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Ancient Indian Ritual as a Multimodal Metaphor¹

ABSTRACT

The paper will explore the possibility of understanding an ancient Indian ritual in terms of conceptual metaphor. The conceptual metaphor is a model of thinking according to which we think about complex and often abstract issues in terms of concepts taken from everyday life activities. The concept conceived is called the target domain, whereas the concept which lends its categories is the source domain. Thanks to the conceptual metaphor, the target concept is better understood and expressed. The ritual can be seen as such a metaphor. The target domain is expressed in the cosmogony which explains the need for its performing. It is Prajāpati who manifests himself in the world during the creation. The source domain is realised on various levels. In the cosmogony it is expressed verbally: the activity of Prajāpati is illustrated in various terms referring to everyday activities, such as preparation of food, its eating and digestion. On the ritual level it is achieved through the sacrificer's activity who imitates the activity of the Creator. The target domain, which is the God's activity, makes the ritual activity meaningful and worthwhile. My analysis will be based on *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa* 6.1.3.

KEY WORDS

conceptual metonymy, conceptual metaphor, multimodal metaphor, conceptual blending, ritual, philosophy, the Brāhmaṇas, India

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In this paper I would like to focus on the power of ritual. I do not intend to analyse it as a social or cultural event but from the perspective of an individual who is expected to perform it. I will treat the ritual as a psychological or physiological activity of a human being who, thanks to it, understands the world and her role as the incarnation of the Creator.

In my research, in addition to philology, I have employed the methodology of cognitive linguistics. This is a branch of linguistics which investigates the relationship between verbal and non-verbal signals on the one hand, and thinking and experience on the other. The main question which cognitive linguists aim to answer is how the world takes its meaning.² They postulate that thinking is not independent from experience; quite the opposite, it is embodied, that is to say motivated by experience, both in universal and cultural dimensions.³ The second main assumption of cognitive linguistics is that thinking reveals itself in verbal and non-verbal clues. This is the basis for the next assumption that it is possible to investigate thinking by analysing the signs.

Cognitive linguistics investigates mental operations thanks to which we understand signals. It proposes various models for these operations: conceptual metonymy, conceptual metaphor and conceptual blending.⁴ In my analysis I will refer primarily to the metaphoric model. This is a model of thinking which operates between two concepts (they are called conceptual domains) and enables thinking about one concept in terms of another. The concept which provides categories is called the source domain; the concept which is conceived in terms of those categories is called the target domain. For example, in the Indo-European languages, cognition is conceived in terms of seeing: sight is the source domain, whereas cognition is the target domain.⁵ The conceptual metaphor reflects itself in language so that we can meaningfully say: "I see what you mean" when we understand someone else's thought. Usually, complex concepts are conceived with the aid of var-

² M. Johnson, *The Body in the Mind. The Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagination, and Reason*, Chicago and London 1992.

³ G. Lakoff, *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things. What Categories Reveal about the Mind*, Chicago and London 1987.

⁴ For conceptual metonymy and metaphor cf. G. Lakoff, M. Johnson, *Metaphors we live by*, Chicago 1980; G. Lakoff, M. Turner, *More Than Cool Reason. A Field Guide To Poetic Metaphor*, Chicago 1989. For conceptual blending cf. G. Fauconnier, M. Turner, *The way we think. Conceptual blending and the mind's hidden complexities*, New York 2003.

⁵ E. Sweetser, *From Etymology to Pragmatics. Metaphorical and Cultural Aspects of Semantic Structure*, Cambridge 1990.

ious source domains. Cognition is just such a concept and can also be conceptualised in terms of grasping that it reflected, for example in the sentence: ‘Now, I’ve grasped your point.’

