakoff and Turner 1989) and called the Great Chain of Being Metaphor System, there is a hierarchy of entities, with their attributes and behaviour, and entities belonging to one level of the hierarchy are conceptualized in terms of entities belonging to another level; entities higher in the hierarchy are usually conceptualized in terms of entities lower in the hierarchy, but the opposite is also possible.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Based on Kövecses 2002: vii–xi, 3–13 and 93–105.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Kövecses 2002: 43–55; Kövecses 2007b: 100–101, and especially Kövecses 2007b: 259–264, where another creative cognitive process, namely the negation or cancelling of common conceptual metaphors, is pointed out.

<sup>7</sup> Based on Lakoff and Turner 1989: 160–213 and Kövecses 2002: 121–141; see also Turner 1996: 136–139.

The so-called Basic Great Chain of Being consists of:

- humans, with their higher-order attributes and higher-order behaviour (e.g. rational thought, character);
- animals, with their instinctual attributes and instinctual behaviour;
- plants, with their biological attributes and biological behaviour;
- complex objects, with their structural attributes and functional behaviour;
- natural physical things, with their natural physical attributes and natural physical behaviour.<sup>8</sup>

The so-called Extended Great Chain of Being consists of:

- cosmos / universe;
- society;
- humans;
- animals;
- etc.<sup>9</sup>

Zoltán Kövecses suggests that at the level above humans, society should be replaced by *abstract complex systems*, with society as one of their categories. He employs this term to refer to abstract complex configurations of entities, involving humans and their ideas, such as the mind, theories, scientific disciplines, worldviews, relationships, the family, careers, society, social organizations, political systems, political parties, the government, legal systems, economic systems, industry, companies, etc. His research shows that in the mind of the present-day speakers of English, abstract complex systems are largely understood via four conceptual metaphors:

- AN ABSTRACT COMPLEX SYSTEM IS THE HUMAN BODY (which focuses on the structure and condition of the abstract complex system—is it in an appropriate condition?);<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Based on Lakoff and Turner 1989: 170–171; cf. Kövecses 2002: 126–127; see also Turner 1996: 137.

<sup>9</sup> Based on Lakoff and Turner 1989: 204–213; cf. Kövecses 2002: 128.

<sup>10</sup> The examples of this metaphor given by Kövecses include: ‘[...] the world governing *body* in athletics [...]’

- AN ABSTRACT COMPLEX SYSTEM IS A PLANT (which focuses on the development of the abstract complex system—does it develop as it should?);
- AN ABSTRACT COMPLEX SYSTEM IS A BUILDING (which focuses on the structure and stability of the abstract complex system—is it well-structured? is it long-lasting and stable?);
- AN ABSTRACT COMPLEX SYSTEM IS A MACHINE (which focuses on the function of the abstract complex system—does it function effectively?).<sup>11</sup>

My study of the passages concerning politics in the relevant cantos of Kālidāsa's *Raghuvamśa*, Bhāravi's *Kirātārjunīya*, Bhaṭṭi's *Rāvaṇavadha* and Māgha's *Śiśupālavadha* by the above-mentioned methods has identified, among others, several conceptual metaphors for the state clearly underlying the texts, some of them with source domains identical with, or similar to, those pointed out by Kövecses.

In the present paper, I will deal with one such conceptual metaphor, namely THE STATE IS THE HUMAN BODY. I have not found any instances of this metaphor in the relevant *sargas* of the *Raghuvamśa*, *Kirātārjunīya* or *Rāvaṇavadha*. However, it appears prominently in the *Śiśupālavadha*. I will discuss here in detail its most important occurrences in Māgha's poem.

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'[...] at the very *heart* of our culture [...]'

'The tour is the first visit to the country by a Jewish *head* of state.'

'Women are the church's *backbone* but rarely hold any positions of leadership.'

'Politicians are being blamed for all the *ills* of society.'

'Observers here believe that the greatest difficulty before him is the *ailing* economy of the country.'

'The *crippling disease* of state involvement in industry through nationalisation has not been *cured*.'

(Kövecses 2002: 129–130).

<sup>11</sup> Based on Kövecses 2002: 98–101 and 127–134; see also Kövecses 2007a: 97–103; Kövecses 2007b: 202–204 and 209–217.

