ABSTRACT

Metaphor as a core concept of literary studies continues to command serious attention. It is pervasive in everyday language and speech which makes it a tool of analysis par excellence. It is this indispensability of metaphor which makes us look at poetry from a different point of view. No more ornamental and a device of adornment, it is the basis of conceptualization. The cognitive view defines metaphor as understanding one conceptual domain in terms of another conceptual domain. The knowledge that one derives from source domain is mapped onto the target domain. This is particularly perceptible in religious poetry where most of the target domains – God, soul, life, death and Self are abstract and need concrete ideas from the source domains to make them explicit. Maharshi Ramana’s poetry is no exception. This particular view brings two postulations to mind:

1. Is knowledge mapped from the image schema of source domain fully compatible with the target domain?
2. Do all the aspects and elements of source domain fully map onto target domain or is this mapping partial?

The present paper tries to find answers to these questions in Maharshi Ramana’s poetry in view of the invariance principle in metaphor. The analytical framework is based on George Lakoff views in “Contemporary Theory of Metaphor” (1993), Zoltán Kövecses’s discussion in Metaphor: A Practical Introduction (2010) and Olaf Jaekel’s summary of tenets of cognitive view in “Hypotheses Revisited: The Cognitive Theory of Metaphor Applied to Religious Texts” (2002).

Key words: Invariance Principle, Metaphor, Maharshi Ramana, Poetry

INTRODUCTION

Metaphor is a core concept of literary studies as well as everyday language. Hence, it continues to command serious attention as can be seen from the voluminous work appearing on the subject. It is an acceptable proposition that metaphor has taken strides into many fields other than literature. However, its pervasiveness and ubiquity in our daily communication is so common that we often fail to notice it. “The processes of metaphors are everywhere at work in language”, to borrow the words from David Punter (1977: 3). Metaphors have become an integral part of communication. Religious poetry also abounds in metaphors as the abstract concepts in this kind of poetry fail to unfold their meanings without metaphors. Metaphors step into the journey of literal to literary mode of language. They are partial if not full equivalents to abstract ideas beyond expression. How much this mapping of elements from source domain is utilized by the target domain? How much knowledge is actually compatible between the source and target domains? How many aspects of this kind of transference are invariant? These are the questions dealt with in the purview of invariance principle in Maharshi Ramana’s poetry. The paper first defines invariance principle, applies its main precepts to Maharshi Ramana’s poetry and tries to reach a conclusion as to how successfully the invariance
principle works in religious texts particularly Maharshi Ramana.
The cognitive view of metaphor defines metaphor by its two aspects: source and target domains. The domain which supplies knowledge is source and the domain on which the knowledge is applied is target. The concrete source domain maps its elements of knowledge onto abstract target domains to make the ideas clear. It is, however, questionable whether all the elements of a source domain can be applied to the target domain. The full compatibility between both source and target domains is somewhat impossible. Generally speaking, only some of the elements of source are eligible for the mapping onto the target as the image structure of the target domain absorbs only that much knowledge from source domain which fits into the images compatible and well matched with target. An example from Maharshi Ramana would make it clear. Religious poetry in India makes use of ‘fruit’ as a very common source domain. So is the case in Maharshi Ramana’s poetry. Fruit has many elements which act as source domain –ripe, raw or rotten. The following example explains the invariance principle. Maharshi in his poem “The Marital Garland of Letters” says:

I am not a fruit which is overripe and spoilt draw, me, then into the inmost recess and fix me into eternity. (The Collected Works: 89)

How much knowledge from the source domain of fruit can be mapped onto the target of human mind which is ready to embrace God? Of course the ripe fruit which is neither overripe nor rotten. Maharshi Ramana’s poetry generally makes use of this source domain of fruit for the maturity of human soul. The other metaphors related with invariance principle have been discussed in Maharshi’s poetry later in the paper.

The Invariance Principle
Lakoff defines invariance principle as: Metaphorical mappings preserve the cognitive topology (that is, the image-schema structure) of the source domain, in a way consistent with the inherent structure of the target domain. (Lakoff: 215)

The Invariance principle is one of the main tenets of cognitive view of metaphor. The other important tenets are Unidirectionality, Necessity, Creativity, Domain, Focus, Ubiquity, Diachrony and Model. The invariance principle forms the basic analytical framework for analysis of Maharshi Ramana’s poetry in the present paper.