Cognitive linguists divide metaphors into conventional and novel metaphors. Conventional metaphors are stored in the long-term memory (usually unconsciously) and form the basic conceptual net. With their aid, the linguistic community understands the world, themselves and can talk about it. They are activated automatically, effortlessly and unconsciously. As Lakoff and Turner write:

Once we learn a conceptual metaphor, it too is just there, conventionalised, a ready and powerful conceptual tool – automatic, effortless, and largely unconscious. The things most alive in our conceptual system are those things that we use constantly, unconsciously, and automatically.⁶

They also argue that the metaphors have power over us:

Anything that we rely on constantly, unconsciously, and automatically is so much part of us that it cannot be easily resisted, in large measure because it is barely even noticed. To the extent that we use a conceptual schema or a conceptual metaphor, we accept its validity. Consequently, when someone else uses it, we are predisposed to accept its validity. For this reason, conventionalised schemas and metaphors have *persuasive* power over us.⁷

These powers of metaphor are: the power to structure, the power of option, the power of reason, the power of evaluation and the power of being there. Novel metaphors, used by artists or copywriters, are the same mechanisms of everyday thought but are usually extended, elaborated and combined in such a way that they transcend it.⁸

Metaphors can be monomodal and multimodal. In the monomodal metaphor, the source and the target domains are represented in the same mode. Within this mode we can discern the following type of signs: pictorial, written and spoken signals as well as gestures, sounds, music, smells, tastes and touch.⁹ In the multimodal metaphor, the source and target domains are repre-

⁶ G. Lakoff, M. Turner, op. cit., p. 62.

⁷ Ibidem, p. 63.

⁸ Ibidem, p. 6ff.

⁹ Ch. Forceville, *Multimodal Metaphor in Ten Dutch TV Commercials*, “The Public Journal of Semiotics” 2007, Vol. 1 (1), p. 16; *Multimodal Metaphor*, eds. Ch. Forceville, E. Urios-Aparis, The Hague 2009, p. 23.

sented in different modes; for example, most TV advertisements operate *via* visual and verbal signs, sounds and music.¹⁰

What I am arguing is that ritual can be treated as a multimodal metaphor. Viewed as such, the ritual is a conventionalised metaphor, taken for granted by the cultural community. The cognitive interpretation of the ritual allows for better understanding of why it is so powerful and not easily questioned by members of the community. As I have mentioned previously, conceptual metaphors operate unconsciously and hold a persuasive force over us. The conceptual metaphor is already there in our minds before we can even think about it. And this is the case with rituals too. They are similarly deeply entrenched in our minds. What is more, thanks to its multimodality, ritual activity encompasses the human being holistically – not only his psychological but also his physical being.

I will use as an example the ritual of building the fire altar (the *Agnicayana*) described in the *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa* (ŚB).¹¹ It belongs to the Brāhmaṇas, the ancient Indian texts composed c.a. 9th–8th BC. We could call them the manuals of ritual. They explain ritual in two perspectives: procedures and reasons for their performance. The general assumption is that the ritual should be carried out because it repeats the creative activity of the God. This is expressed with aid of various source domains but the one which prevails recruits from the experience connected with being hungry through hard work, looking for food, its preparation, eating, digestion, and finally becoming strong and vigorous.¹²

The Brāhmaṇas assume a monistic vision of reality. The creation of the world is a manifestation of its one aspect. The first act of this manifestation consists of the creation of space for the future world. The Creator then fills the space with himself in a form which is both identical and opposite to

¹⁰ For multimodal metaphor cf. Ch. Forceville, *Non-verbal and multimodal metaphor in a cognitivist framework*, [in:] *Cognitive Linguistics: Current Applications and Future Perspectives*, eds. G. Kristiansen, M. Achard, R. Dirven, F. Ruiz de Mendoza Ibañez, Berlin–New York 2006; idem, *Multimodal Metaphor in Ten Dutch TV Commercials*, op. cit.; *Multimodal Metaphor*, op. cit.; A. Cienki, C. Müller, *Metaphor, gesture, and thought*, [in:] *The Cambridge Handbook of Metaphor and Thought*, ed. R. W. Gibbs, Jr., Cambridge 2008.

¹¹ For a thorough description of the *Agnicayana* cf. J. F. Staal (in collaboration with C. V. Somayajipad and M. Itti Ravi Nambudiri), *Agni: The Vedic Ritual of the Fire Altar*, Vol. 1–2, Berkeley 1983.