## 2. The conceptual metaphor THE STATE IS THE HUMAN BODY in Māgha's *Śiśupālavadhā*

The concrete and clearly delineated conceptual domain of the human body, with its biological part-whole structure and its aspects of health and illness, which we know well (or which we at least think we know well), is universally one of the most common source domains, drawn on to comprehend a variety of target domains, including abstract complex systems. The body parts of animals also frequently constitute source domains.<sup>12</sup>

In Indian culture, the conceptual metaphor AN ABSTRACT COMPLEX SYSTEM IS THE (HUMAN) BODY is deeply entrenched. In Sanskrit, it manifests itself, for example, in the well-conventionalized metaphorical meaning of the word *aṅga* 'a limb of the body', but also 'a subordinate division or department, especially of a science, as the six Vedāṅgas; [...] any subdivision' (Monier-Williams 2002: 7). In the political context, for example, the five elements of counsel (*mantra*) are referred to as the five *aṅgas*.<sup>13</sup>

The conceptual metaphor THE STATE IS THE BODY can be discerned in the *Arthaśāstra*; it clearly underlies the following stanza:

*nāsya guhyaṃ pare vidyūś chidraṃ vidyāt parasya ca /  
gūhet kūrma ivāṅgāni yat syād vivṛtam ātmanaḥ // AŚ 1.15.60*

'The enemies should not come to know of his secret; he should, however, find out the weaknesses of the enemy. He should conceal, as a tortoise does his limbs, any (limb) of his own that may have become exposed.'  
(Trans. Kangle 2000a: 36).

<sup>12</sup> On the metaphorical utilization of the conceptual domains of the human body, health, illness and animals, see Kövecses 2002: 16–17.

<sup>13</sup> See, for example, AŚ 1.15.42; trans. Kangle 2000a: 35.

The stanza makes use of the common *conceptual metonymy*<sup>14</sup> CONTROLLER FOR CONTROLLED:<sup>15</sup> as frequently happens in the *Arthaśāstra*,<sup>16</sup> ‘he’, i.e. ‘the king’, stands here for ‘the state’. In the second verse, the state is conceived of, at a more general level, in terms of the body; the biological part-whole structure of the body is mapped onto the abstract functional structure of the state. At a more specific level, the state is conceptualized here in terms of an animal, namely a tortoise; the instinctual behaviour of a tortoise, a reclusive animal which withdraws its soft limbs into its hard shell for protection from predators, is mapped onto the rational foreign policy of the state, which conceals information concerning its functional elements, and especially the weaknesses of its functional elements, for protection from external political enemies. Additionally, our knowledge of the longevity of tortoises maps onto the stability of the state which adopts the policy of close concealment.

In Māgha’s *Śiśupālavadha* (*The Slaying of Śiśupāla*), one of the best and most famous Sanskrit *mahākāvyas*, based on an episode of the *Sabhāparvan* of the *Mahābhārata* (MBh 2.30–42; trans. van Buitenen 1975: 86–106), the conceptual metaphor THE STATE IS THE HUMAN BODY appears mainly in *sarga* 2, where the hero Kṛṣṇa, who has been asked by Indra to kill the evil Śiśupāla, mighty King of the Cedis, takes counsel with his elder relations Balarāma and Uddhava to decide on a course of action against the villain. One more occurrence of this metaphor is found in *sarga* 14, which describes Yudhiṣṭhira’s *rājasūya* sacrifice. All the stanzas of the *Śiśupālavadha*

<sup>14</sup> “This is a cognitive process in which one conceptual entity, the vehicle, provides mental access to another conceptual entity, the target, within the same conceptual domain” (Kövecses 2002: 248). For more on conceptual metonymy, see Kövecses 2002: 143–162; cf. Lakoff and Johnson 2003: 35–40; Lakoff and Turner 1989: 100–104; Radden and Kövecses 1999.

<sup>15</sup> See Lakoff and Johnson 2003: 38; Radden and Kövecses 1999: 40; Kövecses 2002: 144 and 155.

<sup>16</sup> See Kangle 2000b: 128.

in which the metaphor can be seen follow the *Arthaśāstra* in making use of the conceptual metonymy THE KING FOR THE STATE.