The invariance principle claims that only some of the aspects of source domain map onto the target domain as the image-schematic structure of the target does not require the use of all aspects of source domain. So there are no fixed correspondences between these two domains. If the source domain tries to map the elements not required by target domain, the target may block or resist this arrangement. This type of transference needs only those aspects which are coherent with the knowledge mapped from the source domain. Metaphors in Maharshi’s poetry are not one to one equivalent of the source and target domains as life’s intricacies cannot be reduced to such simple structures. Here metaphor goes further and challenges the notions of fixed resemblances and similarities and unfolds the drama of human existence in a significant way.

There is an inherent image structure in the target domain which goes well with some elements of source domain. Paul Ricoeur refutes the view that the theory of resemblance is indissolubly linked to that of substitution in metaphor (1977: 4). Metaphor does not work simply on the principle of resemblance and substitution. It is marked by various processes by cognition. Cognition is the process of mental thinking by which understanding occurs. It includes such aspects like awareness, perception and judgment. These faculties of mind have their role in transferring the knowledge from one domain to the other. When the transference between the two domains of metaphor occurs, a kind of unavoidable tension takes place. Ricoeur recognizes that “the variability of semantic values, their sensitivity to contexts, the irredubibly polysemic character of lexical terms in ordinary language... are permanent and fruitful functioning of ordinary language” (380). Hence they also have a pertinent role to play in metaphors.

The conceptualization of metaphor in human mind is a complex phenomenon and rightly so in Maharshi’s poetry. The spiritual path delineated by him finds an expression in the conceptual metaphors. Maharshi’s poetry works at two levels:
Maharshi’s life, his philosophy and his instructions were so intermingled with one another that his poetry imbibes all of them through metaphors to provide us ways to enter that realm of truth. This realm of truth is not a fleeting brief moment of fancy but an eternal state of consciousness and Bliss which leads us out of “tangled thoughts and vain imaginings” (Osborne: 295). Maharshi’s poetry is sacred as “the poet-saint becomes a recipient, an instrument through which flow utterances of Truth of sublime beauty and purity”. (Osborne, 2000: 225). It is in this background of thematic concerns of Maharshi Ramana that his poetry unfolds metaphors of various types. Maharshi never wrote poetry as a deliberate effort as he was a Saint in search of higher realities of life. Some of his poems came spontaneously to him though he himself wondered what he had to do with poetry. They are profound and emotional poems written about indissoluble union of soul with God. He addressed his first five poems to Sri Arunachala titled Five Hymns to Sri Arunachala. The poems begin with an invocation to God Ganesha. “The Marital Garland of Letters” has a metaphor of marriage, but its significance lies in the symbolic union of soul-bride and God. ‘The Necklet of Nine Gems’ consists of nine stanzas with the same theme. ‘Eleven Verses to Sri Arunachala’, ‘Eight Stanzas to Sri Arunachala’ and ‘Five Stanzas to Sri Arunachala’ are the other poems in the collection. “The Essence of Instruction” is a beautiful poem that teaches a precious lesson of how to conduct life to reach God. “Reality in Forty Verses”, “Five Verses on The Self” and some miscellaneous Poems also form the bulk of his poetry. Some other poems are short and somewhat casual in approach. These poems are valuable and stand out for its excellent metaphorical import. They also have a mysticism which can be captured only through metaphors. They are: “The “Song of Poppodum”, “Self Knowledge”, “Nine Stray Verses”, “The Self in The Heart”. Occasional poems also form a small part of his poetry but do not lack in philosophical import. “On Subramanya”, “Virupaksha Cave”, “Ganesa”, “Dipawali”, “Liberation”, “Silence”, “One Letter”, “Sleep While Awake” and “A Jnani and His Body” are a few of them. Some of the verses are also adaptations and

Maharshi’s Poetry

There is a need to go into some details of Maharshi’s life for the readers who are not familiar with his antecedents. His life-history has a significant role in generating metaphors in his poetry. The journey of Maharshi’s life starts from Tiruchuzi in Tamilnadu, South India. Born on 30th Dec., 1879 in an ordinary middle class family to parents Allagmmal and Sundara, he had a normal childhood. He was not very academically inclined and had no inkling of the future spiritual transformation. However life takes the course as it has to and as it has been predestined. God had other things in store for him. His father died when he was twelve years old. The family had to move to his uncle’s house where he spent a few years without any remarkable incident. After a few years a strange happening changed his life forever. An intense experience which had repercussions on his future changed the course of his life. Despite being perfectly physically healthy, he had an experience of near death. He felt the inert lifeless body and had a feeling that he was about to die. He awakened to the immanent reality of a soul which never dies. He realized the import of what Shri Krishna said in Bhagvad Gita regarding the immortality of soul. The soul is not killed when the body is killed, “na hanyate hanyamāne śarīre” (Bhagavad-Gita: 2.20). Life transcends in the form of soul mingling with God. Another incident also transformed his life. He heard about hill Arunachala from a relative. Arunachala is a sacred place for Hindus in Tiruvannamalai in South India and is famous for Arunachala temple. This call from mountain made him leave his home forever. Both these incidents left an indelible impact on his life.