¹² Another important source domain is sexual activity, pregnancy and birth-giving.

himself at the same time.¹³ Such a manifestation of the Creator is conceived in terms of fire.¹⁴ It can also be envisaged in terms of the hungry child of the Creator.¹⁵ In many places the manifest part of the Creator is contrived as the Creator himself who toils and heats. The concept of a fire which constantly needs fuel allows the composers of the Brāhmaṇas to express the emptiness of the space for the future world. At the same time, lack of fuel is seen as the reason for the death of the Creator within a manifest aspect. The action which revives the Creator is a sacrifice which is explained in a given cosmogony.

The ritual of building the fire altar (*Agnicayana*) is a long and complex one.¹⁶ It is preceded by a special preparation of the sacrificer who is supposed to fast in an isolated place (this preparation is called *dīkṣa*). The main ceremony consists of building the fire altar of bricks arranged in five layers. When the altar is ready, fire is brought from the domestic hearth and offerings of the Soma plant¹⁷ are made and animal sacrifices are performed. Soma is pressed and then the juice is prepared and poured into the fire, after which the animals are cooked. These oblations are the gods' food. The priests drink and eat their remains.

I will firstly discuss the cosmogony which explains the ritual of *Agnicayana*. I will show that the main source domain used in the conceptualisation of creation is the domain of the preparation of food, cooking, eating and digestion; more often than not, only cooking is explicitly mentioned.¹⁸ Then I will show that the sacrificer was supposed to fulfil this complex domain in a ritual. Finally I will discuss the multimodality of the ritual of *Agnicayana*.

¹³ A similar cosmogonic concept is *cimcum* created by Isaac Luria. G. Scholem, *Mistycyzm żydowski i jego główne kierunki (Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism)*, Warszawa 1997.

¹⁴ Cf. e.g. ŚB 2.2.4.

¹⁵ Cf. e.g. ŚB 2.5.1.

¹⁶ P. V. Kane, *History of Dharmasāstra. Ancient and Medieval Religious and Civil Law in India*, Pune 2006 (first edition 1932–1962), Vol. 2, Part 2.

¹⁷ For identification of soma cf. R. G. Wasson, *Soma: Divine Mushroom of Immortality*, New York 1968; H. Falk, *Soma I and II*, "Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies" 1989, Vol. 52, No. 1, p. 77–90.

¹⁸ Such a complex domains are called Idealised Cognitive Models, cf. G. Lakoff, *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things...*, op. cit.

THE CREATION OF THE WORLD IS THE PREPARATION OF FOOD, ITS EATING AND DIGESTION

The first creative act of the Creator, mentioned in the Brāhmaṇas Prajāpati, is conceived in terms of toiling and heating. Most cosmogonies begin with the formulaic expression: ‘He toiled, he heated himself’ (so ‘*śrāmyat sa tapo ‘tapyata*). The Brāhmaṇas do not specify what kind of heating activity is evoked here as the source domain but in two places of the ŚB we are informed that it was quick running like in a race:

- [1] Prajāpati produced creatures. Having produced creatures, and run the whole race, he became relaxed. From him, when relaxed, the vital air went out from within: then his vigour went out of him. That having gone out, he fell down. From him, thus fallen, food flowed forth: it was from that eye on which he lay that his food flowed. And, verily, there was then no firm foundation whatever here (ŚB 7.1.2.1)¹⁹.

Prajāpati is conceived in terms of a runner who, exhausted with his quick run, falls down. If we follow the logic of the source domain, we will understand that the Creator dies, as is confirmed by the fact that the main vital air of Prajāpati goes out of him.²⁰ But this does not mean that the Creator dies in his entirety but only in his manifest aspect. In his non-manifest aspect he is still present and omnipotent and thus he is able to create within his manifest aspect his subjective powers, the gods, who will continue the creation:

- [2] The gods heated him in the fire; and when the fire rose over him thus heated, that same vital air which had gone out from within him came back to him, and they put it into him; and the vigour which had gone out of him they put into him; and the food which had flowed from him they put into him. Having made him up entire and complete, they raised him (so as to stand) upright; and inasmuch as they thus raised (ŚB 7.2.1.6) This (terrestrial) world truly is his foundation; and what fire there is in this world that is his (Prajāpati’s) downward vital air. And the air is his body, and what wind there is in the air, that is that vital air of his in the body. And the sky is his head; the sun and the moon are his eyes. The eye on which he lay is the moon: whence that one is much closed up, for the food flowed there from (ŚB 7.2.1.7).