In ŚV 2.82, Māgha elaborates on the conceptual metaphor THE ABSTRACT FUNCTIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE STATE IS THE BIOLOGICAL STRUCTURE OF THE HUMAN BODY by specifying the parts of the human body in the source domain (the eyes, the mouth and the limbs) and the corresponding functional elements of the state in the target domain (spies, envoys and the *prakṛtis*, i.e. the constituents of the state).<sup>17</sup> He also extends the metaphor by additionally mapping an armour and a weapon worn on the body onto the state's policy of close concealment and its intellectual potential:

*buddhiśāstrāḥ prakṛtyaṅgo ghanasaṃvṛtikañcukāḥ /  
cāreḥkṣaṇo dūtāmukhāḥ puruṣaḥ ko 'pi pāṛthivāḥ // ŚV 2.82*

The king is a special kind of man: with spies as his eyes, with envoys as his mouth, with the constituents of the state as his limbs, with close concealment as his armour, with intellect as his weapon.<sup>18</sup>

However, in the majority of the stanzas of the *Śiśupālavadhā* which make use of the conceptual metaphor THE STATE IS THE HUMAN BODY, it is the condition of the state that is brought into focus.

In ŚV 2.93, the appropriate condition of the state is conceived of in terms of the appropriate condition of the body:

*ṣāḍguṇyam upayujjīta śaktyapekṣo rasāyanam /  
bhavanty asyaivam aṅgāni sthāsnūni balavanti ca // ŚV 2.93*

[A ruler] with power in view should use the elixir of the six measures of foreign policy;  
his limbs will thus become firm and strong.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Namely the king (*svāmin*), the ministers (*amātya*), the country (*jana-pada*), the fortified cities (*durga*), the treasury (*kośa*), the army (*daṇḍa*) and the allies (*mitra*). See AŚ 6.1.1; trans. Kangle 2000a: 314. See also Kangle 2000b: 127–128.

<sup>18</sup> All translations from ŚV are mine. Cf. Hultzsch 1926: 19.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Hultzsch 1926: 20.

The physical firmness and strength of the limbs of the human body are mapped here onto the political stability and power of the functional elements of the state. The means of achieving the bodily health, namely the miraculous *elixir vitae* (*rasāyana*),<sup>20</sup> believed to prevent old age and prolong life, maps onto the rational sixfold foreign policy of the state (*śāḍḡuṇya*),<sup>21</sup> which, as we can now understand, is the means of achieving the state's welfare, prevents its decay and prolongs its existence.

The conceptual metaphor THE APPROPRIATE CONDITION OF THE STATE IS THE APPROPRIATE CONDITION OF THE HUMAN BODY also appears in ŚV 2.10, where another mapping can be seen as well:

*uttiṣṭhamānas tu paro nopekṣyaḥ pathyam icchatā /  
samau hi śiṣṭair āmnātau vartsyantāv āmayaḥ sa ca // ŚV 2.10*

[A ruler] who wishes for well-being should not ignore a rising enemy;  
for the learned teach that he will continue to grow stronger, like a disease.<sup>22</sup>

Political enemies, who can be the cause of an inappropriate condition of the state, are conceptualized here in terms of diseases, which can be the cause of an inappropriate condition of the human body. If one wishes for well-being (i.e. health in the case of the body or welfare in the case of the state), neither any disease, nor any enemy should be ignored, no matter how insignificant they may initially seem, as both diseases and enemies, when left unattended, tend to grow stronger and become more dangerous (and harder to cure or defeat) over time.

<sup>20</sup> On *rasāyana*, see Monier-Williams 2002: 870; Filliozat 1964: 12; Jolly 1951: 19 and 42; Wujastyk 2001: 201 and 209.

<sup>21</sup> The six measures of foreign policy are: peace (*saṃdhi*), war (*vigraha*), staying quiet (*āsana*), marching (*yāna*), seeking shelter (*saṃśraya*) and resorting to peace with one and war with another (*dvaiddhībhāva*). See AŚ 7.1.2; trans. Kangle 2000a: 321. For more information on the sixfold foreign policy, see the whole AŚ 7; trans. Kangle 2000a: 321–384; see also Kangle 2000b: 251–255.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Hultzsich 1926: 12.