Maharshi’s Life

Maharshi’s life, his philosophy and his instructions were so intermingled with one another that his poetry imbibes all of them through metaphors to provide us ways to enter that realm of truth. This realm of truth is not a fleeting brief moment of fancy but an eternal state of consciousness and Bliss which leads us out of “tangled thoughts and vain imaginings” (Osborne: 295). Maharshi’s poetry is sacred as “the poet-saint becomes a recipient, an instrument through which flow utterances of Truth of sublime beauty and purity”. (Osborne, 2000: 225). It is in this background of thematic concerns of Maharshi Ramana that his poetry unfolds metaphors of various types. Maharshi never wrote poetry as a deliberate effort as he was a Saint in search of higher realities of life. Some of his poems came spontaneously to him though he himself wondered what he had to do with poetry. They are profound and emotional poems written about indissoluble union of soul with God. He addressed his first five poems to Sri Arunachala titled Five Hymns to Sri Arunachala. The poems begin with an invocation to God Ganesha. “The Marital Garland of Letters” has a metaphor of marriage, but its significance lies in the symbolic union of soul-bride and God. ‘The Necklet of Nine Gems’ consists of nine stanzas with the same theme. ‘Eleven Verses to Sri Arunachala’, ‘Eight Stanzas to Sri Arunachala’ and ‘Five Stanzas to Sri Arunachala’ are the other poems in the collection. “The Essence of Instruction” is a beautiful poem that teaches a precious lesson of how to conduct life to reach God. “Reality in Forty Verses”, “Five Verses on The Self” and some miscellaneous Poems also form the bulk of his poetry. Some other poems are short and somewhat casual in approach. These poems are valuable and stand out for its excellent metaphorical import. They also have a mysticism which can be captured only through metaphors. They are: “The “Song of Poppodum”, “Self Knowledge”, “Nine Stray Verses”, “The Self in The Heart”. Occasional poems also form a small part of his poetry but do not lack in philosophical import. “On Subramanya”, “Virupaksha Cave”, “Ganesa”, “Dipawali”, “Liberation”, “Silence”, “One Letter”, “Sleep While Awake” and “A Jnani and His Body” are a few of them. Some of the verses are also adaptations and
translations of the poetry Maharshi appreciated. For the present paper, only some of the poems from The Collected of Sri Ramana Maharshi (2010) have been taken up for study.

Maharshi’s Philosophy: Being – Consciousness – Bliss

Maharshi’s philosophy is tied to the Self-realization of a constant awareness of identity with \textit{Atman}, which he calls by other names such as Self, Spirit, God and the absolute (The Collected Works XIII). Maharshi realized that being is one and manifested in the world in various forms. It is an all inclusive consciousness of unity with God. Maharshi believed in the doctrine of non-duality \textit{Advaita}. The world is not real as a separate self existing entity. It does not exist for its own sake as a source of activities of body. As long as man thinks himself to be living in the world, it causes bondage in the form of self conceit, nescience, impurity and ego. What is that which makes body conscious? What happens to the body when it dies? The answers to these questions lie in his method of Self-enquiry.

Self-enquiry

The philosophy of Sri Ramana lies in the enquiry into the nature of self, the content of the notion “I”. Normally the sphere of ‘I’ varies because of many factors. We often associate ‘I’ with name, fame or ego. However these factors are not the real ‘I’ as they are extraneous. To believe that one is body, is fallacious. The body undergoes many changes from childhood to old age and finally dies. The circumstances in which the body lives also change. Sometimes they cause happiness and at others they make one sad. Man’s desires lead him to a path of dissatisfaction. Man’s ego, his ignorance and his bloated self-image lead him to an eternal pool of sorrow. The door to happiness lies in the realization of the immanence of soul within God. Man needs to make a constant enquiry into the nature of ‘I’ which is not body but an effulgent awareness. One has to offer the ego in the fire of wisdom and what comes out is consciousness and bliss. It is in this background of Maharshi’s philosophy that invariance principle works in Maharshi’s metaphors.