¹⁹ All the translations of the *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa* (ŚB) are Eggeling’s (*The Śatapathabrāhmaṇa According to the Mādhyandina School*, Vol. 1–5, Delhi 1994). See also ŚB 6.1.2.12, *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa* 2.1.2.1–2 (H. W. Bodewitz, *The Daily Evening And Morning Offering (Agnihotra)*, Leiden 1976, p. 16), *Kāthakasamhitā* 6.2 (ibidem, p. 30).

²⁰ In the *Genesis*, the God, having created the world, is tired too, but, contrary to Prajāpati, he simply takes rest.

The text construes the image of heating the dead body in fire. In this way the concept of cooking is evoked which transforms something inedible (like raw meat) into food under the influence of fire. However, here cooking is the source domain for other concepts. In terms of cooking, the digestion of food was conceived.²¹ So the recipient can understand that the dead Prajāpati is fed with food by the gods, and that food, when digested, gives him his life and power back.²² In the context of Indian civilisation, the image of heating the dead body also evokes the concept of cremation. It was believed (and it has been believed to this day²³) that the dead person is revived under the influence of the cremation fire and acquires the perfect form of the ancestor. This transforming influence of fire was also illustrated in terms of cooking.²⁴

The description is constructed in such a general way that it does not constrain us in the choice of the target domain which we are expected to evoke (this is the power of metaphors). We are rather expected to evoke all three target domains mentioned above.²⁵ Then we will understand that the Creator is both food and the eater.²⁶ Within the frames of this conceptualisation, the Creator is cooked, and at the same time, he eats the food and digests it. The life-giving character of food allows us to understand why Prajāpati stands up, but if we evoke the concept of cremation, we will understand that Prajāpati is revived in the cosmos. And mentioned in the texts, the head of Prajāpati becomes the sky, his feet the earth, his belly – space.²⁷

This cosmogony does not explicitly mention hunger as the reason for death, although we may presume that this concept should be evoked because it is said that the food flew away from Prajāpati too. Hunger as the reason for the death of Prajāpati is mentioned more explicitly in the following cosmogony:

- [3] This Prajāpati, the year, has created all existing things, both what breathes and the breathless, both gods and men. Having created all existing things, he felt like one emptied out, and was afraid of death (ŚB 10.4.2.2).

²¹ W. O. Kaelber, *Tapta Mārga. Ascetism and initiation in Vedic India*, Delhi 1990, p. 52–53; D. M. Knipe, *In the image of fire. The Vedic Experience of Heat*, Delhi–Varanasi–Patna 1975, p. 102ff.

²² Till today it is believed that the dead person should be fed in order to survive death as ancestor, J. P. Parry, *Death in Banaras*, Cambridge 1994, p. 191 ff.

²³ Ibidem.

²⁴ And also is today, cf. ibidem, p. 211ff.

²⁵ And create a conceptual blend (for conceptual blends cf. G. Fauconnier, M. Turner, *The way we think...*, op. cit.).

²⁶ Which agrees with the monistic assumption.

²⁷ In the similar way in *R̥gveda* 10.16.3 the dead person became the world.

He bethought himself, ‘How can I get these beings back into my body? how can I put them back into my body? how can I be again the body of all these beings?’ (ŚB 10.4.2.3).

The first act of creation is conceived in terms of excretion. We can presume that that this excretion was preceded by heating, similarly as in the previous cosmogony (example 2) where Prajāpati is overheated and then vital air, vigour and food flow out of him. The result of this act is a feeling of emptiness which can be interpreted as hunger. So the Creator wants to put back all the creatures and to become their self or body. In the frames of the monistic vision, the food can only be constituted by what is excreted from the Creator, i.e. the creatures. When Prajāpati eats them, he will become their body in the same way as a human being becomes the body of what she has eaten.

ŚB 6.2.1 (examples 4–9, below) elaborates the scenario of the preparation of food and its consumption in order to express creation in a most detailed way. The manifest aspect of the Creator, conceived in terms of fire, wants to hide itself from Prajāpati, because it is afraid that Prajāpati will eat it.²⁸ Hence, it assumes the form of five animals: a human being, horse, bull, ram and he-goat. But Prajāpati recognises it in these forms:

[4] He considered, ‘They are Agni’²⁹: I will fit them unto mine own self (ŚB 6.2.1.5)³⁰. Then Prajāpati begins to prepare food. He kills the animals:

[5] Having appeased them and carried the fire round them, he led them northwards and slew them (ŚB 6.2.1.6).