Māgha elaborates on the conceptual metaphor POLITICAL ENEMIES ARE DISEASES in ŚV 2.96, where a major and not easily defeatable enemy is conceived of in terms of a specific major and not easily curable disease, namely consumption (*rājayakṣman*),<sup>23</sup> while his allies are conceptualized in terms of minor diseases accompanying consumption. Uddhava warns Kṛṣṇa:

*mā vedi yad asāv eko jetavyaś cedirād iti /  
rājayakṣmeva rogānām samūhaḥ sa mahībhṛtām // ŚV 2.96*

Do not believe that King of the Cedis is alone and therefore easy to defeat; just as consumption is accompanied by a multitude of other diseases, so he is followed by a host of other kings.<sup>24</sup>

ŚV 2.94 spells out the possible dire consequences of a conflict with a more powerful political enemy:

*sthāne śamavatām śaktyā vyāyāme vṛddhir aṅginām /  
ayathābalaṃ ārambho nidānaṃ kṣayasampadaḥ // ŚV 2.94*

Rulers who make peace and wage war according to their ability and in the right place at the right time, grow stronger, as do men who rest and exercise according to their ability and in the right place at the right time; an effort beyond one's ability is the cause of total destruction / consumption.<sup>25</sup>

The stanza makes use of the conceptual metaphor AN INAPPROPRIATE CONDITION OF THE STATE IS AN INAPPROPRIATE CONDITION OF THE HUMAN BODY: the final disintegration of the state politically and economically enfeebled by its excessive war effort is here conceived of in terms of the death of a person bodily enfeebled by his excessive physical effort

<sup>23</sup> On *rājayakṣman*, see Filliozat 1964: 100–105 and Jolly 1951: 129–131.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Hultzsich 1926: 21.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Hultzsich 1926: 21.

and, consequently, ravaged by consumption.<sup>26</sup> (Thus, precisely speaking, the state is here conceptualized in terms of a person, i.e. a human, and not the human body; still, the metaphor focuses on the body of the human and its condition, and not on the human's higher-order attributes and behaviour). A balanced foreign policy, taking into account the state's own power and external circumstances, which is thus recommended, is understood in terms of a balanced healthy lifestyle.

A healthy lifestyle is also mapped onto a good policy in ŚV 14.13. In an earlier stanza, Yudhiṣṭhira points out that it is thanks to Kṛṣṇa, who is the lord of the universe, that he has achieved sovereignty over the whole of Bhāratavarṣa (ŚV 14.5; trans. Hultzsich 1926: 141). Kṛṣṇa politely disagrees:

*sāditākhilanṛpaṇ mahan mahaḥ saṃprati svanayasampadaiva te /  
kiṃ parasya sa gunaḥ samaśnute pathyavṛttir api yady arogitām // ŚV 14.13*

It is thanks to the excellence of your own policy that you have now subjugated all the other kings and attained great might;  
if a man who leads a healthy lifestyle becomes free from diseases, does someone else deserve the credit?<sup>27</sup>

When a man's healthy lifestyle is enough to get rid of all diseases and gain strength, a competent physician is not needed, and neither is a powerful protector when the state's own wise policy is enough to subjugate all enemies and obtain supremacy.

Summing up, in the *Śisūpālavadha*, the well-known domains of the human body, health, illness and medicine are utilized for the metaphorical conceptualization of the state and its policy. The conceptual metaphor THE STATE IS THE HUMAN BODY, which clearly underlies Māgha's stanzas concerning politics (and which the poet, naturally, elaborates

<sup>26</sup> On excessive physical effort believed to be one of the causes of consumption, see Filliozat 1964: 103–104 and Jolly 1951: 129–130.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Hultzsich 1926: 142.

on and extends), focuses, it seems, on the structure and condition, but also, I would argue, on the stability of the state, and is characterized by the following set of mappings:

<b>Source: the human body</b>	<b>Target: the state</b>
the biological structure of the body	the abstract functional structure of the state
the parts of the body	the functional elements of the state
the appropriate condition of the body (health, firmness, physical strength)	the appropriate condition of the state (welfare, stability, political power)
an inappropriate condition of the body	an inappropriate condition of the state
the causes of an inappropriate condition of the body (diseases, an unhealthy lifestyle)	the causes of an inappropriate condition of the state (political enemies, a bad policy)
the means of achieving the appropriate condition of the body (a healthy lifestyle, medical treatment)	the means of achieving the appropriate condition of the state (a good policy)

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