Invariance Principle in Maharshi’s Metaphors

Invariance principle in Maharshi’s metaphors works on the basis of knowledge mapped from concrete source domain to the abstract target domain. The predominant mood in Maharshi’s metaphor is that of a human soul aspiring to meet God. Both are abstract terms therefore they need something concrete to unfold their meanings. All the examples given below are concrete source and abstract target domains. The examples have been cited from The Collected Works of Sri Ramana Maharshi. (2010), an anthology of poems published by Sriramanasramam.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. No.</th>
<th>Source domain</th>
<th>Aspect used</th>
<th>Target domain</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a)</td>
<td>This hill, the lodestone of lives, arrests the movements of anyone who also much as thinks of it, draws him face to face with it, and fixes him motionless like itself, to feed upon his soul thus ripened. (100)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b)</td>
<td>As snow in water, let me melt as love in thee, who are love itself, Oh Arunachala! (94)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c)</td>
<td>My mind has blossomed, (Then)scent it with thy fragrance and perfect it, Oh Arunachala! (90)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d)</td>
<td>When shall I (become) like the ether and reach Thee, subtle of being, that the tempest of thoughts may and Oh Arunachala? (89)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e)</td>
<td>Not finding the flower open, Thou didst stay, no better than a (frustrated) bee, Oh Arunachala! (87)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f)</td>
<td>Be Thou my stay and my support lest I droop helpless like a tender creeper, Oh Arunachala! (89)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g)</td>
<td>When the pot is carried, the space within the pot, though conceived of as carried, is it not only the pot that is carried. (168)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h)</td>
<td>Better than spells of meditation is one continuous current, Steady as a stream, Or downward flow of oil (110)</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
All the metaphors cited above exemplify that only some aspects are used for target domain from the knowledge extracted from the source domains. A lodestone has a magnetic property to attract iron. This property is invariant. Both the source and target domains are related to each other by this very quality. This particular element cannot be changed or reversed. The second source domain from the category of food is an equivalent of God nourishing only those souls who are mature and spiritually inclined. Ripening is also associated with fruit and has been used for the target domain of soul’s maturity.

Snow acts as a target domain for human soul or mind. The snow melts in water, it is irrefutable. Similarly the human mind which is free from impurity dissolves in God immediately. Snow dissolves only in water. The human soul dissolves only in God. The mapping of source domain on to the target domain is coherent with the image-schema structure and is invariant as it cannot be possible vice-versa.

Plant and its various elements are the common source domains used for religious poetry. It has other elements like seed, branch, twig and bud. Although it means various things at various times, here flowering means the maturity of soul. The devotee requests God to bestow his grace on him as a flower full of fragrance catches the attention of everyone who passes nearby.

Ether has a property of being highly volatile and inflammable. It evaporates very easily. In ancient medieval civilization, this element was believed to be all over in the space, above the Moon and a component of stars and planets. Its omnipresence was its special property. Here both the properties of ether have been used for the eagerness of human soul to be a part of universal consciousness which is God. Tempest again recurs in Maharshi’s poetry which signifies the turbulence of human soul which is struggling hard to be one with God. The storm in the sea has to stop; similarly the upheavals in human minds have to stop to gain a state of permanent peace.

It is quite interesting to note that Maharshi’s poetry displays some metaphors which occur time and again. Flower is one of them. Of course the metaphor has positive connotations. In religious poetry, flower is symbolic of soul’s maturity. The

|   | (i) Lodestone | Magnetic quality | God
|---|---|---|---
|   | (ii) Feed | nutrition | To nourish
|   | (iii) Ripened | Maturing | Soul’s maturity
|   | (i) Snow | melting snow | Human being
|   | (ii) Water | dissolving snow | God
|   | (i) Blossom | blooming of flower | Mind free of worldly entanglements
|   | (ii) Scent | fragrance | grace bestowed by God
|   | (i) Ether | The regions of space beyond earth, therefore all pervading storm | eagerness of human soul to meet God
|   | (ii) Tempest | | mind full of disturbances
|   | (i) Flower | blossoming | mind free of impurities
|   | (ii) Honey bee | sucking flowers | God embracing human beings
|   | (i) creeper | Weak and needs support | support of God
|   | Earthen pot | A container to carry or hold something | Human body needs God’s consciousness
|   | (i) Stream | flowing steadily | Continuous meditation
|   | (ii) Oil | flowing down | Mind turning inward to seek the source of God’s consciousness

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same happens here also. Honeybee sucks only those flowers which are full of sap otherwise the flower would be of no use for bees. God also loves only those human beings who have the essence of desire, maturity and willingness to meet Him. The bee would never sit on a flower which has not bloomed or is dry. The metaphor of creeper however has been used in only in its basic sense which is invariant. A creeper needs support of tree. The pot is a source domain for the target domain of body. In itself, the pot is lifeless. It does not have its own energy. Body also does not have its own energy. It works because of God. Particularly the element of inertness has been made use of for the target domain of body. As this is the only element required from the source. The pot may also be used as a container to hold anything. Body may also be used as a container to hold consciousness from God. Only this much knowledge will be coherent between the two domains, hence invariant.