Then he cuts their heads off and puts them on, while the corpses he throws into water:

[6] Well then, I will only put on the heads. He cut off the heads and put them on (himself, or the altar). The remaining trunks he then let float on the water (ŚB 6.2.1.7).

It is not clear what Prajāpati is doing with the heads. The word *upa dhā-*, translated by Eggeling as ‘to put on,’ implies either placing something under something or in something. I would not agree with Eggeling’s interpretation

²⁸ This is explicitly said in *Tāṇḍyamahābrāhmaṇa* 21.1.2, after S. Lévi, *La doctrine du sacrifice dans les Brāhmaṇas*, Paris 1898, p. 25.

²⁹ I.e. fire.

³⁰ The desire of eating is expressed in the similar way as in ŚB 10.4.2.3 (example 3): Prajāpati wants the creation to become himself and this process of identification with it is conceived in terms of eating.

that Prajāpati puts the heads on himself (because it does not make any sense), or on the altar (because the altar has not yet been built). I would rather understand in this way: either Prajāpati puts them aside in order to use them later or, more probably, he puts them into himself, i.e. he eats them. Then we are told that Prajāpati does not reach the end of fire (ŚB 6.2.1.7) which agrees with my interpretation that Prajāpati ate only the heads of the animals: the animals are fire and we can presume that Prajāpati will reach the end of fire when he eats the animals' bodies too. But he ate only the heads, so he did not internalise the whole creation but only a part of it. And he is still hungry. We may presume that he is again in danger of death or hunger because he thinks:

[7] 'Lest my sacrifice be pulled to pieces.' Sacrifice is his body, so he considers 'Lest my body be pulled into pieces.' (ŚB 6.2.1.7)³¹

If Prajāpati's body is pulled to pieces, he will die. So he considers:

[8] 'I must search for that body which I let float on the water.' He searched for it; and what (part) of those (bodies) cast into the water had settled therein, that water he gathered; and what (had settled) in this earth, that clay (he gathered). And having gathered both that clay and water, he made a brick: hence a brick consists of these two, clay and water (ŚB 6.2.1.8).

If we elaborate on the source domain of cooking, we will understand that Prajāpati prepares meat for eating; in these terms, the bricks for the altar are conceived. Then Prajāpati realises that he has to cook meat, because raw meat will cause his death again:

[9] 'Surely, if I fit this (matter) such as it is unto mine own self, I shall become a mortal carcass, not freed from evil: well then, I will bake it by means of the fire.' So saying, he baked it by means of the fire, and thereby made it immortal; for the sacrificial food which is baked by fire is indeed immortal (or, ambrosia). Hence they bake the bricks with fire: they thereby make them immortal (ŚB 6.2.1.9).

Prajāpati cooks the corpses of the animals and eats them. Digested, they become his body as the food becomes the body of the eater. In this way, the animals become immortal because they constitute the body of the God whose immortality in the manifest aspect is achieved through his constant

³¹ Eggeling omits in his translation the passage which identified sacrifice with the body of Prajāpati. The Sanskrit word *ātman* used here means not only body but everything which is inside it, the mental and physical self, the being of a person.

dying and resurrection. The target domain evoked by this description is the preparation of the bricks of the altar (according to the ritual prescriptions, bricks should be fired).

It is worth noting that, contrary to the target domain, the source domain is not expressed here explicitly. The concept of cooking and eating are evoked indirectly, *via* the concept of the identification of Prajāpati (the eater) with the animals (the food). But its scenario orders the sequence of the stages of Prajāpati's activity. They are the same as the stages of cooking: Prajāpati toils and heats himself, creates beings from himself, becomes hungry and is either afraid of death or dies. Then he prepares the food: he kills the creation, which he then cooks, eats and digests.³²

In terms of this source domain, a very abstract philosophical concept is expressed. In order to create the world, the Creator creates a place within himself for the future world and then manifests himself within it as the dynamic cosmos. The change is as purposeful as the cooking is intentional.

The cosmogonies of the *Agnicayana* imply that *in illo tempore* there was no division between the ritual and the cosmos, similarly as there was no division between the word and its designate.³³ And this is why the creation of the cosmos is the creation of the altar: because these are one activity. The altar built by Prajāpati represents his manifestation in the temporal and spatial cosmos:

[10] And that Prajāpati who became relaxed is the year; and those five bodily parts of his which became relaxed are the seasons; for there are five seasons, and five are those layers: when he builds up the five layers, he thereby builds him up with the seasons (ŚB 6.1.2.18).

And the Fire that is laid down on the built (altar), that is yonder Sun; that same Agni is indeed (raised) on the altar, and that just because Agni had restored him (Prajāpati) (ŚB 6.1.2.20).

We can conclude then that the creation of the world is conceived in terms of the preparation of food and its cooking. At the same time, we have seen that cooking is the source domain for partial concepts of this domain, such as hunger and digestion which allows the composer of the ŚB to create a coherent image of the Creator whose creative activity is conceived in terms of cooking.

³² It is worth adding that hunger is conceived in terms of fire (BU 1.2.1), so the creation of fire can already be understood as conveying the meaning of hunger.

³³ Ch. Malamoud, *Cooking the World. Ritual and Thought in Ancient India*, Delhi 1996 (translation of *Cuire le Monde. Rite et Pensée dans l'Inde ancienne*).

The last target domain of the cooking-metaphor is the temporal existence of the manifest aspect of the Creator. Let us consider the following description:

[11] That one (the sun) bakes everything here, by means of the days and nights, the half-moons, the months, the seasons, and the year (ŚB 10.4.2.19).

The subject of the description is the sun, whose the movement is the visible sign of the temporal character of the creation. While it moves, it ripens plants so they become edible. At the same time, the movement of the sun ages living beings and this is the reason for their death. Both these processes are conceived in terms of cooking.³⁴ The instruments of the activity of the sun thus conceived are time divisions that can be understood as the fuel.³⁵ Cooking seems to be a suitable source domain for conceptualisation of maturing and ageing because it takes time to cook meat properly for it to be appetising, similarly as it takes time to become matured and old. The coherence of this conceptualisation is strengthened by that in the ŚB the existence of the world was seen as a constant repetition of the creative act.

RITUAL ACTIVITY IS THE PREPARATION OF FOOD, ITS EATING AND DIGESTION

The cooking-metaphor, as long as it is expressed by the texts is a monomodal one: it is expressed *via* one verbal mode. But, as I have already mentioned, the cosmogonies of the Brāhmaṇas were designed to explain ritual. Rather than merely theoretical treatises, first and foremost they were practical manuals.

During the ritual, the sacrificer was supposed to repeat the creative activity of Prajāpati. The altar built in Agnicayana was measured according to the size of the sacrificer which implied their identity:

[12] ‘Let it (the altar) measure a fathom across on the west side,’ they say: that, namely, is the size of a man, and it (the altar) should be of (the) man’s size (ŚB 1.2.5.14).

We can understand that during the ritual the sacrificer built his own sacrificial body similarly to Prajāpati during the creation.³⁶

³⁴ This way of thinking about the action of time in terms of cooking is continued in later thought, e.g. *Mahābhārata* 12.217.39, 220.84, 231.25, 309.90.

³⁵ In the same way the time divisions are conceived in the *Rgveda* 10.90.6.

³⁶ B. K. Smith, *Reflections on Resemblance, Ritual and Religion*, New York 1989, p. 82ff.