The ‘current of a stream’ and ‘downward flow of oil’ are two metaphors which suggest the way one should concentrate on ‘I’ thought. The current of a stream flows steadily ; similar is a mind who concentrates on ‘I’ the Self even when one is living in the world. Oil always flows down, similarly a mind flows down and finally finds the source in the form of Self which is self-luminous. This is the ultimate goal of human life and can release man from bondage of miseries. Both the source domains used here indicate that the required elements to be mapped on to the target are restricted. Water has other properties also, for example, it soaks, it splashes and it falls down like rain as they do not go with the given structure of the target. None of these are required here. Oil may burn, may cook food and may be used for lubrication but none of the additional knowledge about oil is required.

Thus, the invariance principle in all the examples cited above takes only required elements from the source domain on to the target domain coherent with the image structure of the target domain. The rest of the elements are not required so their usage is blocked. Some of the elements in the source domain are an inevitable part of the target, therefore they are indispensable. The rest of the elements are not needed so not put into use. For example the bud has no use for honeybee, therefore Maharshi does not make use of the same. Similarly snow, ice, rain and steam are all forms of water. Maharshi however needs only the knowledge required about snow, therefore it makes sense to use snow as it melts in water. The magnetic quality of iron gives it an extra edge to qualify as a tool to attract other things made of iron. The sea may be placid, stormy, surging with waves and a habitat for sea animals and pearls. But Maharshi uses its stormy aspect for the target domain of human mind which is turbulent. The mapping is compatible with the target domain. Maharshi has made use of other aspects of water in the form of steam and sea in other contexts. Here other elements of water will cause an incompatibility as well as an illegitimate transfer and incoherence, therefore bring an awkward and wrong import.

This principle offers a hypothesis that only some aspects of source domain can go with the target domain. How far these aspects go to explain the target domain depends on the particular context. The inherent potentiality of language restricts the use of elements of source. The examples taken from Maharshi’s poetry corroborate the invariance principle that there should neither be any conflict nor any incoherence between the two parts of the domains: the part that tells us what can be mapped from the source and the part that tells us what cannot and why. Only analysis of one example would suffice to prove this. Snow melts in water. Only snow has that element which can bring metaphorical import to the sentence. Steam or rain as elements of water can be used elsewhere for the purpose of clouds forming from water or rain falling down serving as source domains. But this knowledge is not desirable here, so it is blocked. This is what invariance principle does. Zoltán admits that the invariance hypothesis does not offer solutions to all the cases but the above cited cases are a proof that the required knowledge which is compatible with the target would serve the purpose and not otherwise.

Many other examples can be quoted to support this view but the above examples are full proof to confirm the postulations given in the beginning. The abstract concepts of life may be partially mapped by concrete source domains as the intricacies of life are not within the reach of language. Whatever remains
behind can be caught by metaphors. The cognitive view of metaphor successfully reaches the areas where literal language cannot. The invariance principle is only one of the main tenets of conceptual metaphor. So it may explain some of the areas of metaphor’s conceptualization although not all the mysteries of metaphor. The rest of the metaphors may need other explanations.

The paper unfolds the problem by resorting to the view that the conceptual metaphors consist of a set of mappings between a source and a target. Certain aspects of both the domains will be brought into correspondence with each other in such a way that they successfully generate meanings compatible in that particular context. Any additional or extra effort to use other elements would not only be futile but also ruin the whole communication or a piece of literature. Since poetry is fragile and difficult to handle, the invariance principle comes to its rescue by its ability to block the knowledge which is not required.

The invariance principle helps us not only to look afresh at the fixed notions of similarity but also provide insights to look into the crevices and gaps in the theory of one to one resemblance. The invariance principle has its significance not only in daily language but also important in poetry as it is an area which goes beyond literal boundaries to enter the realm of unknown. No identical relationship is possible between ideas and the invariance principle explains those inexplicable boundaries which make poetry what it is.

Works Cited