The general scenario of the *Agnicayana* ritual also agrees with the general scenario of the creation conceived in terms of preparing and cooking food, as has been reconstructed above. The sacrificer had to fast before the ritual.³⁷ We can understand that, while fasting, the sacrificer repeated on a small scale the act of Prajāpati's withdrawal in order to make space for the future world. At the same time his condition was explained in terms of cooking. Not only was his hunger revealed in terms of fire which transformed him into someone ritually pure, but the sacrificer was illustrated in terms of an embryo maturing in the womb and, as mentioned earlier, the maturing influence of time was also appropriated in terms of fire, i.e. cooking. The external sign of this internal cooking was expressed by the fact that the sacrificer was supposed to carry for the whole year a vessel with fire.³⁸

Before the sacrificer begins construction of the altar he should take it within himself:

[13] Being about to build Agni (the fire-altar), he takes him up into his own self; for from out of his own self he causes him to be born, and wherefrom one is born, suchlike he becomes. Now were he to build up Agni without taking him up into his own self, he would beget man from man, mortal from mortal, one not freed from sin from one not freed from sin; but when he builds up Agni after taking him up into his own self, he causes Agni to be born from Agni, the immortal from the immortal, the sinless from the sinless (ŚB 7.4.1.1).

This act is interpreted as a mental creation of the ideal altar which will be built during the ritual.³⁹ I would argue that in this way the sacrificer repeats the creative desire of Prajāpati who wants to take back the creatures into himself.

Then the sacrificer kills five animals and prepares the bricks out of water and clay in fire. The heads were placed beneath the altar, the bricks, identified with corpses, above them, in the five layers.

When Prajāpati builds the fire altar during the creation, he builds for himself the cosmic body which enables him to manifest as dying and living. The aim of the ritual activity of the sacrificer is the same: he needs to build a body for himself for a sacrificial journey to the sun which could not be made in his human body. When the altar is built, he lights a fire on it, pre-

³⁷ W. O. Kaelber, op. cit., p. 38–39.

³⁸ Ibidem, p. 34; N. Drury, *The Sacrificial Ritual in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, Delhi–Varanasi–Patna 1981, p. 80.

³⁹ H. W. Tull, *The Vedic Origins of Karma. Cosmos as Man in Ancient Indian Myth and Ritual*, New York 1989, p. 91.

parens Soma, performs animal sacrifice, eats and drinks the oblations thanks to which he has become immortal like a god. The altar is the external, immortal form of the body of the sacrificer.

RITUAL AS A MULTIMODAL METAPHOR

Thus the human being, performing the ritual of the Agnicayana, reenacted the creative process of the manifestation of Prajāpati in the world, conceived in terms of hunger, the preparation of food and eating. Realised during ritual, the cooking-metaphor becomes a multimodal metaphor.

Its source domain manifests itself in three modes. The first mode is the physiological processes which occur in the human body: hunger, eating and digestion. This is the most intimate mode, universal to all human beings. The second mode is the ritualised preparation of food (making fire and cooking). The third mode is the verbal one that is expressed in the cosmogony discussed above, and which makes ritual activity meaningful. These two modes are restricted to the Brahmins and their sacrificers.

This three-modal source domain gives access to the first target domain which is the temporal functioning of the cosmos conceived in the same terms of cooking. This target domain gives access to the second target domain which is the manifestation of the Creator in the creation, possible to be experienced only indirectly, through his manifested forms.

If we take into account the nature of metaphors discussed at the beginning of my paper we will understand the power of the ritual. Metaphors operate effortlessly, automatically and unconsciously. This does not mean that the Brahmins did not know what they were doing but that connections between the modes of the source domain and between the source and the target domains operated in such a way that they could be immediately integrated in one coherent experience both bodily and mentally. When the sacrificer felt hunger during his preliminary fast, he not only knew he was a God who had made space for the future world and that this future world was fire, but also felt it physically as well. Then he looked for food, prepared, cooked and finally ate it and became full. Thus he knew and felt that he was a God who had constructed for himself an immortal body within his manifest part and that the only possible immortality here is to die and be resurrected again and again.

The power of the ritual is even more strengthened by the fact that one of its source domains, i.e. hunger, is one of the strongest human motivations,

controlled both physiologically and psychologically.⁴⁰ It is hunger which motivates living beings to act. If the sacrificer was really hungry during his preliminary fast he must have had the strong urge to perform the ritual which was the only socially accepted way of appeasing his hunger in this situation.

The ritual of the Brāhmaṇas viewed as a multimodal metaphor is not an empty mechanic manipulation of objects but an experience which integrated both mind and body and made the world and the life of a particular human being meaningful.

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⁴⁰ The second such strong motivator is sex and its concept is also used as the source domain in the Brāhmaṇic cosmogonies.

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